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## Hot Topic: City Clerks and Recorders Certification Regulations Summarized

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# Hot Topics for Tennessee cities and towns

Oct. 17, 1994 #8

## City Clerks and Recorders Certification Regulations Summarized

Chapter 648 of the Public Acts of 1994 adds a new law requiring municipal clerks and recorders to become certified by completing 100 hours of education. Requirements are currently being established by 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). The final rules and regulations governing state certification will be issued in January and sent to all clerks and recorders in Tennessee. Following is a brief look at where things stand.

**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:** If you are presently a city clerk or recorder, you have between March 21, 1994, and March 20, 1998, to be certified. If you were hired after March 21, 1994, you'll have four years from the day you were hired. (Because certification can take several years, cities with clerks or recorders who are near retirement should consider sending someone else to training.)

**How to become certified:** The following methods for earning certification were recently recommended to the secretary of state by TAMCAR. These are under consideration and have not yet been approved:

- ▶ **Attending the Municipal Clerks' Institute in Murfreesboro.** You'll need to attend six sessions that last 2 1/2 days each. 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. Register early for these — the new law caused attendance to triple at the last one. 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.
- ▶ **Receiving the IIMC Certified Municipal Clerk certification.** 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.

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- ▶ ***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, and the courses are free. You can earn the 10 additional hours required for state certification by completing the UTMT Leadership Forum, a two-day leadership development program. A modest fee may be charged for meals at the forum. 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.
- ▶ ***Using self-taught computer courses.*** These courses need to be approved beforehand by the secretary of state. Details are presently being worked out, and more information will be available in January.
- ▶ ***Earning a college degree.*** Clerks and recorders with bachelor's degrees in related fields such as public administration, business administration, or political science don't have to be certified. A bachelor's in an unrelated field or an associate's in a related field go toward certification but they don't fully meet the requirements. More on this will be issued in January.
- ▶ ***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.

**Caution:** Remember, this is just an update. The final rules and regulations giving you detailed instructions will be sent your way the first of the year. If you have questions, call Sally Oglesby, chairperson of the TAMCAR education certification committee, at (615) 484-7060.

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