



1605 Grand Avenue, Suite 4  
San Marcos, CA 92078  
Phone: 760-761-4734 / Fax: 760-761-4736  
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**Celebrating 20 Years**

California Council for Interior Design Certification  
The standard for interior designers in the State of California  
"Public Protection Through Examination and Certification"

#### Introduction

[The practice of a Certified Interior Designer](#)

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#### Consumer's Guide to

## Hiring a Certified Interior Designer

#### INTRODUCTION

Are you thinking about hiring an interior designer? Individuals and businesses in California who want to create or remodel a safe and comfortable environment for their home or place of work usually hire Certified Interior Designers for space planning, interior design, selection of furnishings, custom cabinetwork design, finish selection, observation of the construction and supervision of the installation for their projects.



The California Council for Interior Design Certification (CCIDC) certifies more than 3,500 interior designers in California to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public by ensuring the professional performance of those designers they certify.

Because of the detailed and specialized nature of interior design work, questions about services or misunderstandings may arise between the consumer and the designer about plans, specifications, schedules, budgets, and the quality of the proposed services. The CCIDC "Consumer's Guide to Hiring a Certified Interior Designer" will help you understand Certified interior design

services and to prevent any problems from occurring by providing:

- [Why you should hire](#) a Certified Interior Designer.
- [How to find and select](#) a Certified Interior Designer
- What the [written agreement](#) between you and your Certified Interior Designer should contain
- Information on the [budgeting and construction](#) for your project.

Elsewhere on this site you can also read about:

- The Most [Common Mistakes](#) People Make When Hiring an Interior Designer and,
- [The Difference between a decorator and an interior designer](#)

If you have a problem with your Certified Interior Designer, even after following the information in this guide, instructions and a form for filing a complaint are included. By carefully planning and thoroughly discussing your project beforehand with your Certified Interior Designer, you will hopefully avoid having to take this step.

We hope this guide will help you understand what a Certified Interior Designer is and how he/she can help you create an environment that is healthy, safe and attractive.



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## Certified Interior Design Practice

In California, a Certified Interior Designer is a person who engages in programming, planning, designing, and construction documentation services for the interior improvement, alteration, construction or installation of non-structural, (or non-seismic), elements within a building. They also design cabinetwork and fixtures; and specify finishes for floors, walls and ceilings; and select furnishings and lighting systems.

Certified Interior Designers may also submit their plans to local building departments for a permit if their plans and your project require a licensed contractor to implement them

### Qualifications and Examination for Certification

To become Certified, an interior designer must have a minimum of six years combined accredited interior design education and experience (or) a minimum of 8 years combined interior design education and experience; plus the passage of required exams. Interior designers are examined for competence in California Codes and Regulations, design synthesis, schematics, programming, space planning, design development, working drawings construction documents, furniture and finish specifications, lighting layout and specifications, contract documents, contract administration, and business law and ethics

### Why should you hire a Certified interior designer?

The CCIDC recommends that you hire Certified Interior Designers for your interior improvement projects because they have met the education, experience and examination requirements established by the CCIDC Board under Section 5800 of the California Business and Professions Code. As there is no law in California at this time that requires interior designers to be licensed, or regulated by the state, most consumers are not aware that literally anyone can call themselves an "interior designer". The CCIDC recommends "caveat emptor" (buyers beware), you could be hiring someone unqualified to provide you with competent interior design services. To become Certified, interior designers must prove they are fully qualified to practice in any commercial or residential area of interior design.

CCIDC Certification provides assurance to you, the consumer, that your project and funds will be handled competently and with care by a qualified interior design professional.



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## Must I hire a Certified Interior Designer for my project?

Current California law does not require you to hire a Certified Interior Designer for your project. However, before you hire someone to design the interior of a new structure, or alter the interior of an existing structure, you should check the designer's credentials and references to ensure they are qualified and competent to perform such work.

You may also want to consult the local building official in your city, or county, building department to determine whether or not your project will also require a registered civil or structural engineer to prepare and submit plans and specifications for that portion of the project that may change or affect the structural system or safety of the building.

