

PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS

Certified Financial Planner (CFP®)

Some of our professionals are certified for financial planning services in the United States by Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, Inc. (“CFP Board”). The CFP® certification is voluntary. No federal or state law or regulation requires financial planners to hold the CFP® certification. You may find more information about the CFP® certification at www.cfp.net. CFP® professionals have met CFP Board’s high standards for education, examination, experience, and ethics.

To become a CFP® professional, an individual must fulfill the following requirements:

- Education – Earn a bachelor’s degree or higher from an accredited college or university and complete CFP Board-approved coursework at a college or university through a CFP Board Registered Program. The coursework covers the financial planning subject areas CFP Board has determined are necessary for the competent and professional delivery of financial planning services, as well as a comprehensive financial plan development capstone course. A candidate may satisfy some of the coursework requirement through other qualifying credentials.
- Examination – Pass the comprehensive CFP® Certification Examination. The examination is designed to assess an individual’s ability to integrate and apply a broad base of financial planning knowledge in the context of real-life financial planning situations.
- Experience – Complete 6,000 hours of professional experience related to the personal financial planning process, or 4,000 hours of apprenticeship experience that meets additional requirements.
- Ethics – Satisfy the Fitness Standards for Candidates for CFP® Certification and Former CFP® Professionals Seeking Reinstatement and agree to be bound by CFP Board’s Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct (“Code and Standards”), which sets forth the ethical and practice standards for CFP® professionals.

Individuals who become certified must complete the following ongoing education and ethics requirements to remain certified and maintain the right to continue to use the CFP Board Certification Marks:

- Ethics – Commit to complying with CFP Board’s Code and Standards. This includes a commitment to CFP Board, as part of the certification, to act as a fiduciary, and therefore, act in the best interests of the client, at all times when providing financial advice and financial planning. CFP Board may sanction a CFP® professional who does not abide by this commitment, but CFP Board does not guarantee a CFP® professional’s services. A client who seeks a similar commitment should obtain a written engagement that includes a fiduciary obligation to the client.
- Continuing Education – Complete 30 hours of continuing education every two years to maintain competence, demonstrate specified levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities, and keep up with developments in financial planning. Two of the hours must address the Code and Standards.

Certified Public Accountant (CPA)

The Certified Public Accountant (CPA®) Designation is issued by the Boards of Accountancy. Like regular accountants, CPAs can help organizations and individuals:

- record and organize financial information;
- analyze trends;
- make budgetary recommendations;
- prepare tax documents;
- perform internal audits;
- ensure all financial activities are compliant with local and federal regulations.

However, due to their training in the public sector, CPAs can do a few other things that regular accounts legally can't, such as:

- Representing clients during IRS audits;
- Perform external and public audits;
- Prepare audited financial statements for the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Each state has slightly different requirements that one must follow for CPA certification. These requirements are determined by the state's Board of Accountancy and The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AIPCA). To check the requirements of your state, please [click here](#). To verify an individual's CPA status, please [click here](#).

Financial Paraplanner Qualified ProfessionalSM (FPQP®)

The foundation of financial planning is developing strong relationships with new and current clients, so you can help them achieve their financial goals. The FPQP® designation is for those who have no financial planning experience and want to start building that foundation. The program covers the main facets in personal financial planning with a focus on practical application, such as estate, tax, retirement, insurance, and investments. Holding the FPQP® designation demonstrates to clients that you can gather, review, and analyze their financial information and offer a comprehensive picture of their financial well-being.

Accredited Investment Fiduciary® (AIF®)

The Accredited Investment Fiduciary designation is currently offered and recognized by the Center for Fiduciary Studies. To obtain this designation, a candidate must meet a point-based threshold based on a combination of education, relevant industry experience, or professional development. In addition, a candidate must complete either a web-based or a capstone program, successfully complete a proctored closed book final certification exam, and complete at least 6 hours of continuing education requirements per year.

Behavioral Financial Advisor (BFA)

A Behavioral Financial Advisor (BFA) is a specialized financial advisor that goes beyond just asset selection and allocation, but also offers practical services such behavioral advice to positively influence an individuals savings, spending, and investing habits. To obtain this designation, a candidate must complete two online courses related to behavioral finance and successfully complete a proctored closed book final certification exam, and complete at least 20 hours of continuing education requirements every two years.

Certified Retirement Counselor (CRC®)

Financial advisors with this certification are very knowledgeable in retirement planning, retirement income management and more. To earn the CRC® certification and the right to use the marks, Candidates are required to pass a comprehensive 200 question, multiple-choice exam and have two years of experience with a college degree (five years of experience required with a high school diploma or equivalent). Counselors are required to complete 15 hours of continuing education per year, including at least two hours of ethics every two years.