

Professional Designations

Below is an explanation of professional designations used by Northwest Asset Management associates. Do not rely solely on a title or designation to determine whether a financial professional has the expertise that you need. The explanation below will help you understand what the designation means and what the financial professional did to obtain it.

CFP®: CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™

The CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™, CFP® and federally registered professional certification marks (collectively, the “CFP® marks”) granted by the United States by Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, Inc. (“CFP® Board”).

The CFP® certification is a voluntary certification; no federal or state law or regulation requires financial planners to hold a CFP® certification.

To attain the right to use the CFP® designation, an individual must satisfactorily fulfill the following requirements:

- Education – Complete an advanced college-level course of study addressing the financial planning subject areas that CFP Board’s studies have determined as necessary for the competent and professional delivery of financial planning services, and as of January 2007, attain a Bachelor’s Degree from a regionally accredited United States college or university (or its equivalent from a foreign university). CFP Board’s financial planning subject areas include insurance planning and risk management, employee benefits planning, investment planning, income tax planning, retirement planning, and estate planning;
- Examination – Pass the comprehensive CFP® Certification Examination. The examination includes case studies and Client scenarios designed to test one’s ability to correctly diagnose financial planning issues and apply one’s knowledge of financial planning to real world circumstances;
- Experience – Complete at least three years of full-time financial planning-related experience (or the equivalent, measured as 2,000 hours per year); and
- Ethics – Agree to be bound by CFP Board’s *Standards of Professional Conduct*, a set of documents outlining the ethical and practice standards for CFP® professionals.

Individuals who become certified must complete ongoing education and ethics requirements in order to maintain the right to continue to use the CFP® marks. This requires 30 hours of continuing education hours every two years, including two hours on the *Code of Ethics* and other parts of the *Standards of Professional Conduct*, to maintain competence and keep up with developments in the financial planning field; and renewal of an agreement to be bound by the *Standards of Professional Conduct*. The Standards prominently require that CFP® professionals provide financial planning services at a fiduciary standard of care. This means CFP® professionals must provide financial planning services in the best interests of their Clients.

CFP® professionals who fail to comply with the above standards and requirements may be subject to CFP Board's enforcement process, which could result in suspension or permanent revocation of their CFP® certification.

CPA: CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT

CPAs are licensed and regulated by their state boards of accountancy. While state laws and regulations vary, the education, experience and testing requirements for licensure as a CPA generally include minimum college education (typically 150 credit hours with at least a baccalaureate degree and a concentration in accounting), minimum experience levels (most states require at least one year of experience providing services that involve the use of accounting, attest, compilation, management advisory, financial advisory, tax or consulting skills, all of which must be achieved under the supervision of or verification by a CPA), and successful passage of the Uniform CPA Examination.

In order to maintain a CPA license, states generally require the completion of 40 hours of continuing professional education (CPE) each year (or 80 hours over a two year period or 120 hours over a three year period). Additionally, all American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) members are required to follow a rigorous Code of Professional Conduct which requires that they act with integrity, objectivity, due care, competence, fully disclose any conflicts of interest (and obtain client consent if a conflict exists), maintain client confidentiality, disclose to the client any commission or referral fees, and serve the public interest when providing financial services. The vast majority of state boards of accountancy has adopted the AICPA's Code of Professional Conduct within their state accountancy laws or has created their own.

CFA: CHARTERED FINANCIAL ANALYST

The Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) charter is a globally respected, graduate-level investment credential established in 1962 and awarded by CFA Institute — the largest global association of investment professionals.

To earn the CFA charter, candidates must: 1) pass three sequential, six-hour examinations; 2) have at least four years of qualified professional investment experience; 3) join CFA Institute as members; and 4) commit to abide by, and annually reaffirm, their adherence to the CFA Institute Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct.