## What can I expect when I work with a Certified Interior Designer?

You can expect to work with a professional who will share their knowledge, experience, and "vision ability" in a creative and cost-efficient way. They'll provide you with a detailed contract so you know exactly what services you are getting. With project management systems in place, a Certified Interior Designer knows how to orchestrate your project from start to finish. They'll help meet your project goals whether for a favorite room, a two-story home or a large commercial space such as a restaurant, health club or a high-tech business complex.



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## 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.

Here are [The Most Common Mistakes People Make When Hiring an Interior Designer](#).

"Free" copies of this brochure are available for consumers, and CIDs. [Email us for your copies today.](#)

If you are an educator with a valid school address, you may be interested in "free copies" of [this brochure](#) for Students and non certified interior designers.

### 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 non-structural, 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 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 non-load 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 building's structural system.

Common non-structural 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 5801 5801.1)

A Certified Interior Designer must have completed:

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

Starting in 2009 they must pass the IDEX California examination specifically developed for certification based upon the California Building Code, Title 24, California laws and regulations. Prior to 2009 they were required to pass the California Codes and Regulations Examination (CCRE) and one of three national interior design examinations.

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.

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

Go online to [www.ccidc.org](http://www.ccidc.org) and look under "[Verify a CID's Status](#)", or you can call CCIDC to verify whether the interior designer is indeed certified and in good standing.

- 5) HAS YOUR DESIGNER SIGNED A CODE OF ETHICS AND CONDUCT?

Ask your designer if they have signed and agreed to abide by a Code of Ethics and Conduct. Ask them for a copy. All Certified Interior Designers are required to sign and abide by the [CCIDC Code of Ethics and Conduct](#).

- 6) 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.

- 7) THIS IS WHAT THE CCIDC STAMP LOOKS LIKE:



- 8) ARE CERTIFIED INTERIOR DESIGNERS STATE CERTIFIED? (B&P Code Section 5804 and Section 5538)

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.

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- 9) 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.

- 10) 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.”

- 11) 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.

- 12) 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, contact us at the phone number on the back of this guide, or visit our website at [www.ccidc.org](http://www.ccidc.org) .

13) 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.

14) 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.

For your convenience, we have posted an [interactive complaint form](#) on our website which you can E-mail or print out, fill in, and fax or mail to our office. You can obtain a copy of the [Code of Ethics](#) on our website, or we can send it to you.



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## Making Your Decision

You may call the CCIDC to verify the certification status of the Certified Interior Designer(s) you are considering to hire. Although a Certified Interior Designer may display a certificate indicating that he or she is certified by CCIDC, it may be invalid if the Certified Interior Designer has not renewed the certificate, has had his or her certification suspended or revoked. The CCIDC, upon written or telephone inquiry, will also inform you of any reportable [complaints or disciplinary actions](#) filed against the Certified Interior Designers you are considering hiring.

We also suggest that you check the references that each Certified Interior Designer has given you and ask the following questions:

- Did the Certified Interior Designer adhere to required schedules and budgets?
- Were you pleased with the Certified Interior Designer's services and your working relationship with them?
- Did the Certified Interior Designer listen to your concerns and attempt to resolve them?
- Would you hire the Certified Interior Designer again?
- What problems surfaced during the project?

If possible, visit the actual projects the Certified Interior Designers have used as examples of their services.



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## Design Fees and Project Funds

Before you sign the written agreement, it's a good idea to clearly establish the total amount of money (including contingency funds) you are willing to pay for the design and construction of your project, the number of payments you will make to your Certified Interior Designer, and the amounts and schedule for these payments. The fee schedule should be recorded accurately in the written agreement, and you should make each payment to the Certified Interior Designer as called for in the agreement.

If you have obtained a loan for your project, ensure that it covers both the cost of your Certified Interior Designer's services and the construction cost. Don't pay an excessive advance or retainer fee before services have commenced on your project. Don't make the final payment until the project is complete in accordance with your agreement and you are satisfied with the services your Certified Interior Designer has provided you. Also make sure you obtain all lien releases from all those who are engaged on your project, including your Certified Interior Designer and your contractor.

