

Hot Topics for Tennessee cities and towns

March 11, 1996
#19

Legislature Rules College Degree Counts Toward Certification Process of City Clerks and Recorders

In 1994, Chapter 648 of the Public Acts added a new law requiring municipal clerks and recorders to become certified by completing 100 hours of education. The secretary of state and the Tennessee Association of Municipal Clerks and Recorders (TAMCAR), the state affiliate of the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC), have been working to establish regulations and requirements. The rules are expected to be adopted by May 1, 1996.

Of particular concern was whether or not a college degree would count toward the certification process. New legislation that recently passed through the Tennessee General Assembly assures that a college degree would help satisfy the required education hours.

Tennessee Code Annotated, section 6-54-120, states: the required education hours may include a credit of 25 hours for an Associate of Arts or Science degree and a credit of 50 hours for a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree, provided that such credit is given for only one degree. In addition, completion of any course approved for continuing education credit may be applied to satisfy the required education hours.

The following briefly outlines the requirements:

Who's included: All city recorders and clerks, city managers who are also recorders, and employees who perform city recorder or clerk duties even though that may not be their title. Examples of such duties cited in the statute include taking minutes at board meetings, keeping the city's public records, and providing and certifying copies of official records. Each municipality must have at least one certified person, and more than one can be certified from the same city or town.

Who's exempted: Lawyers with active law licenses who perform clerk or recorder duties and municipalities with 1,500 or fewer residents. Those smaller cities can pass an ordinance requiring certification of the clerk or recorder. A sample ordinance is available from The University of Tennessee's Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS).

Deadline: Each city with more than 1,500 residents must have one person certified by 1998.



How to become certified: The following methods for earning certification are recommended by TAMCAR:

- ▶ ***Attending the Municipal Clerks' Institute in Murfreesboro.*** You'll need to attend six sessions that last 2 1/2 days each and count for 17.5 credit hours for each session. This will take at least three years because institutes are only offered each spring and fall. The next session is in April. Each institute costs about \$115, and scholarships are available to TAMCAR members whose cities are unable to help them financially. You don't have to attend the sessions back-to-back, just as long as you complete six of them in four years. To register contact Karen Howell at (615) 898-2462.
- ▶ ***Receiving UT Municipal Training (UTMT) municipal specialist or generalist certificates.*** Municipal generalists and municipal specialists in financial, personnel, or municipal management will be certified by the state after they complete 10 hours of additional training. Earning a generalist or specialist certificate will give you 90 credit hours. Most courses are one-day, count for six hours credit, and are free. You can earn the 10 additional hours by completing the UTMT Leadership Forum, a two-day leadership development program. A modest fee may be charged for meals. The generalist and specialist courses are offered by UT's Center for Government Training (CGT) in conjunction with MTAS and the Tennessee Municipal League. Three UTMT courses are offered monthly across the state. For more information, call CGT at 327-2656.
- ▶ ***Combination of the above.*** Certification can be obtained through a combination of training and a college degree, as long as the credit hours total 100. For example:

Bachelor's of Arts degree		50 hours
Municipal Clerks' Institute	(three sessions)	<u>52 hours</u>
	total	102
Associate Arts degree		25 hours
Municipal Clerks' Institute	(three sessions)	52 hours
UTMT	(four sessions)	<u>24 hours</u>
	total	101

- ▶ ***Receiving the IIMC Certified Municipal Clerk certification.*** Completing the Municipal Clerks' Institute also goes toward earning the IIMC Certified Municipal Clerk certification. However, the IIMC designation isn't necessary to obtain the new state certification. Anything you've done that meets the IIMC certification requirements also meets the state requirements. If you have the IIMC certification, you don't need to be certified by the state. TAMCAR will send a list of those who have earned the IIMC designation to the secretary of state.

The recent amendment to Tennessee Code Annotated, section 6-54-120, does not effect the IIMC certification process or the UTMT municipal generalist and specialist certificates.

- ▶ ***Using self-taught computer courses.*** These courses need to be approved beforehand by the secretary of state.
- ▶ ***Completing any relevant classes or training before March 21, 1994.*** Related courses taken before the law passed count toward certification.

Recertification: After you've earned your certification, you have to complete 18 hours of continuing education courses every three years to keep it. The three-year recertification period begins immediately after you've been certified. The courses can be educational sessions at annual TAMCAR meetings and other conferences (you have to go to the designated educational sessions — just showing up at a conference doesn't count); CGT classes (these are usually six hours each so you'd only need to attend one a year); UTMT courses; Certified Municipal Clerks' Institutes; IIMC Academy for Advanced Education sponsored by Middle Tennessee State University through TAMCAR; and outside courses if you can prove they're related to your job, like a computer or accounting course taken at a local community college. Participating in professional organizations also goes toward recertification.

If you have questions, call Sally Oglesby, chairperson of the TAMCAR education certification committee, at (423) 484-7060, or contact any of the MTAS offices throughout the state.

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MTAS Mission Statement

The Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) was created in 1949 by the state legislature to enhance the quality of government in Tennessee municipalities. An agency of The University of Tennessee's Institute for Public Service, MTAS works in cooperation with the Tennessee Municipal League and affiliated organizations to assist municipal officials.

By sharing information, responding to client requests, and anticipating the ever-changing municipal government environment, MTAS promotes better local government and helps cities develop and sustain effective management and leadership.

MTAS offers assistance in areas such as accounting and finance, administration and personnel, fire, public works, law, ordinance codification, communications, and wastewater management. MTAS houses a comprehensive library and publishes scores of documents annually.

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