

What Are Your Tax Preparers Credentials and Qualifications?

Any “tax professional” with an IRS Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN) is authorized to prepare federal tax returns. However, tax professionals have different levels of skills, education and expertise. It is important to investigate and ask, “What are your credentials and qualifications?”

An important difference in the types of professionals is “representation rights.” This means representation before the IRS for different reasons, such as audits, payment/collection issues, and appeals. Here is guidance on each credential and qualification:

Enrolled Agents – Licensed by the IRS. Enrolled agents are subject to a suitability check and must pass a three-part comprehensive exam that requires them to demonstrate proficiency in federal tax planning, individual and business tax return preparation, and representation. They must complete 72 hours of continuing education every 3 years.

Certified Public Accountants – Licensed, CPA’s have passed the Uniform CPA Examination. They have completed a study in accounting at a college or university and met experience and good character requirements established by their respective boards of accountancy. In addition, CPAs must comply with ethical requirements and complete specified levels of continuing education in order to maintain an active CPA license.

Attorneys – Licensed, such as the State Bar, they have generally earned a degree in law and passed a bar exam.

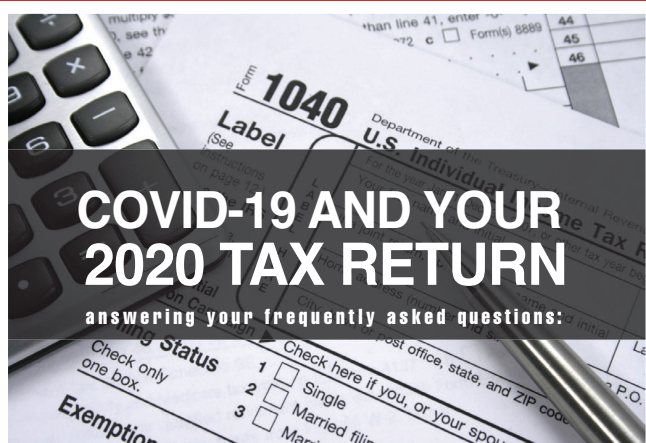
Attorneys generally have on-going continuing education and professional character standards. Some specialize in tax related matters.

Limited Representation Rights:

Some preparers without one of the above credentials have limited practice rights. They may only represent clients whose returns they prepared and signed, but only before revenue agents, customer service representatives, and similar IRS employees, including the Taxpayer Advocate Service. **They cannot** represent clients whose returns they did not prepare, or regarding appeals or collection issues even if they did prepare

the return in question. **Reminder:** Everyone described above must have an IRS issued preparer tax identification number (PTIN) in order to legally prepare your tax return for compensation. Make certain your preparer has one and enters it on your return filed with the IRS. Choose any tax return preparer wisely.

Always inquire about their education and training. Gary E. Rowe is a Certified Public Accountant offering expertise in all areas of tax preparation and Small Business Payroll services. **For more information contact M. R. Gaebel at 315-493-1862.**



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