Careful planning and discussion with your Certified Interior Designer, as well as accurate record keeping, should prevent any fee disputes.



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## How to Find a Certified Interior Designer or Verify Their Status

The CCIDC maintains a referral service and can provide you with a list of Certified Interior Designers within your local area either by city or zip code. CCIDC cannot recommend any individual Certified Interior Designers. You will still have to conduct the interview process and make your own evaluation based upon their experience and expertise.

To find a Certified Interior Designer in your area we suggest you first look at "[The CID Pages](#)" which is a paid directory with designer's project photos and contact information. This directory is not a complete database of all Certified Interior Designers. Therefore, if you cannot find an interior designer in "The CID Pages" that suits your needs, please contact us to request a free list of CIDs in your immediate area.

To verify the status of a Certified Interior Designer to see if their Certification is current, [please click here](#). Check our [disciplinary action](#) page to see if there has been any action taken against a Certified Interior Designer.

Another way to find the right Certified Interior Designer for your project, is to:

- Ask for recommendations from someone you know who has worked with a Certified Interior Designer or
- Search on the Internet in your favorite search engine or
- Look in the yellow pages of the telephone directory under "interior designers" for individuals with the designation CID or Certified Interior Designer in the State of California or
- Look for interior design firms and/or professional interior design associations which may have employees or members that are Certified interior designers.

Some Certified Interior Designers specialize in designing certain types of interiors such as restaurants, hotels, offices, hospitals, single-family dwellings, apartments, condominiums, retail stores or institutional projects. "[The CID Pages](#)" allows you to search keywords to find a designers specialty.

You may find it to your advantage to contact and interview several Certified Interior Designers after searching "The CID Pages", or receiving a list from CCIDC, or referrals and recommendations from various other sources. You will need to determine which Certified Interior Designer will be able to provide you with the services you need at a cost you are willing to pay.



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## Evaluate Your Project

Before you hire a Certified Interior Designer, you should evaluate your project and provide this information to the Certified Interior Designers being considered. Your evaluation of your project should include, but not be limited to:

- The services you expect the Certified Interior Designer to perform;
- The size, appearance, and functional requirements of your project;
- What you intend to spend for design fees, if known;
- What materials and types of furnishings and lighting you wish to use;
- What you intend to spend for construction;
- How your project will be financed and, if known, by whom;
- Your anticipated starting and completion dates of your project; and
- How you intend to construct the project.

### Request for information

You should request information on qualifications and experience from several Certified Interior Designers. After reviewing their qualifications, you may want to interview a number of Certified Interior Designers to determine their understanding of your project and their compatibility in working with you.

During the selection process, you may want to ask some or all of the following:

### General questions

- Do you have valid status with the CCIDC?
- If so, what is your Certification number?
- Do you carry insurance? If so, what type(s)? How long have you carried each type and what are the policy limits?
- How long have you been in business?
- How many persons are employed by your firm?
- How have you kept current in your practice?
- Do you intend to use consultants for this project? If so, whom do you propose to use? What are their qualifications and your experience with them?
- What percentage of your practice involves the type of interiors I intend to build (or remodel)?

### Questions about experience

- Have you recently designed the type of interior I intend to build? If so, how many times?
- May I see examples of your previous projects that are similar to my project (sketches, photos, plans)?
- When and what was your most recent project?
- May I have the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the clients whose projects you are using for these examples?
- What was the actual interior design and construction cost versus budgeted cost for these projects?
- What services did you provide for these clients during the design, bidding, and construction phases?
- What services do you propose to provide for my project during each of these phases?
- Who will provide these services, you or your employees?

### Questions about fees

- What will the fee schedule be?

- How will your fees for my project be determined and what services do the fees cover?
- Will you provide probable construction cost estimates for my project?
- If consultants (such as architectural or structural engineering) are necessary, are their fees included in your basic fee?
- What additional costs (e.g., permit and other governmental fees) or services (e.g., time spent obtaining necessary permits and other approvals) do you anticipate for my project?
- How do you establish your fees for additional services and reimbursable expenses?
- Will there be a charge for redesign if it is necessary to meet the construction budget?
- Will there be additional charges for changes required by the building department or other government agency?
- How are additional charges computed for design changes requested by me?
- How will the fees be handled if the project is abandoned ((cancelled) before completion?

