

**The Society of Certified Retirement  
Financial Advisors™ (SCRFA)**



**CERTIFIED RETIREMENT  
FINANCIAL ADVISOR™**

*CANDIDATE GUIDE and  
INFORMATION  
HANDBOOK*

***Society of Certified Retirement Financial Advisors™***

501 North Mustang Road, Suite D1  
P.O. Box 453  
Mustang, OK 73064

*This Candidate Information Handbook provides comprehensive information concerning the Certified Retirement Financial Advisor Examination and Certification program, offered by the Certified Financial Advisor Certification Board.*

## Communications

Please direct all communications in writing to:

The Certified Retirement Financial Advisors Certification Board  
501 North Mustang Road, Suite D1  
P.O. Box 453  
Mustang, OK 73064  
1-888-880-CRFA (2732) Toll-Free  
405-376-9976 Office  
405-376-1455 Fax  
Email: [Certification@CRFA.us](mailto:Certification@CRFA.us)  
Attention: CRFA Certificant Coordinator: Mrs. Linda L. Lee

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**Introduction**

Welcome, and thank you for your interest in the Certified Retirement Financial Advisor (CRFA) Program. This Candidate Guide and Information Handbook details the policies and procedures supporting the CRFA credential. It contains the program application, describes the eligibility and experience requirements, the examination content outline, reference recommendations, information about registering for and taking the CRFA Examination, and recertification requirements. The CRFA credentialing program is administered by the CRFA Certification Board, which operates as an autonomous Board of the Society of Certified Retirement Financial Advisors (SCRFA or “the Society”).

The CRFA Certification Board is responsible for all aspects of the CRFA Credential, as authorized by the by-laws of the Society, which is the premier non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of legal and professional recognition of individual training and experience of retirement financial advisors. This recognition is supported by the CRFA Registry, providing a central source for the public, consumers, employers and the government to confirm retirement financial advisor credentialing. The CRFA Certification Board has certified over 500 retirement financial advisors. The Society is a nonprofit membership organization offering referral services, a registration directory for the public, education programming, and support for continuing education (CE) courses, training and education under a separate affiliation with the SCRFA Retirement Academy.

**Mission Statement**

The Mission of the Society of Certified Retirement Financial Advisors is to encourage and maintain the highest quality service in the provision of retirement financial advice, to stimulate and support the development of new and improved means for providing service, advocacy and financial advice to retirees, including the requirements to follow all applicable rules, standards, policies, regulations and laws. The CRFA Certification Board also supports continuing professional education and acts as a conduit for information exchange about new products, technologies and changes to applicable rules, standards, policies, regulations and laws. It serves to establish and maintain a well-coordinated professional organization that represents the profession of retirement financial advisors, providing a common forum for persons interested in the profession/provision of retirement financial advice by establishing and recognizing standards of competence for the retirement financial advisor, through certification.

## **The Certified Retirement Financial Advisor (CRFA) Credential Philosophy**

The designation as a Certified Retirement Financial Advisor (CRFA) is meant to assure stakeholders (the public, employers, consumers and legislators) that the credentialed retirement financial advisor has demonstrated an established level of competence in the field. Applying research performed in the development of the CRFA certification program, candidates are measured against standards that reflect competence in the role as it is practiced today.

The goal of the CRFA program is to:

- i. Provide a registry of CRFAs serving the stakeholder's needs to identify certified retirement financial advisors.
- ii. Provide a means for retirement financial advisors to demonstrate the critical knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to serve the public trust and interest.
- iii. Establish legally-defensible criteria against which competency as a CRFA may be measured.
- iv. Encourage personal and professional growth.
- v. Recognize retirement financial advisors who demonstrate and maintain competency as a CRFA.

## **Becoming a Certified Retirement Financial Advisor**

To be considered for candidacy in the CRFA program, candidates must:

- Assert and document completion of a minimum of three (3) years of **professional experience** in retirement financial advising, or one of its four recognized sub-specialties;
- Assert and document a minimum of 24 required **education and/or training** credits as they relate to any/all of the four recognized specialties.
- Receive an endorsement from a CRFA, employer or equivalent of the education, attesting to training and experience claimed on the Application.
- Complete the Application in its entirety, including acceptable responses to the Ethics Certification and Attestation, Privacy Policy opt in/opt out questions, and the Certification of Accuracy, and the Agreement and Release Authorization, attesting to the truth the assertions regarding professional experience and education, and commitment to abide by the CRFA Code of Ethics:
- Submit the examination fee.

To qualify for the CRFA credential, candidates must pass the CRFA examination with a scaled score of 70 or better.

