



## CFP® CERTIFICATION: THE HIGHEST STANDARD

### IF YOUR FINANCIAL LIFE SEEMS TO BE SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL, YOU'RE NOT ALONE.

Today more than ever, CFP® professionals are an essential resource. From budgeting, to planning for retirement, to saving for education, to managing your taxes and your insurance coverage; “finances” doesn’t mean just one thing for most Americans — and “financial planning” means much more than just investing. Bringing all the pieces of your financial life together is a challenging task.

Although many professionals may call themselves “financial planners,” CFP® professionals have completed extensive training and experience requirements and are held to rigorous ethical standards. They understand all the complexities of the changing financial climate and will make recommendations in your best interest.

## WHY CERTIFICATION MATTERS

Most people think all financial planners are “certified,” but this isn't true – nor are all certifications the same.

Anyone may call him or herself a “financial planner,” but only those who have fulfilled the certification and renewal requirements of the CFP Board can display the CFP® certification marks, which represent a high level of competency, ethics, and professionalism. CFP Board's *Standards of Professional Conduct* require CFP® professionals to look out for your interests above their own.

## EDUCATION

Unlike many financial advisors, CFP® professionals are required to develop their theoretical and practical knowledge by completing a comprehensive course of study at a college or university with a curriculum approved by the CFP Board. Planning professionals with training outside of the CFP Board's approved list may meet the education requirement through a review process, which looks at transcripts, previous course work, and other professional designations.

## EXAMINATION

CFP® professionals must pass the comprehensive CFP® Certification Exam, which tests their ability to apply financial planning knowledge to real-life situations. The exam covers the financial planning process, tax planning, employee benefits and retirement planning, estate planning, investment management and insurance. The average pass rate for this difficult exam is only 55 percent to 60 percent. This comprehensive exam ensures that CFP® professionals are highly qualified to develop a plan for your finances.

## EXPERIENCE

CFP® professionals must have a minimum of three years' experience in the financial planning process prior to earning the right to use the CFP® certification marks. This hands-on experience guarantees that CFP® professionals have practical financial planning knowledge, so you can count on them to help you create a realistic financial plan that fits your individual needs.

# ETHICS

When it comes to financial planning, CFP® professionals are held to the highest of standards. CFP Board's Code of Ethics outlines CFP® professionals' obligations to uphold principles of integrity, objectivity, competence, fairness, confidentiality, professionalism and diligence. The Rules of Conduct require CFP® professionals to put clients' interests above their own, and to provide their financial planning services as a "fiduciary" — acting in the best interest of their financial planning clients. CFP® professionals are subject to sanctions if they violate these standards.

# ENFORCEMENT

CFP Board's rigorous enforcement of its *Standards of Professional Conduct* — including releasing disciplinary information to the public — distinguishes the CFP® certification from the many other designations in the financial services industry. Anyone who seeks CFP® certification is subject to a background check, and those whose past conduct falls short of CFP Board's ethical and practice standards can be barred from becoming certified. After attaining certification, a CFP® professional who violates CFP Board's ethical and practice standards becomes subject to disciplinary action, which could include the permanent revocation of certification. Through diligent enforcement of its ethical and practice standards, CFP Board provides you with the confidence that your CFP® professional is both competent and ethical.