

THE SPECIALIST

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Did you know?

- 25 states now recognize private or direct certification
- The top specialty areas are estate planning, criminal, bankruptcy and family law
- Texas has specialties in both health law and juvenile law
- California, Florida and Texas each have more than 3,000 certified specialists
- Certified Specialists in North Carolina now number more than 500



PROFILES IN SPECIALIZATION

Stuart Dorsett became a Certified Specialist in Estate Planning and Probate Law in 1995. He practices in New Bern, NC.

Question: Has certification been helpful to your practice?

Answer: Certification gives me instant credibility with new clients and referral sources. It allows me to differentiate the caliber of my legal services from those of practitioners who do not practice trusts and estates law full-time. Many of my clients are physicians, who have their own system of board certification, and my certification has allowed me to expand my practice among that group of clients.

Question: Is certification important in your practice area?

Answer: I believe certification is critically important for a younger trusts and estates lawyer. Trusts and estates clients are increasingly well-informed about estate planning and estate administration issues, and one of the points that has been hammered into them by the financial press is to get an expert to handle their estate plan. Often, one of the first questions from a new or prospective client is whether I am a certified specialist.

Question: How does specialization benefit the public? The profession?

Answer: Specialization benefits both the public and the profession by encouraging the development of a cadre of lawyers with in-depth knowledge of a particular practice area. These

attorneys are well-trained and technically proficient, and the quality of service to the public necessarily improves. In the area of estate planning and probate law, specialization probably also has the benefit of discouraging practice by attorneys who infrequently handle estate planning and probate matters, thereby decreasing the risk of malpractice. Conversely, knowing that they will be held to a higher standard of practice, specialists are encouraged to continue to hone their skills.

Cynthia Aziz, a Certified Specialist in Immigration Law since 1997, practices in Charlotte, NC.

Question: Why did you pursue certification?

Answer: I thought it would enhance my credentials and demonstrate to potential clients that I am competent in my area of concentration, i.e. immigration and nationality law.

Question: How did you prepare for the examination?

Answer: I reviewed materials prepared at seminars I have attended on immigration and nationality law. (continued p. 2)



WELCOME CHRISTY EVE REID, INCOMING CHAIR, NCSB BOARD OF LEGAL SPECIALIZATION

Christy Eve Reid, a Board Certified Specialist in Estate Planning and Probate Law, is excited to be stepping into the role of Chair. Christy has been a specialist since 1987 and is a shareholder at Robinson, Bradshaw & Hinson, P.A. in Charlotte, NC. A graduate of Smith College and the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill Law School, Christy is married and has three children.

"The growth in the Specialization Program has been tremendous since 1987,

with new specialties added in criminal law, family law, immigration and worker's compensation. Certification has certainly given me an edge in my practice and I encourage other lawyers to pursue specialization. It provides a meaningful way for the public to identify qualified attorneys."

"As Chair, I welcome your comments and involvement as the program continues to grow and adapt to the changing legal profession."

PROFILES CONTINUED

Cynthia Aziz continued...

Question: Is certification important in your region?

Answer: Although, this area of specialization is based in federal law, it is important to have this certification by our state bar because the State Bar is the disciplinary organization for those attorneys licensed to practice in this state. It will be the State Bar who will receive complaints from a disgruntled client who believes his or her attorney has provided poor or harmful representation. I believe the population who are affected by U.S. Immigration and Nationality Laws are a particularly vulnerable part of our state population in that they have limited rights in this country as non-citizens. Also, due to cultural and language barriers which are inherent with this popula-

tion, the clients may be even less cognizant of the impact of the law on their lives or actions. Hence, it is important that some measure of protection exist to guide this population in locating and selecting a lawyer.

Cindy Oliver, Certified Specialist in both Business and Consumer Bankruptcy practices in Raleigh. She attained her certification in 1993.

Question: Why did you pursue certification?

Answer: I wanted to have a good grasp of the Bankruptcy Code as a whole, rather than researching and focusing on isolated Code sections.

Question: Was the certification process (exam, references, application) valuable to you in any way? (continued p. 4)

“Certification gives me instant credibility.”

Stuart Dorsett,

Certified Specialist in Estate Planning and Probate Law

“I will seldom refer a family law matter to anyone other than a Board Certified Specialist.”

Doyle Early Jr. ,

Certified Specialist in Family Law

CERTIFICATION- STATE BY STATE

Exactly half of the states in America recognize certified specialists at some level. North Carolina is among the trend-setters, recognizing private certification programs in addition to offering state sponsored specialty areas. States that offer comparative options for attorneys include Arizona, California, Florida, Louisiana, New Jersey, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas. New Mexico recognizes only the certification programs that it provides, mandating that attorneys certified through other agencies place a prominent disclaimer in any material they produce.

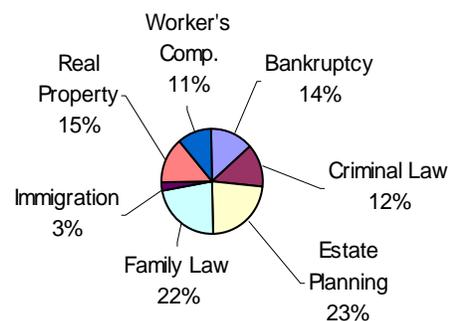
Among the states that offer certification programs, the most common specialties are estate planning, bankruptcy, criminal, and family law, with 80-90% of the states offering these programs. Some of the most uncommon specialties are: Arizona’s Injury and Wrongful Death, Florida’s programs in City/County/Local Government and Admiralty/Maritime, New Mexico’s Natural Resources, and Texas’s programs in Oil, Gas and Mineral Law, Farm and Ranch Real Estate and Personal Injury Trial Law.