### ***Eligibility Requirements***

Eligibility is determined based upon recognized education, training and experience related to the provision of professional retirement financial advice. The CRFA Certification Board recognizes that the pathway to the CRFA credential is diverse: some professionals have a wealth of experience in insurance needs; others come to serve as retirement financial advisors based upon experience in the fields of law, investments and securities or through the provision of services related to financial trusts or tax

preparation. As the CRFA Content Outline (included in this Guide) shows, the skills required to practice competently involve expertise in sub-specialties of all four specialty fields – but to require education, training and experience in all sub-specialty fields is impractical and unfair. Similarly, the CRFA Certification Board recognizes that, for some candidates, a combination of education/training and experience or education alone provides sufficient general knowledge to qualify a candidate to sit for the examination.

Therefore, eligibility requirements may focus on one or more sub-specialty, with the understanding that candidates are expected to obtain the knowledge, skills and abilities from all content areas to demonstrate competency. Meeting eligibility requirements for the CRFA is the threshold in assessment of the full-scope of general working knowledge that describes the retirement financial advisor profession. Independent of the certification process, candidates are expected to self-assess their knowledge and understanding required to successfully pass the examination. Passing the examination insures that CRFA credential holders have demonstrated competency in the full complement of sub-specialty content areas, reflecting competent practice in the field.

Eligibility is established by asserting/documenting the minimum education, training and education requirements.

### **1.a Professional Experience:**

*Please indicate all experience in these areas below. However, all CRFA candidates must document a MINIMUM of three (3) years of Professional experience in any one of the four (4) specialties:*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance (circle one)   | 1 year, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years or more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Securities (circle one)  | 1 year, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years or more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tax Preparation (circle one)                                   | 1 year, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years or more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trust Preparation/Trust<br>Administration Advisor (circle one) | 1 year, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years or more |

### **1.b Education and Training:**

Recognizing that either education or training or a combination of the two would provide the minimum opportunity to learn the required tasks associated with competent entry-level performance, *all CRFA candidates must demonstrate a minimum of 24 Credits across Education and Training. Note: Credits may be counted in only Education, only Training or a combination of both.*

**Education** in a field/subject relevant to any/all specialties (choose the highest education achieved):

- Graduate Degree (20 Credits)
- Bachelor's Degree (15 Credits)
- Associates Degree (10 Credits)
- Formal Classroom Education Credits- vo-tech or certificate course (3 Credits per certificate/class) 3 Credits x    Classes =    Formal Classroom Credits

The following classes are offered by The American College of Financial Services. Credits are also recognized for equivalent classes offered in an institution that has DOE accreditation. Please identify classes by placing a check mark by the class you successfully completed or list on a separate sheet and total by all classes checked X3 credits.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Security Analysis and Portfolio Management GS 811
- \_\_\_\_\_ Qualified Retirement Plans GS 814
- \_\_\_\_\_ Advanced Estate Planning GS 817
- \_\_\_\_\_ Personal Tax Planning GS 817
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mutual Funds Analysis, Allocation & Performance GS 819
- \_\_\_\_\_ Charitable Strategies GS 849
- \_\_\_\_\_ Issues in Advance Retirement Planning GS 806
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fundamentals for Estate Planning HS 330-2200-3151
- \_\_\_\_\_ Financial Planning Process/Environment HS 300-2200-3160
- \_\_\_\_\_ Essentials of Disability Income Insurance FA 211
- \_\_\_\_\_ Essentials of Multiline Products FA 222
- \_\_\_\_\_ Essentials of Business Insurance FA 251
- \_\_\_\_\_ Essentials of Life Insurance Products FA 257
- \_\_\_\_\_ Foundation of Retirement Planning FA 261
- \_\_\_\_\_ Foundation of Estate Planning FA 271

  3   Credits x \_\_\_\_\_ Classes = \_\_\_\_\_ Formal Classroom Credits from DOE Curriculum

Vo-Tech or Certificate Courses (1/2 credit per certificate class)

**Training** in a field/subject relevant to any/all specialties:

Training w/certificate – minimum of 10 hours or more (1 Credit per certificate)

  1   Credit x \_\_\_\_\_ courses = \_\_\_\_\_ Certificate Training Credits

Training courses (no certificate) minimum of 6 hours (1/4 credit per course)

  1/4   Credit x \_\_\_\_\_ courses = \_\_\_\_\_ Non-certificate Training credits

In-house (employer) training course (1/8 Credit per hour, per certificate)

  1   Credit x \_\_\_\_\_ courses = \_\_\_\_\_ In-house Training Credits

In Regulatory Notice 11-52 issued by FINRA it is suggested that Designation Standards and Supervision include rigorous curriculum for any certification. All applicants are encouraged to research courses approved by their firm. SCRFA offers curriculum that meets FINRA standards through the Retirement Academy.

