

Elder Care Specialist® (ECS)

(Class Topics for Level I, II and III)

This credential recognizes professionals who have a thorough knowledge of: preparing their clients for retirement; the essentials of estate and trust planning; and financial planning for the elderly.

Proclaim to the world you're qualified to service clients in this fastest growing marketing niche -- elder care. This credential recognizes professionals who have a thorough knowledge of: preparing their clients for retirement; the essentials of estate and trust planning; and financial planning for the elderly and who have demonstrated their customer sensitivity and communication skills.

To become an ECS you must first qualify for the test by earning 36 CPEs from the elder care levels listed in the ECS blueprint listed below.

Then you will be allowed to take an open-book test on what you have learned. You must score 70% or better. You must complete the exam on each of the three levels. Finally, complete the ECS credential application and pay the application fee. (If you don't receive the credential, the fee is refunded.)

Elder Care Specialist Exam Blueprint

Level 1 - Required Topics Preparing For Retirement

Demographics & Opportunities For Retirement Planning

- The Baby Boomer generation
- Sources of retirement income
- Special income tax benefits for senior citizens
- The retirement and estate planning team
- Overview of planning opportunities

Social Security

- Overview of the Social Security system
- Retirement benefits
- Disability benefits
- Survivors' benefits
- Eligibility for Social Security benefits
- How Social Security benefits are computed
- Delayed retirement credits
- Penalties for earned income after retirement
- Rules for divorced and widowed spouses
- Death of a beneficiary
- Special situations and case studies

Medicare

- Overview of Medicare, benefits & history
- Medicare Part A, hospital insurance
- Medicare Part B, medical insurance
- Medicare Part D, prescription drug coverage
- Eligibility for Medicare
- Medicare enrollment
- Medicare choices & options' planning opportunities

Medicaid

- Overview of the Medicaid program
- Medicaid coverage
- Eligibility for Medicaid
- Exempt assets
- Non-exempt assets
- Income limits
- Protections for the non-institutionalized spouse
- Qualifying for Medicaid benefits
- Income cap states
- Spend-down states
- Medicaid estate recovery
- Medicaid planning opportunities
- Gifts
- Trusts
- Gifts versus transfers to a trust

Veteran's Benefits

- Eligibility for benefits
- Benefits available

Health Care & Long-Term Care Options

- Medigap insurance
- Comparison of Medigap standard plans
- Health Savings Accounts (HSAs)
- Long-term care insurance
- Accelerated death benefits from life insurance policies
- Home health care
- Other options and case studies

Strategic Planning And Self-Employment Taxes

- Tools for reducing self-employment taxes
- Tools for increasing self-employment taxes to maintain eligibility for benefits
- Optional methods of computing SE taxes

Strategic Planning And Business Entities

Planning opportunities with S corporations

Planning opportunities with LLCs

Designing The Retirement Plan

Goals, objectives, and assumptions

Estimating annual income needed in retirement

Identifying sources and projecting annual retirement income

Planning opportunities when projected retirement income is insufficient for needs

Need for reviewing and updating retirement plans

Mistakes To Avoid

Choosing the wrong options when leaving a company

Choosing the wrong beneficiary designation

Choosing the wrong distribution option for a retirement plan

Failing to take the minimum required distribution from an IRA

Outliving the money

Retirement Plans

Funding your retirement plans

Types of plans available

Calculating the maximum contribution

Opportunities for planning when close to retirement age

Premature distributions

Lump-sum distributions

Periodic payments

Rollovers

Minimum required distribution rules

Calculating the required distribution

Required beginning date

Beneficiary designations

Personal Residence Planning Opportunities

The home sale exclusion

Planning for the vacation home

Sale of a mixed-use residence

Reverse mortgages

Decedent's Final Tax Return

Responsibility for the final return

Filing status and exemptions for the final return

Income on the final return

Deductions on the final return
Dealing with incorrect information returns for the year of death
Income and deductions in respect of a decedent

Level 2 - Required Topics Estates & Trusts

Basics Of Estates, Trusts, And Fiduciary Accounting:

Governing Instruments - Wills, Trusts, State Law
Duties of the Personal Representative
Overview of the probate process
Types of Trusts - purpose and tax treatment
Allocation of accounting income & expenses to beneficiaries or to the estate or trust

Income Taxation Of Estates & Trusts

Tax filing requirements of estates & trusts
Reportable income of estates & trusts
Allocation of income between decedent and estate
Treatment of capital gains & losses
Rules for holding period and basis of assets
Deductions of estates & trusts
Allocations of deductions to classes of income
Charitable contributions for estates & trusts
Alternative minimum tax, Form 1041
Estimated taxes; allocating estimated taxes to beneficiaries
Distributable net income and income distribution deduction
Allocations of net income to beneficiaries
Tax return elections of estates & trusts
Preparation of Form 1041
Income in respect of a decedent

Federal Gift Tax

Overview of law
Gift-splitting by married persons
Gifts for educational and medical expenses
Gifts to minors
Preparation of gift tax returns

Federal Estate Tax Returns

Unified transfer tax concepts
Filing requirements
Property includible in the estate
Valuation of the estate
Transfers during decedent's life

Deductions from the gross estate
Generation skipping transfer tax
Unified credit and the state death tax credit
Elections available on the estate tax return
Fiduciary relationship
Preparation of Form 706

Level 3 - Required Topics Ethics & Professionalism

Serving Aging Clients

Determining who is the client
Dealing with client family members
Dealing with clients with diminished capacity
Protecting the client with diminished capacity
Potential conflicts of interest
Confidentiality issues
Limiting your exposure to professional liability
Engagement letters
Case studies in ethics & professional practices

Case Studies In Basic Estate Planning

Gathering information & interviewing the client Utilizing the marital deduction
Utilizing the gift tax annual exclusion
Gift tax exclusion for education and medical payments
Gift-splitting
Transfers made within three years of death
Income in respect of a decedent
Powers of appointment
Community property
The charitable deduction
Situations involving divorce and re-marriage

Tools Of Estate Planning

The will The unified credit shelter by-pass trust
The marital deduction QTIP trust
Living trusts
Gift giving and the Crummey power
Life insurance planning strategies
Disclaimers
Valuation discounts
Utilizing business entities in estate planning
Installment sales and self-canceling installment notes
Sale to intentionally defective grantor trust
Private annuities

Grantor retained interest trusts — GRITs, GRATs, & GRUTS
Qualified personal residence trust
Buy-sell agreements
Special use valuations
Special needs trusts
Dynasty trusts
Health care directives

Retirement Distribution Planning

Roth IRA conversions
Charitable donations of IRA
Avoiding penalties for early withdrawal upon early retirement
Withdrawal options for the surviving spouse
QTIP and QDOT trusts as plan beneficiaries
Withdrawal options for non-spouse beneficiaries
Trusts as plan beneficiaries
Contingent beneficiaries