Questions about time frame of your project

- Can you meet my proposed schedule?



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## Your Design Services Agreement

As part of the [CCIDC Code of Ethics](#), before accepting an assignment, a Certified Interior Designer is required to inform the client of the scope and nature of the project involved, the interior design services to be performed, and the method of remuneration for those services. A Certified Interior Designer shall not materially change the scope of a project without the client's consent

A written agreement should be executed by the Certified Interior Designer and client prior to commencing services. Many Certified Interior Designers prepare their own agreements or have them prepared by an attorney. Whatever agreement is used for professional services, it is a legal document that binds you and the Certified Interior Designer to certain obligations for the life of the project and, in some cases, beyond project completion. It should include the specific services that you and your Certified Interior Designer have agreed upon and the conditions under which these services are to be rendered. Otherwise, issues could arise that may be both expensive and time-consuming to resolve.

Review the agreement carefully. It is yours and the Certified Interior Designer's responsibility to understand and follow the agreement. You have the right to question and change the terms of the agreement before signing it. Because it is a binding legal document, you may wish to have your legal counsel review the agreement before you sign it. You, as owner, should retain an original copy of the signed agreement. In addition, you should not make agreements with other parties regarding your project without first notifying the Certified Interior Designer with whom you have the primary agreement.

### Items for the written agreement

Your written agreement for Certified Interior Designer services should contain, as a minimum, these items:

1. A description of services to be provided by the Certified Interior Designer to the client.
2. A description of any basis of compensation applicable to the contract and method of payment agreed upon by both parties.
3. The name, address, and Certification number of the designer and the name and address of the client.
4. A description of the procedure that the Certified Interior Designer and the client will use to accommodate additional services.
5. A description of the procedure to be used by either party to terminate the contract.

### Additional recommended items in the written agreement

Beyond those items as shown above, the CCIDC recommends that an agreement for design services also include

- The title and address of the project;
- At what phases of the Certified Interior Designer's services the client's approval must be given before he or she proceeds to the next phase;
- The time frame in which the design services must be completed;
- The construction budget and what items it includes;
- An itemized listing of the Certified Interior Designer's basic services;
- The maximum fee for these basic services;
- A listing of the disciplines of consultants that may be needed (i.e., engineering, landscape, etc.), and a clarification of who hires the consultants and who approves and pays their fees;
- A list of the reimbursable costs that are not included in the basic fee;
- A list of what services constitute additional services and at what cost;
- A clarification of whose approval is required before these additional service costs are incurred;
- Whether assistance with establishing a contract between a contractor and owner will be provided;

- The date of anticipated start of construction;
- A provision for cost escalation or contingencies for delay of construction;
- A provision for cost escalation or contingencies for changes in the project scope during construction;
- A schedule of when and in what amounts payments are due; .
- Whether construction observation services are included;
- The amount of the retainer fee and how/when/ where it will be applied;
- How final payment is computed if the agreement is terminated;
- A procedure for handling disputes between the parties should the need arise (for example, arbitration or mediation);
- A clarification of who owns the project documents; and
- A clarification of who is responsible for keeping project account records and when they may be reviewed.

#### Keeping Records

The written agreement is not the only document you should keep. You should also keep a written record of all verbal communication with your Certified Interior Designer that relates to the project. Do not assume your Certified Interior Designer will interpret everything you discuss with him or her the same way you do. When you have a meeting or discussion with the Certified Interior Designer about your project, write the Certified Interior Designer a memo confirming your understanding of that meeting or discussion. These memos can help to prevent misunderstandings from occurring and may prove invaluable should a problem or dispute occur. Include the date and time of your conversation in the memo, as well as the date you write it. You may also want to write memos or notes to yourself about the progress of the project. Photographs or videotapes taken at regular intervals (with notes as to the dates that the photos are taken) can be very useful in establishing a historical record of the project.