The majority of states that recognize certified specialists do so through ABA accredited national organizations including the American Board

of Certification, the National Board of Trial Advocacy and the National Elder Law Foundation.

How does North Carolina measure up? Recognized nationally as a top quality program, North Carolina continues to contribute to the growth of specialization. A recent survey* indicates that the majority of North Carolina attorneys view themselves as specialists. Certification provides a way to make that specialty official and communicate it effectively to the public. North Carolina’s Certified Specialists are pace setters. We anticipate steady growth in our program as more attorneys recognize the value that certification provides.

North Carolina Certified Specialists

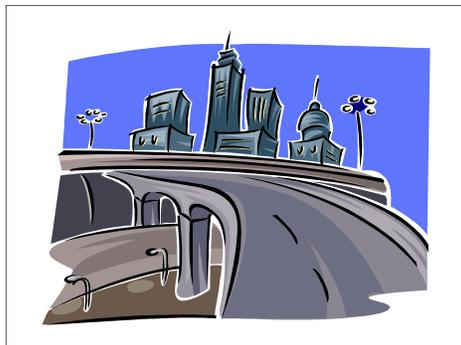


*Survey results are from NC Bar Association June 2000

LAND CONDEMNATION— THE NEW SPECIALTY AREA?

As North Carolina continues to grow, property owners are increasingly faced with the challenges of governmental appropriations of their land. In many cases, they don't know where to turn for a qualified attorney to help them assess their rights and the property's worth, and to negotiate an appropriate settlement. Increasingly, the public is turning to a small number of qualified lawyers for guidance. In a move to assist the general public with locating qualified counsel, the State Bar is considering the establishment of a new specialty area in land condemnation law.

A committee was recently appointed to look at the possibility of creating a specialty in land condemnation. Committee



members include George Autry (Chair) of Raleigh, Jones Byrd of Asheville, Emmett Haywood of Raleigh, Henry Kitchen of Rockingham, John McMillan (Vice Chair) of Raleigh, W. Richard

Moore of Raleigh and James Rogerson of Wilson.

The committee met in March to draft standards for this new specialty area. It is anticipated that the standards will be presented to the State Bar Council in July for approval to publish.

Your written comments are encouraged.

CRIMINAL LAW—NEW AND IMPROVED

The Criminal Specialty Committee is hard at work revising the criminal law certification exam. Committee members, Daniel Boyce (Chair), Locke Clifford, David Freedman, Charles Lloyd, Thomas Manning, Eben Rawls, and Matthew Martin are reviewing the old exam and determining which questions need to be revised. Walter Jones plans to join them at Ocean Isle Beach for a weekend retreat to ensure that the new exam is both valid and reliable.

Quite a few of the current Criminal Law Specialists sent in excellent exam question suggestions. Professor Charlie Rose, Wake Forest School of Law, will review the draft exam and provide input on the questions and test design. The new exam, which includes both objective and short answer questions, will debut this fall.



WELCOME DENISE MULLEN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF SPECIALIZATION

Denise Mullen joined the State Bar in January as our new Assistant Director of Specialization. She comes to us with a bachelor's degree in Psychology from Indiana University and a Masters in Education from Kent State. Denise is married and has two children. Her background includes 10 years of work experience in education and non-profit administration, including concentrations in marketing, program development and fund-raising.

She hit the ground running and has been coordinating exam revisions, creating and revising study guides to add to our website, and designing a new marketing plan for both attorneys and the general public including our new specialization brochure.

We are pleased with the creation of this new position and anticipate that it will add a whole new dimension to the specialization program.

2001/2002 Board of Legal Specialization

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PROFILES CONTINUED

Cindy Oliver, continued...

Answer: The process forced me to study the law, and as a result I became more proficient.

Question: How does specialization benefit the public?

Answer: Clients' problems tend to be narrow, so they benefit from attorneys who specialize.

Doyle Early, Jr., a Certified Specialist in Family Law since 1990, practices in High Point, NC.

Question: Why did you pursue certification?

Answer: When I decided to become a Board Certified Specialist in family law in 1990, I had been practicing civil litigation for 23 years but had already narrowed my practice primarily to family law. However, when we were given the opportunity to become Board Certified Family Law Specialists, I felt that it would raise my practice to another level. Those in my peer group who had just become specialists were among the finest family lawyers in the state and I wanted to join them.

Question: Is certification important in your area of practice?

Answer: I can't think of any area of practice where certification would be more important than in the area of family law. There are a lot of lawyers who dabble in the area of family

law, but there are only a handful of family lawyers who are competent and qualified to handle complex family law litigation. Most of those lawyers are Family Law Specialists and the public needs to know who they are. I contend that some equitable distribution cases present some of the most complex litigation in either district or superior court.

Question: Has certification affected your referral process?

Answer: I will seldom refer a family law matter to anyone other than a Board Certified Specialist if there is one available in the geographic area. If I don't know the attorney, the certification indicates a level of experience, competence and expertise that I would want if I were referring a good friend or relative. I have received numerous calls from potential clients who got my name from the North Carolina State Bar web site or the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers web site, which is a national organization composed of family law specialists.

