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California Council for Interior Design Certification
Public Protection Through Examination and Certification

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CERTIFIED INTERIOR DESIGNERS



Hiring a Certified Interior Designer ensures that you'll be working with an experienced and competent design professional.

If you've never worked with an interior designer before, the process can be overwhelming. This brochure is designed to help you make informed decisions about hiring the best interior designer for your residential, retail, office or other commercial project.

Once you've decided to hire an interior designer, choosing one is of paramount importance. Many people call themselves interior designers, but if you are a consumer with a complex project, be sure you hire someone who is truly qualified to execute the task at hand. This should be someone who is trained to guide you through dozens, sometimes hundreds of decisions, challenges, and opportunities all to a successful result.

CCIDC, the California Council for Interior Design Certification, (a public/private partnership) was established in 1992 to act as a protection resource to help you, the consumer, know when an interior designer is qualified. We are a council of qualified and experienced interior design professionals providing service and information to the public about ethical and professional standards for the industry.

1) **WHAT IS A CERTIFIED INTERIOR DESIGNER?** (B&P Code Section 5800,5538)

As opposed to a non certified interior designer, a Certified Interior Designer is a competent design professional who is qualified to design, prepare, and submit any type of nonstructural, non seismic interior construction plans and specifications to local building departments. Certified Interior Designers have demonstrated through education, experience and examination their knowledge of the Uniform Building Code as it relates to space planning, life safety, flammability and disabled access code issues.

2) **WHAT ARE THE MEANINGS OF THE TERMS "NONSTRUCTURAL" AND "NON SEISMIC"?**

"Nonstructural" means interior elements that are nonload bearing. It excludes the structural grid system supporting a building. *"Non seismic"* means interior elements that do not assist in the seismic bracing of a buildings structural system.

Common nonstructural items include ceiling and partition systems. These components employ normal and typical bracing conventions and do not assist in the structural integrity of a building.

3) **WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF A CERTIFIED INTERIOR DESIGNER, AND WHO MAY REFER TO THEMSELVES AS A CERTIFIED INTERIOR DESIGNER?** (B&P Code Section 58015801.1)

A Certified Interior Designer must have graduated from:

- a. A four or five year accredited interior design program and have a minimum of two years experience, or;
- b. A three year accredited interior design program and have a minimum of three years experience, or;
- c. Have a combination of interior design education and experience for a minimum total of eight years.

They must pass the complete National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) examination **or** the Council for Qualification of Residential Interior Designers (CQRID) examination **or** both parts of the National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA) examination **and** the California Codes and Regulations Exam (CCRE), with enrollment in relevant continuing education classes for re-certification. In addition, the certified interior design professional has pledged to uphold strict standards, including the CCIDC [Code of Ethics](#), further ensuring quality design services to you, the consumer.

Only persons who have met these education, experience, and examination requirements, and have been certified by the California Council for Interior Design Certification (CCIDC) may refer to themselves as a Certified Interior Designer.

4) **HOW DO I KNOW THAT THE INTERIOR DESIGNER I AM HIRING IS CERTIFIED?**

You can call CCIDC to verify whether the interior designer you are hiring is indeed certified and in good standing.

5) **HOW WILL THE CERTIFIED INTERIOR DESIGNER BE IDENTIFIED?** (B&P Code Section 5802)

Each Certified Interior Designer should affix a stamp and a wet signature to all

drawings, specifications or documents prepared for submission. All documents shall be presented as interior design documents, not as architectural or engineering documents.

6) **THIS IS WHAT THE CCIDC STAMP LOOKS LIKE:**



7) **ARE CERTIFIED INTERIOR DESIGNERS STATE CERTIFIED?** (B&P Code Section 5800 (b))

No. The California Council for Interior Design Certification (CCIDC) is a private nonprofit corporation and is responsible for certifying interior designers. The certification process in California is a public/private partnership, as directed by the Business and Professions Code, Section 5800.