Keep detailed financial records by ensuring the Certified Interior Designer provides detailed invoices. Also keep records of the date and amount of each payment you make. Require the Certified Interior Designer to obtain your written approval before additional costs are incurred. Carefully evaluate each phase of the project. Make sure your Certified Interior Designer knows your written approval is necessary before proceeding to the next project phase.

Make sure that you receive a copy of all documents you sign, and keep a copy of all documents you give to your Certified Interior Designer.



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## Construction and Installation

Unless you are experienced in construction and installation, you probably should not attempt to build-out your interior. The construction work should be performed by a properly licensed and experienced building contractor. Therefore, it is important for you to ensure that the construction documents (building plans and specifications) you receive from the Certified Interior Designer are complete enough for you to obtain bids from one or more contractors, and that the plans are complete enough for the contractor to build your project.

Do not assume that the plans your Certified Interior Designer gives you are sufficient for the building contractor to build from simply because you were able to obtain a permit for the work. Discuss the plans with your Certified Interior Designer and your contractor to ensure that they are suitable for bidding and construction purposes.

It is also important to note that unless your interior designer has a valid contractor's license they may not act as a general contractor or have any direct financial dealings between you, the consumer and the contractor. As owner of the project, you must hire a general contractor and conduct all business, including payments, directly with the general contractor. The CCIDC suggests you go through a similar process in hiring a general contractor as you do in hiring a Certified Interior Designer by Contacting the California Contractors State License Board by calling 1-800-321-CSLB or visit their Web site at [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov)



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## Problems with Your Project?

As a consumer you have a right to receive careful and professional service from the Certified Interior Designer you have hired. Even if you have read and followed this guide and have done everything possible to prevent problems, you may still feel that you have a complaint about your Certified Interior Designer. What should you do?

First, discuss the problem thoroughly and calmly with your Certified Interior Designer. If the Certified Interior Designer is violating your written agreement, review the agreement and other relevant documentation with the Certified Interior Designer to rectify the situation. If you and your designer are unable to settle the problem, your next step should be to call or write the CCIDC.

In addition, if the Certified Interior Designer has violated the [CCIDC's Code of Ethics](#), provided in this guide, you have a right to file a complaint against the designer.

CCIDC believes that consumer problems can be minimized by hiring a Certified Interior Designer yet there may be occasion where you have no alternative but to file a complaint. After we receive your written complaint, we will contact you and look into the matter on your behalf, to try to resolve the problem.

While CCIDC has no authority over uncertified interior designers, we may be able to direct you to other means of recourse, such as the Better Business Bureau or Small Claims Court.

What constitutes a complaint?

The CCIDC has the power, duty, and authority to investigate alleged violations of the provisions of [Business and Professions Code, Chapter 3.9, Section 5800 - 5810](#), CCIDC Rules and Regulations, and the CCIDC Code of Ethics. Certified Interior Designers guilty of violations can have their Certification suspended, be required to attend education classes, or have their Certification permanently revoked.

The CCIDC takes action against Certified Interior Designers for:

- Fraud in obtaining certification;
- Impersonation of or use of an assumed or corporate name; a Certified Interior Designer, or use of a Certified Interior Designer's stamp that does not belong to them;
- Using the Certified Interior Designer appellation or stamp when such has expired;
- Aiding unlawful practice;
- Signing others' plans not prepared under their direct supervision or permitting the misuse of their name; .
- Fraud in the practice of interior design;
- Negligence or misconduct;
- Failure to accurately represent qualifications;
- Conflict of interest; and
- Incompetence or recklessness.
- Any violation of the CCIDC Code of Ethics



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## How to File a Complaint

Fill out [the complaint form](#) provided in this guide (to be mailed or faxed to CCIDC) or file a complaint on our Web site at [www.ccidc.org/complaint\\_information.html](http://www.ccidc.org/complaint_information.html) Please supply evidence to support your complaint.

If you submit a letter, fully describe your complaint. Submit copies of all documentation that you believe will substantiate your complaint. Keep the originals of these documents, as well as a copy of your complaint letter. Include your name, address, and telephone number so that the CCIDC may contact you if more information is required

How will the CCIDC respond?

