



Certification, Certificates, And Accreditation

Not all credentialing is created equal. When you hear someone talking about being certified in a specific field or by a specific association, what does it really mean? Terms that belong to the same category, such as certificates and accreditation, can also be confusing to understand, even by those who went through the process. Let's go through each term to understand them better.

Certificate

Many think of the word certificate to mean something very basic, like a certificate of attendance given after a presentation. But certificates come in different forms. What they all have in common is that they belong to the person who has earned it. They cannot be revoked, and do not have to be renewed. Certificates are typically awarded at the end of a workshop or study program and demonstrate mastery of knowledge in a particular area. If you have an academic degree, a diploma, this is also a type of a certificate. A specific kind of certificate is issued in higher education. These certificates, such as post-master certificates, indicate in-depth study of a subject, includes assessment, and rarely takes less than six months to complete.

Certification

What many people don't know is that there are different kinds of certifications. The highest level of certification, and how certifications are meant to function, is independent certification. This means that the organization that issues your certification, typically a board, is independent from the place you received training and there is no membership involved. This is to ensure that your knowledge, skills, and abilities are independently assessed. It is not associated with any educational course, book, or individual. The certification organization does not have a financial interest in where you got your training. An independent certification typically involves an exam of some sort and can be profession-wide. There are also other kinds of certifications that do not meet the

requirements of being independent. These certifications are sometimes referred to as internal or product-specific. In these cases the association or organization that certifies individuals might also train them and might require that certified individuals are also members of the association. Internal or product-specific certifications tend to focus on a specific task, model, or product. A mechanic can be certified in servicing Ford engines, but won't be certified in servicing all car engines if the training was focused on one particular brand. What all certifications have in common is that they are only granted for a limited amount of time and must be renewed (or recertified) in order to be maintained. This renewal provides some assurance that the certification holder is keeping current in the profession. The certification might even be reworked for failure to meet recertification requirements or for a violation of its code of ethics.

Accreditation

An easier term to understand is accreditation. Simply put, people can't be accredited, but programs, buildings, institutions, and organizations can. Accreditation means that a third party has verified that certain requirements have been met by the entity that is accredited. An example of this is higher education institutions.

When you hear someone say they are certified, it can mean a number of different things. As an informed consumer it is important to understand the differences.

The CBEIP provides independent, profession-wide certification to those who work with horses in mental health or in learning services. Visit www.cbeip.org for more information.

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