Anyone may use the term Interior designer. However, their qualifications for professional practice are unknown. If they are not a Certified Interior Designer, they may not have the knowledge and ability to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

8) **MAY A CERTIFIED INTERIOR DESIGNER ACT AS A GENERAL CONTRACTOR AND HIRE SUBCONTRACTORS FOR PROJECTS?** (B&P Code Section 5803)

No. The Certified Interior Designer would have to hold a valid contractors license in order to hire subcontractors and/or perform contracting work. Certified Interior Designers prepare designs for work to be performed by licensed contractors.

9) **MAY CERTIFIED INTERIOR DESIGNERS DESIGN HANDICAP ACCESS SYSTEMS?**

Yes. Certified Interior Designers are required to pass a building and barrier free codes exam to demonstrate proficiency in handicap access and other code requirements.

They are recognized by Section 5800(a) to have ..."demonstrated by means of education, experience, and examination the competency to protect and enhance the health, safety, and welfare of the public."

10) **MAY CERTIFIED INTERIOR DESIGNER PLANS INCLUDE MECHANICAL OR ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING DRAWINGS?**

Yes. if the mechanical and electrical elements have been prepared and stamped

by a licensed mechanical or electrical engineer or architect.

11) **HOW CAN I FIND A CERTIFIED INTERIOR DESIGNER FOR MY PROJECT?**

The Certified Interior Designer has the education, training, and experience to guide you through the entire design process from helping define the initial project goals, to meeting cost and time budgets. A certified professional can actually save you considerable time and expense by knowing how to get the most out of your design budget, and by avoiding costly mistakes. Fees for certified interior designers are very competitive in the marketplace.

For a list of certified interior design professionals in your area, or for more detailed information on certification, [E-mail us at ccidc@ccidc.org](mailto:ccidc@ccidc.org)

12) **WHAT ARE THE PROPER FEE STANDARDS AND BILLING ARRANGEMENTS FOR A PROJECT?**

There is no single set of industry fee standards for interior design, so during the interview process, you'll want to make sure you ask the designer questions (sample questions follow):

- Billing method: How will the designer charge for professional services? Is it a fixed fee, or one based on square footage? Is it an hourly rate? If hourly rates apply, then what is the hourly billing rate, and what is the estimated number of hours for your job? If applicable, also be sure to ask about billing rates for travel time, and any other reimbursable expenses. Ask for a signed contract.
- Be aware that some interior designers, certified or not, may purchase goods, and may include with their professional fees a markup on items (such as furnishings, window and wall treatments, floor coverings, hardware, etc.) purchased on your behalf. As work progresses, you are entitled to an itemized list of these goods, including the total price. Also, in this case, a Certified Interior Designer is required by the CCIDC Code of Ethics to disclose to the client the billing method used.

Some interior designers provide professional design services only, and are not involved in the actual purchase of items for a project. In this case, the designer would charge only for design services and other reimbursable expenses, but should help you locate and coordinate suppliers or other resources for obtaining the necessary merchandise for your project.

While determining which billing method the interior designer uses, establish a budget together. Ask to see a copy of the designers project contract, and verify your payment responsibilities as listed in the contract. Before signing, make sure you understand it. If you have questions, ask!

Terms: What will be the payment schedule for the project? If the proposed schedule doesn't meet your needs, negotiate a reasonable compromise.

13) **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF PROBLEMS OCCUR WITH THE CERTIFIED INTERIOR**

DESIGNER I HIRED?

Following these procedures will greatly reduce the chance for any misunderstanding. However, should any problems arise, you should openly and candidly discuss the problem with your designer. If you are still having difficulty solving the problem, contact us at CCIDC. We can often suggest solutions, or act as a resource until the problem has been solved satisfactorily. If necessary, we can determine whether the designer in question has violated the CCIDC Code of Ethics or our Rules and Regulations. The CCIDC has the duty and authority to investigate alleged violations by its Certified Interior Designers, and, in extreme cases, to even revoke their certification if warranted.