High Ethical Standards

The CFA Institute Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct, enforced through an active professional conduct program, require CFA charterholders to:

- Place their clients' interests ahead of their own
- Maintain independence and objectivity
- Act with integrity
- Maintain and improve their professional competence
- Disclose conflicts of interest and legal matters

Global Recognition

Passing the three CFA exams is a difficult feat that requires extensive study (successful candidates report spending an average of 300 hours of study per level). Earning the CFA charter demonstrates mastery of many of the advanced skills needed for investment analysis and decision making in today's quickly evolving global financial industry. As a result, employers and clients are increasingly seeking CFA charterholders—often making the charter a prerequisite for employment.

Additionally, regulatory bodies in over 30 countries and territories recognize the CFA charter as a proxy for meeting certain licensing requirements, and more than 125 colleges and universities around the world have incorporated a majority of the CFA Program curriculum into their own finance courses.

Comprehensive and Current Knowledge

The CFA Program curriculum provides a comprehensive framework of knowledge for investment decision making and is firmly grounded in the knowledge and skills used every day in the investment profession. The three levels of the CFA Program test a proficiency with a wide range of fundamental and advanced investment topics, including ethical and professional standards, fixed-income and equity analysis, alternative and derivative investments, economics, financial reporting standards, portfolio management, and wealth planning.

The CFA Program curriculum is updated every year by experts from around the world to ensure that candidates learn the most relevant and practical new tools, ideas, and investment and wealth management skills to reflect the dynamic and complex nature of the profession.

To learn more about the CFA charter, visit www.cfainstitute.org.

CRPC®: CHARTERED RETIREMENT PLANNING COUNSELOR

Individuals who hold the CRPC® designation have completed a course of study encompassing pre- and post-retirement needs, asset management, estate planning and the entire retirement planning process using models and techniques from real client situations. Additionally, individuals must pass an end-of-course examination that tests their ability to synthesize complex concepts and apply theoretical concepts to real-life situations.

All designees have agreed to adhere to Standards of Professional Conduct and are subject to a disciplinary process.

Designees renew their designation every two-years by completing 16 hours of continuing education, reaffirming adherence to the Standards of Professional Conduct and complying with self-disclosure requirements.

CIMA®: CERTIFIED INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT ANALYST

This designation focuses on asset allocation, ethics, due diligence, risk measurement, investment policy and performance measurement. Only individuals with at least three years of professional experience are eligible to try to obtain this certification, which signifies a high level of investment management expertise. The Investment Management Consultants Association offers the CIMA courses.

Individuals who hold CIMA designations are required to prove their expertise through continual recertification, which requires CIMA designees to complete at least 40 hours of continuing education every two years.

AIF®: ACCREDITED INVESTMENT FIDUCIARY®

The AIF Designation certifies that the recipient has specialized knowledge of fiduciary standards of care and their application to the investment management process. To receive the AIF Designation, the individual must meet prerequisite criteria based on a combination of education, relevant industry experience, and/or ongoing professional development, complete a training program, successfully pass a comprehensive, closed-book final examination under the supervision of a proctor and agree to abide by the Code of Ethics and Conduct Standards. To maintain the AIF Designation, the individual must annually attest to the Code of Ethics and Conduct Standards, and accrue and report a minimum of six hours of continuing education annually. The Designation is administered by the Center for Fiduciary Studies, the standards-setting body of fi360.

AIFA®: ACCREDITED INVESTMENT FIDUCIARY ANALYST

The AIFA® designation certifies that the recipient has advanced knowledge of fiduciary standards of care, their application to the investment management process, and procedures for assessing conformance by third parties to fiduciary standards. The certification is administered by the Center for Fiduciary Studies, LLC (CFS).

To be eligible to receive the AIFA® designation, individuals must have already completed the AIF training program, and passed the AIF exam. Additionally, the individual must have met a minimum prerequisite score based on the candidate's educational background, professional training and work experience. To receive the AIFA® designation, individuals must then complete a training program, successfully pass a comprehensive, closed-book final examination and agree to abide by the AIFA® Code of Ethics. In order to maintain the AIFA® designation, the individual must annually renew their affirmation of the AIFA® Code of Ethics and complete ten hours of continuing education credits.