The CCIDC encourages mediation and will attempt to mediate your complaint when appropriate. You are encouraged to notify the CCIDC as early as possible, so the CCIDC staff can help you resolve the problem.

The CCIDC staff will review your complaint and, if it believes the complaint has merit, will notify you and begin to investigate the complaint. If the CCIDC determines that your complaint does not have merit, you will be notified of the reason(s).

The staff will begin the investigation by evaluating all aspects of your complaint. The CCIDC will ask you to provide as much information as possible before processing the complaint. CCIDC will contact the designer against whom the complaint is being made asking them to respond. A letter to both you and the Certified interior designer is sent out within 10 days of receipt of your complaint. The letter to CCIDC asks the Certified Interior Designer requests him or her to respond with an explanation of his or her side of the situation. The CCIDC gives priority to complaints involving a person's life, health, safety, or welfare.

Once the CCIDC staff have had an opportunity to evaluate both sides they will notify all involved parties of their recommendation for a possible solution. In some cases there may be no remedy, as in other cases, legal action on the part of the complainant may be warranted.

If disciplinary action is recommended against a Certified Interior Designer, the case is put before the entire CCIDC board of directors for review and approval. If the board approves a recommended disciplinary action, the designer is promptly notified and they have 10 days in which to file an appeal. If they choose to file a notice of appeal they have the right to come before the board at the next regularly scheduled board meeting in person to plead their case, as does the complainant at the same time. At that time, or within a suitable number of days afterward, the board will render a final decision. [Disciplinary action](#) can range from suspension of a designers Certification, requirements for additional education to permanent revocation of their Certification.



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**Consumer Complaint form**

**Print this form**, fill it in and FAX it to (760) 761-4736  
**or** mail to: CCIDC, 1605 Grand Avenue, Suite 4, San Marcos, CA 92078  
**or** you may [file a complaint online](#)

**PART ONE:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person filing complaint \_\_\_\_\_

Company (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. No: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Fax No: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

**PART TWO:**

Name of person complaint is against: \_\_\_\_\_

Company (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. No: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Fax No: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Are they Certified? **circle one** (yes) (no)  
Certification # \_\_\_\_\_

Are they a member of a professional organization? **circle one**  
(yes) (no)

If so, which one? \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of your complaint

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(Please use a separate sheet of paper if you need more space for your complaint)



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## 1.0 CODE OF ETHICS AND CONDUCT

### 1.1 OBJECT OF CODE

A. A Certified Interior Designer is required to conduct his/her profession in a manner that will encourage the respect of clients, suppliers of goods and services to the profession, and fellow professional interior designers, as well as the general public. It is the individual responsibility of every Certified Interior Designer to abide by this code.

### 1.2 RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PUBLIC

A. In performing professional services, a Certified Interior Designer shall exercise reasonable care and competence, and shall take into account all applicable laws, regulations and codes.

B. In performing professional services, a Certified Interior Designer shall at all times consider the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

C. In performing professional services, a Certified Interior Designer shall not knowingly violate the law, nor counsel or assist a client in conduct the Certified Interior Designer knows, or reasonably should know, is illegal.

D. A Certified Interior Designer shall not knowingly accept monies from a client for any installation or construction work that is required by law to be performed by a licensed contractor without holding such a license from the State.

E. A Certified Interior Designer shall not permit his/her name, signature, or stamp to be used in conjunction with a design or project for which interior design services are not to be, or were not, performed by the Certified Interior Designer or under his/her responsible direction

F. A Certified Interior Designer shall not engage in any form of false or misleading advertising or promotional activities and shall not imply, through advertising or other means, that staff members or employees of his/her firm are Certified Interior Designers unless such be the fact.

G. A Certified Interior Designer shall not make misleading, deceptive or false statements or claims about his/her professional qualifications, experience, or performance.

H. A Certified Interior Designer shall not by affirmative act or failure to act, engage in any conduct involving fraud, deceit, misrepresentation or dishonesty in professional or business activity.

