

FAQ: Why Hire a Board-Certified Attorney?

Q. What is a Board-Certified Attorney?

A. The State Bar of Texas established the *Texas Board of Legal Specialization (TBLS)* in 1974 by to “promote the availability, accessibility and quality of the services of attorneys to the public in particular areas of the law...and advance the standards of the legal profession.”

Q. What does it mean for an attorney to be Board-Certified?

A. Board Certification is a mark of excellence and a distinguishing accomplishment. *Board Certification* in the Texas legal community means that an attorney has substantial, relevant experience in a select field of law, and has also demonstrated and has tested for special competence in that area of law. The Board Certification process is rigorous and thorough with stringent, ongoing requirements after initial certification. In general, an applicant must:

- Have practiced law for a minimum of five years, with three years of substantial involvement in a particular area of law;
- Complete TBLS-approved Continuing Legal Education course requirements;
- Provide at least 10 qualified, vetted references;
- Provide extensive, relevant experience documentation, and;
- Pass a comprehensive, daylong, specialty area examination.

Q. Is every licensed attorney also Board-Certified?

A. No. According to the Texas Board of Legal Specialization, there are more than 70,000 attorneys licensed to practice in Texas, and only about 7,000 are board-certified.

Q. What are the benefits of hiring a Board-Certified Attorney?

A. When you hire a board-certified attorney, you can be confident that your attorney is a specialist and is experienced in the area of Board Certification. A board-certified attorney is committed to that particular area of practice, will be very familiar with the law in that area, and will be able to offer efficient and effective legal representation.

Q. How do I know if an attorney is Board-Certified?

A. Although many attorneys advertise it in newspapers, on television, and in the phone book, only attorneys who are certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization can use the *Board Certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization* designation on letterhead, business cards, or in advertisements.

Do you have additional questions about board certification in Texas? Contact Mark Hefter for more information.