Successful completion of an education-based program that meets FINRA standards

\_\_\_\_\_ 24 Credits

**Total Education and Training Credits:** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Must be 24 or more Credits to qualify)**

Questions concerning eligibility should be directed to the CRFA Certification Coordinator at 1-888-880-CRFA (2732) or via email correspondence at [Certification@CRFA.us](mailto:Certification@CRFA.us).

***Applying for the Certified Retirement Financial Advisor (CRFA) Credential***

The CRFA Application is downloadable from the CRFA website at [www.CRFA.us](http://www.CRFA.us). Candidates may also request a printed version of the application. Applications must be submitted in writing or via dedicated fax, filled out completely, and signed by the candidate. Applications will not be accepted without payment, education/training and experience documentation. Endorsements must be received via USPS or courier independent of the application. The fee to apply for the CRFA credential is \$595 US. All CRFA correspondence, scores, and certificates will be mailed to the candidate's preferred address as indicated on the application. Applicants are responsible for notifying the CRFA Certification Board in writing of any change of name, address or contact information.

The application contains a checklist of requirements designed for self-assessment of eligibility. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Applications will be processed within 14 days of receipt. If an application is approved, candidates will receive email instructions concerning examination registration procedures and testing options.

Candidates submitting incomplete applications will be notified in writing of deficiencies, and provided 60 days to produce the missing documentation or application items. If the application is not complete within the 60-day window, the CRFA Certification Board will provide notification that the application is incomplete. Upon receipt of the second notice, candidates are provided 60 additional days in which to produce the requested application documents, or request a withdrawal from consideration. Withdrawal results in a refund of the application fee, minus a processing fee of \$50. Failure to respond to the CRFA Certification Board during these two 60-day periods will result in forfeiture of all application fees, and a new application and fee must be submitted. If an application is denied at the end of the deficiency/correction review cycle, candidates may appeal the decision by requesting a final application review in writing to the CRFA Board of Certification. The Board or its agents will review the application and make a final decision within 30 days of receipt of the appeal. .

***Verification of Candidate Eligibility***

The CRFA Certification Board reserves the right to verify the experience and/or education attested to by the applicant. This may be accomplished by a phone interview with a supervising retirement financial advisor or employers, or through verification of education/training transcripts or certificates. Additional documentation may be requested to support the application attestations.

***Certification of Accuracy, Agreement and Release Authorization:***

Candidates are required to attest and certify the veracity and accuracy of the application, and to agree to abide by the CRFA Code of Ethics, Principles and Rules, which are available for download from the CRFA website at [www.CRFA.us](http://www.CRFA.us). Any misrepresentation or misconduct related to the application or examination may result in disqualification or revocation of certification. By applying for the CRFA credential, candidates agree to the

terms set forth in the application and this Candidate Information Handbook regarding certification requirements and the examination.

### ***Endorsement***

Every candidate must obtain an endorsement from an appropriately certified individual, or employment supervisor who is willing to attest to the applicant's assertions regarding professional experience, and that the candidate is in good standing within the profession. If a CRFA credential holder is not available, another qualified professional with knowledge of CRFA certification and accreditation or a supervisor of the candidate's employ may validate/endorse the candidate's claim of professional experience and professional standing. Endorsements must be submitted independent of the Application.

### ***Refunds***

Should an application be denied, the application fee will be reimbursed, less a processing fee of \$50 as stated above. Likewise, candidates requesting a withdrawal from consideration will be refunded the application fee less a \$50 processing fee. Withdrawal requests must be put forth in writing within ten (10) days of the date postmarked on the CRFA application. Candidates suspecting that they may not meet CRFA eligibility requirements are encouraged to contact the CRFA Certification Coordinator prior to submitting an application.

## **Statement of Nondiscrimination**

The CRFA Certification Board shall admit applicants regardless of age, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, handicap, or marital status, and provide all rights and privileges, as well as open access to programs, examinations, and certifications.

## **Special Accommodations**

The CRFA Certification Board grants reasonable accommodations for candidates with documented disabilities in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If special assistance or arrangements are required, the following protocol must be followed:

1. A request for accommodations must be made by the candidate, in writing, when the CRFA application is submitted. This request must include a complete description of the requested accommodation.
2. Documentation of the disability, as diagnosed by a qualified health care professional, must accompany the accommodation request.

Candidates requesting accommodations may be contacted by the CRFA Certification Board to discuss the disability and requested accommodation. In conference with a psychometrician, with consideration of examination security and examination administration guidelines, a reasonable accommodation will be made. Candidates will be notified in writing of the accommodations to be offered.