RMA®: RETIREMENT MANAGEMENT ANALYST

The Retirement Income Industry Association (RIIA) may grant this designation. This designation is earned after completing an educational and ethics training curriculum that teaches financial advisors the RIIA Advisory Process to provide successful retirement income solutions to clients. The RMASM designation is focused specifically on key concepts and practical applications of retirement income planning and management, as well as the construction of portfolios to support retirement income. It does not cover the basics of retirement rules (IRAs, employer plans, etc.) or investments and other retirement income products and services because they are covered in many other traditional venues.

CMT: CHARTERED MARKET TECHNICIAN®

The Chartered Market Technician (CMT) Program is a certification process in which candidates are required to demonstrate proficiency in a broad range of technical analysis subjects. Administered by the Accreditation Committee of the Market Technicians Association (MTA), Inc., the Program consists of three levels. CMT Level 1 and CMT Level 2 are multiple choice exams while CMT Level 3 is in essay form. One must have been gainfully employed in a professional analytical or investment

management capacity for a minimum period of three (3) years and must be regularly engaged in this capacity at the time of successfully passing all three (3) levels of the CMT Exam.

The Market Technicians Association (MTA) is the home of the Chartered Market Technician® (CMT) Program. In January 2011, the MTA launched a voluntary Continuing Education (CE) Program.

CDFA®: CERTIFIED DIVORCE FINANCIAL ANALYST

The Certified Divorce Financial Analyst™ (CDFA™) is a self-study course that provides comprehensive training using a variety of knowledge and skill-building techniques. The course is comprised of four modules. Candidates study one module at a time, complete it, and then take an exam based on the material for that module at one of the 300 test sites across the country. After passing each exam, the candidate may begin working on the next module until all four have been completed.

After completing the case study exam, the candidate sends it to the Institute for Divorce Financial Analysts™ (IDFA™) for personalized grading and comments. Upon successful completion of the comprehensive case study exam, the candidate receives a certificate and designation as a Certified Divorce Financial Analyst™ (CDFA™). This course has been accepted by the CFP Board, The American College, the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA), and the Investment Management Consultant Association (IMCA) as CE Providers for 32 CE credits, 32 PACE credits, and 25 CPE credits.

In order to retain the CDFA™ designation, you are required to complete 20 Continuing Education (CE) credits every two years. A minimum of 10 must be divorce-related. The rest can be on financial planning or tax topics obtained through attending CE seminars offered by accredited financial associations and state/provincial insurance Continuing Education Units (CEUs).

CRPS®: CHARTERED RETIREMENT PLANS SPECIALIST

The CRPS is specifically targeted at professionals who design, install, and maintain retirement plans for the business community. Applicants must also disclose any criminal, civil, self-regulatory organization, or governmental agency inquiry, investigation, or proceeding relating to their professional or business conduct. Conferment of the designation is contingent upon the College for Financial Planning's review of matters either self-disclosed or which are discovered by the College that are required to be disclosed.

Successful students receive a certificate and are granted the right to use the designation on correspondence and business cards for a two-year period.

Every two years, CRPS professionals must complete 16 hours of continuing education and pay a nominal fee to continue using the designation.

QPFC: QUALIFIED PLAN FINANCIAL CONSULTANT

QPFC is the professional credential for financial professionals who sell, advise, market or support qualified retirement plans. The QPFC program provides an understanding of general retirement planning concepts, terminology, distinctive features of qualified plans and the role of retirement plan professionals. A candidate will be expected to demonstrate a general proficiency of plan administration, compliance, investment, fiduciary, and ethics issues.

Earning ASPPA's QPFC credential requires successful completion of the following examinations: Retirement Plan Fundamentals, Retirement Plan Fundamentals 2, Plan Financial Consulting, Plan Financial Consulting 2 and PFC Live Course Instruction.

All credentialed members must acquire 40 hours of Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credits (2 of these must be Ethics) in a two-year-cycle as well as renew your ASPPA Membership annually to retain credentials.