

Selecting an Attorney Specializing in Civil Trial

Maybe you have never needed the services of an attorney before; but now you do. Obviously, you want a lawyer who is able to handle your particular legal situation, and who has expertise in the area of law relating to your legal needs.

To assist you in finding such a lawyer, the Supreme Court of Florida directed The Florida Bar to offer a "Board Certification" program for Florida Bar members. The program is designed to help the public make an informed decision when seeking and selecting a lawyer.

While all lawyers are allowed to advertise, only certified attorneys are allowed to identify themselves as "Florida Bar Board Certified" or as a "specialist." Certification is the highest level of recognition by The Florida Bar of the competency and experience of attorneys in the areas of law approved for certification by the Supreme Court of Florida.

A lawyer who is a member in good standing of The Florida Bar and who meets the standards set by the Supreme Court of Florida, may become a "Board Certified Civil Trial Lawyer."

Certified lawyers in civil trial law deal with litigation of civil controversies in all areas of substantive law before state and federal courts, administrative agencies and arbitrators. In addition to actual pretrial and trial process, civil trial law includes evaluating, handling and resolving civil controversies prior to the initiation of suit.

Every board certified civil trial lawyer has practiced law for at least five years and been substantially involved -- 30 percent or more -- in the area of civil trial law during the three years preceding application. To be certified, the lawyer is required to have conducted at least 15 contested civil cases in courts of general jurisdiction during the lawyer's practice, including cases before a jury and as lead counsel. Credit is given to the lawyer if he or she has served as a judge.

Each certified lawyer must also have passed peer review, completed 50 hours of continuing legal education within the three years preceding application and passed a written examination demonstrating knowledge, skills and proficiency in the field of civil trial law to justify the representation of special competence.

Board certification is valid for five years, during which time the attorney must continue to practice law and attend Florida Bar-approved continuing legal education courses. To be recertified, requirements similar to those for initial certification must be met. Not all qualified lawyers are certified, but those who are board certified have taken the extra step to have their competence and experience recognized.

Civil Trial certification was approved by the Supreme Court of Florida in 1982.

The Florida Bar Board of Legal Specialization and Education operates under the authority of the Supreme Court of Florida. The certification program and any supporting materials or activities are not funded by the general revenues of The Florida Bar.

For more information, please contact:
The Florida Bar
Legal Specialization & Education Department
651 E. Jefferson Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2300
800/342-8060
850/561-5842

###