

The Supreme Court of Ohio

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy and Justices
Robert W. Horner, III, Administrative Director

CC: Gina White Palmer, Deputy Administrative Director, Legal Services

FROM: Britney Cider, Bar Admissions Counsel

DATE: January 27, 2026

RE: 2025 Annual Report of Commission on Certification of Attorneys as Specialists

I. Overview

A. Commission

The Commission on Certification of Attorneys as Specialists (“CCAS” or “Commission”) was created by the Court to administer Gov. Bar R. XIV in the regulation of attorney certification programs for specialization in Ohio. The Commission does not itself certify attorneys as specialists. Individual attorneys must work with an organization to become certified.

With the rule change that went into effect April 2024, the Commission’s main responsibilities are to review accreditation and reaccreditation applications submitted by organizations seeking to administer, or to continue administering, specialization programs, and to review annual reports submitted by the organizations.

At the beginning of 2025, there were three organizations that were accredited to administer certified specialization programs in Ohio. At present, there are two organizations remaining.

B. Chairperson

Commission members elected David Blessing to serve as the CCAS chairperson in 2025. He is serving his third, and final, term on the Commission. Mr. Blessing is a partner at Blessing & Wallace Law, LLC, in Cincinnati.

C. Vice-Chairperson

Commission members elected Professor Christopher Peters to serve as the CCAS vice-chairperson in 2025. He is completing his second term on the Commission. Professor Peters is a professor of law at the University of Akron School of Law.

D. Staff

Britney Cider, Attorney Services Counsel, has served as Secretary to the Commission since late 2022. The Secretary is responsible for maintaining records, facilitating meetings and keeping minutes, gathering and conducting initial review of application materials, and maintaining communication between the Commission and its accredited organizations. The Commission has also delegated authority to the Secretary to determine the annual reporting schedule for the accredited organizations. Jennifer Smith, Bar Admissions Specialist, assisted with the Commission's work.

II. Commission's 2025 Activities & Accomplishments

A. Meetings

The Commission convened for regular business two times during the year, on April 11 and October 10. There were also subcommittee meetings held between April and October. All meetings were conducted virtually.

At its April meeting, Commissioners elected the Chair and Vice Chair. Commissioners were assigned to subcommittees and tasked with creating new forms and determining the new process for reviewing applications and reports.

In October, the Commission approved the annual reporting procedure and set the 2026 meeting schedule.

B. 2025 Finances and Statistics

In 2025, CCAS collected a total of \$1,175 from the annual per-attorney fees paid by the accredited organizations. No additional fees were collected.

At the beginning of the year, there were three accredited organizations; in October, the National Board of Trial Advocacy determined it would not pursue reaccreditation going forward, leaving the American Board of Certification ("ABC") and the National Elder Law Foundation ("NELF") as the two remaining accredited organizations. These two organizations currently offer certification programs in the following areas: ABC: Business Bankruptcy Law, Consumer Rights Bankruptcy Law, Creditor's Rights Law; NELF: Elder Law. Collectively, ABC and NELF have a total of 47 attorneys that were certified as specialists in Ohio in 2025.

III. 2026 Outlook

Since the most recent rule amendments took effect in April 2024, three accredited organizations have withdrawn from the purview of CCAS. Two of those organizations accounted for the vast majority of the Commission's work. As a result, the Commission has considerably less work than years prior.

The commissioners will discuss possible opportunities to educate the public on attorney specialization. Additionally, they will be discussing other ways to utilize the Commission's time due to the reduction in workload.

The Commission will have its first meeting of the year on April 10, 2026.