



Maryland State Benefits Counseling Certification Requirements 2014

To *secure* State Benefits Counseling Certification from the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD), a candidate must complete each of the following requirements:

1. Provisional certification as a Community Work Incentives Coordinator (CWIC). This training, provided by the Social Security Administration's designated contractor, entails five days of classroom training followed by a series of assessments lasting approximately eight weeks. Participants must score at least 80% on each assessment, and may re-take an assessment once if the initial score is less than 80%, OR
2. Certification in Benefits and Work Incentives Planning and Assistance through Cornell University's on-line program, AND
3. Successful completion of additional training and assessment provided by the MDOD. Training includes a three-day classroom session on state-specific and other benefits and a two-day classroom training on residential program fees, group health insurance and asset development. Each of the two training sessions includes an assessment to be completed within one week after the training. Participants must score at least 80% on each assessment, and may re-take an assessment once if the initial score is less than 80%, AND
4. Successful review by MDOD of at least three benefits analyses and Bottom Line Comparisons for real beneficiaries. The analyses must demonstrate adequate understanding and application of work incentives and an ability to explain work incentives clearly. If the analyses and Bottom Line Comparisons a candidate submits are not deemed adequate, the candidate may continue to submit others (and receive technical assistance from MDOD) until at least three are deemed adequate, AND
5. Provide benefits counseling for at least 20 hours per week.

To *maintain* State Benefits Counseling Certification from MDOD, a certified benefits counselor must:

1. Participate in at least half of continuing training sessions offered by MDOD. These include 1-1/2-to-2-hour-long training conference calls offered monthly and occasional classroom training sessions scheduled for topics requiring more intensive training. On a case-by-case basis, advance approval may be given to participate in one or more relevant trainings provided by other agencies to partially satisfy the continuing training requirement; AND
2. Complete successful review by MDOD of at least two benefits analyses and Bottom Line Comparisons for real beneficiaries per year (see 3. above), AND
3. Provide benefits counseling for at least 20 hours per week.

MDOD will provide technical assistance on request to candidates for and recipients of State Benefits Counseling Certification.