I. In the conduct of his/her professional activities, a Certified Interior Designer shall not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, national origin, age, non-disqualifying handicap, or sexual orientation.

J. In performing professional services, a Certified Interior Designer shall refuse to consent to any decision by his/her client, or employer, which violates any applicable law or regulation, and which, in the Certified Interior Designer's judgment will create a significant risk to public health and safety.

### 1.3 RESPONSIBILITY TO CLIENT

A. A Certified Interior Designer shall undertake to perform professional services only when he/she, together with his/her consultants, is qualified by education, training or experience to perform the services required. (A Certified Interior Designer should not work outside their specific area of expertise.)

B. Before accepting an assignment, a Certified Interior Designer shall reasonably inform the client of the scope and nature of the project involved, the interior design services to be performed, and the method of remuneration for those services. A Certified Interior Designer shall not materially change the scope of a project without the client's consent.

C. When accepting an assignment, a Certified Interior Designer should always have a contract, or letter of agreement, with the client that clearly spells out the scope of the work, the fees or costs associated with that scope of work, how and when those fees are to be paid by the client, when the work is expected to be completed, and a clause for legal remedies in the case of a dispute between the client and the Certified Interior Designer utilizing binding arbitration or other suitable forms of dispute resolution.

D. A Certified Interior Designer shall disclose, in writing, to his/her employers and clients prior to the engagement, any direct or indirect financial interest that he/she may have that could affect his/her impartiality in specifying project-related goods or services, and shall not knowingly assume or accept any position in which his/her personal interests conflict with his/her professional duty. If the employer or client objects to such financial or other interest, the Certified Interior Designer shall either terminate such interest, or withdraw from such engagement.

E. A Certified Interior Designer shall not reveal any information about a client, a client's intention(s), or a client's production methods) which he/she has been asked to maintain in confidence, or which he/she should reasonably recognize as likely, if disclosed, to affect the interests of his/her client adversely. Notwithstanding the above, however, a Certified Interior Designer may reveal such information to the extent he/she reasonably believes is necessary to (1) stop any act which creates a significant risk to public health and safety and which the Certified Interior Designer is unable to prevent in any other manner, or (2) to prevent any violation of applicable law or this Code of Ethics.

#### 1.4 RESPONSIBILITY TO OTHER CERTIFIED INTERIOR DESIGNERS AND COLLEAGUES

A. A Certified Interior Designer shall pursue his/her professional activities with honesty, integrity and fairness, and with respect for another interior designer's, or colleague's, contractual and professional relationships.

B. A Certified Interior Designer shall not initiate or participate in any discussion or activity which might result in an unjust injury to another interior designer's or colleague's reputation or business relationships.

C. A Certified Interior Designer shall not accept instruction from his/her clients, which knowingly involves plagiarism, nor shall he/she consciously plagiarize another's work.

D. A Certified Interior Designer shall not endorse the application for certification of an individual known to be unqualified with respect to education, training, experience, or character, nor shall he or she knowingly misrepresent the experience, professional expertise, or moral character of that individual.

E. A Certified Interior Designer shall only take credit for work that has actually been created by that designer or the designer's firm and under the designer's direction.

#### 1.5 RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION

A. A Certified Interior Designer agrees to maintain standards of professional and personal conduct that will reflect in a responsible manner to the profession.

B. A Certified Interior Designer shall seek to continually upgrade his/her professional knowledge and competency with respect to the interior design profession.

C. A Certified Interior Designer agrees, whenever possible, to encourage and contribute to the sharing of knowledge and information between Certified Interior Designers and other allied professional disciplines, industry, and the public.

D. A Certified Interior Designer shall not knowingly make false statements or fail to disclose any material fact requested in connection with his/her application for certification or the renewal thereof.



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## Certified Interior Designers Law

CALIFORNIA BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS CODE  
SECTION 5800-5812

5800. As used in this chapter:

(a) "Certified interior designer" means a person who prepares and submits nonstructural or nonseismic plans consistent with Sections 5805 and 5538 to local building departments that are of sufficient complexity so as to require the skills of a licensed contractor to implement them, and who engages in programming, planning, designing, and documenting the construction and installation of nonstructural or nonseismic elements, finishes and furnishings within the interior spaces of a building, and has demonstrated by means of education, experience and examination, the competency to protect and enhance the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

(b) An "interior design organization" means a nonprofit organization, exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code, of certified interior designers whose governing board shall include representatives of the public, except that an organization that is not currently exempt under that section that submits an application to the Internal Revenue Service requesting an exemption under that section shall be eligible to be an interior design organization if it meets the requirements under that section within a reasonable period of time.

5801. A certified interior designer may obtain a stamp from an interior design organization that shall include a number that uniquely identifies and bears the name of that certified interior designer. The stamp certifies that the interior designer has provided the interior design organization with evidence of passage of an interior design examination approved by that interior design organization and any of the following:

(a) He or she is a graduate of a four- or five-year accredited interior design degree program, and has two years of diversified interior design experience.

(b) He or she has completed a three-year accredited interior design certificate program, and has completed three years of diversified interior design experience.

(c) He or she has completed a two-year accredited interior design program and has completed four years of diversified interior design experience.

(d) He or she has at least eight years of interior design education, or at least eight years of diversified interior design experience, or a combination of interior design education and diversified interior design experience that together total at least eight years.

5801.1. The procedure for the issuance of a stamp by an interior design organization under Section 5801, including the examinations recognized and required by the organization, shall be subject to the occupational analyses and examination validation required by Section 139 every five to seven years.

5802. (a) All drawings, specifications, or documents prepared for submission to any government regulatory agency by any certified interior designer, or under his or her supervision shall be affixed by a stamp, as specified in Section 5801, and signed by that certified interior designer.

(b) All such documents shall be identified as interior design documents, which are not architectural or engineering documents.

5803. A certified interior designer, as defined in this chapter, is exempt from Chapter 9 (commencing with Section 7000) of Division 3 insofar as he or she is designing systems for work to be performed by a licensed contractor.

5804. It is an unfair business practice for any certified interior designer or any other person to advertise or put out any sign or card or other device, including any stamp or seal, or to represent to the public through any print or electronic media, that he or she is "state certified" to practice interior design, or to use any other words or symbols that represent to the public that he or she is so certified.

5805. Nothing in this chapter shall preclude certified interior designers or any other person from submitting interior design plans to local building officials, except as provided in Section 5538. In exercising discretion with respect to the acceptance of interior design plans, the local building official shall reference the Uniform Building Code.

5810. (a) This chapter shall be subject to the review required by Division 1.2 (commencing with Section 473).

(b) This chapter shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2014, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2014, deletes or extends that date.

5811. An interior design organization issuing stamps under Section 5801 shall provide to the Joint Committee on Boards, Commissions, and Consumer Protection by September 1, 2008, a report that reviews and assesses the costs and benefits associated with the California Code and Regulations Examination and explores feasible alternatives to that examination.

5812. It is an unfair business practice for any person to represent themselves as a "certified interior designer" unless they comply with the requirements of this chapter.



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## About CCIDC

The California Council for Interior Design Certification is located in San Marcos, California, was established in January 1992 as the organization responsible for administering the requirements of the Certified Interior Designers Law under Chapter 3.9, Section 5800 of the California Business and Professions Code.



- Under the Certified Interior Designers Law, Certified Interior Designers are qualified by the CCIDC upon evidence of a combination of interior design education and/or experience and passage of a designated examination.
- Only the CCIDC can determine eligibility to be a Certified Interior Designer in the State of California. Designers who meet the education, experience and examination criteria of the CCIDC Board are allowed to use the "Certified Interior Designer" title and are recognized in the State of California.
- Upon qualification, the Certified Interior Designer will be identified by an individual number which will appear on a certificate, a stamp with which to identify interior design nonstructural and non-seismic drawings and documents, and an identification card.

Certified Interior Designers, as mandated by the State of California, have met high standards of qualification and have agreed to uphold a strict code of ethics and conduct.

## Board of Directors

The California Council for Interior Design Certification (CCIDC) consists of an 11-member [Board of Directors, Chief Administrator and Staff.](#)