## Privacy/Confidentiality Policy

The CRFA Certification Board has created and abides by a strict privacy/confidentiality policy demonstrating its firm commitment to CRFA candidate and certificant privacy (find at [www.CRFA.us](http://www.CRFA.us).) The policy applies to all aspects of the CRFA credential including the secure handling and storage of application materials, examinations, scores and candidate and certificant records. CRFA staff is required to complete a non-disclosure document agreeing to protect the privacy of CRFA certificants and candidates. It is the policy of the CRFA Certification Board that Non-Disclosure protected information may NOT be released to or shared with:

- a. Any member of the public unless there is applicable statutory exception or written release from the CRFA candidate or certificant.
- b. Any member of CRFA unless the recipient has a legitimate interest for the use of that protected information to perform a service or carry out a responsibility within that person's scope of employment or engagement as a public official.

The CRFA procedure is that protected Information may only be released or shared in accordance with this policy.

CRFA staff with access to protected Information is expected to protect that information from unauthorized disclosure. This includes, as appropriate:

- *Computer Systems and Applications Security:* Central processing units, peripherals, portable storage devices, operating system, applications software and data.
- *Physical Security:* The premises occupied by CRFA and/or the Society personnel or contractors using computer equipment storing or having access to Protected Information.
- *Operational Security:* Environmental control, power equipment, operational activities related to operations.
- *Procedural Security:* Established and documented security processes for information technology staff, vendors, management, and individual users of Protected Information.
- *Network Security:* Communications equipment, transmission paths, switches, terminals and adjacent areas.

*The Society and the CRFA Certification Board reserve the right to change this policy at any time by notifying users of the existence of a new privacy statement.*

## Examination Information

### Examination Development

The content validity (relevance), fairness and accuracy of the CRFA examination are assured. The CRFA Certification Board, working with a professional testing company, mandates that all aspects of the examination development, administration, scoring and reporting adhere to international professional standards and guidelines establishing

assessment and certification best-practice. The most important of these standards are promulgated by such key organizations as the *National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA)*, ISO/American National Standards Institute (ANSI) 17024 Standards, the American Psychological Association (AERA), and the Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR). This body of standards provides a means for ensuring that the assessment and credentialing process is a fair measure of competence and is legally-defensible.

The examination content outline is based upon the Job Analysis Study (also called a Role Delineation), which is revalidated on a periodic basis. The most recent study findings were implemented in the spring of 2010, and utilized a full scale survey methodology inviting all known retirement financial advisors to participate. This research was performed under the direction of a panel of CRFA Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) representing the full complement of diversity in the field providing a documented link between the content of the examination and practice on the job as a retirement financial advisor. The Job Analysis report is available on the CRFA website.

The passing standard (cut score) for the CRFA examination was determined using methodologies involving a representative panel of SMEs and empirical judgments (Angoff Design V). New forms and versions of the examination are systematically implemented to protect the integrity and security of the examination program and to conform to testing industry standards. Each new examination form contains a significant percentage of new questions that are unique to the new form. Psychometric procedures are used to score the examinations in compliance with relevant technical guidelines. The CRFA examination reports scores using a scaled score model for all examinations. Raw scores are placed on a 0-100 scale with 70 reported as the passing score on all examinations. Score scaling is a common psychometric practice, used on many examinations including the SAT, ACT and CPA examinations.

Ongoing item writing, item review, examination and question analyses are conducted to ensure that the validity, reliability and other psychometric characteristics of the examinations conform to testing industry standards. New questions written by SMEs are reviewed multiple times, verified to an approved reference, and linked to the examination content outline. All questions undergo statistical review to ensure that they operate properly. All of these activities are overseen by professional test developers and psychometricians provided by the CRFA Certification Board's testing service. The CRFA Certification Board is highly confident that the validity of content, the reliability of the test instruments, and the measurement processes employed to analyze, score and establish reporting scores are of the highest caliber.

### **Examination Design, Scoring and Reporting**

The CRFA examination is comprised of 100 four-option multiple-choice questions, administered in computer-based examinations. Candidates are allotted four (4) hours in which to complete the exam. Each multiple-choice question has four answer choices; only one answer choice is correct. It is a closed-book examination. Candidates have access to an on-screen scientific calculator at all times during the examination, and will

be provided with scratch paper that will be collected after the test administration. Candidates are encouraged to read the questions carefully, choosing the single best response. Candidates are advised to first answer the questions that they are sure of, returning to the more difficult questions as time allows. Credit is given only for questions that have responses. Questions left blank will be scored as incorrect. There is no penalty for guessing.

At the end of the testing session, a computer-generated score report will be issued. This score is provisional, pending statistical verification that will take place within 72 hours. If candidates do not hear from the CRFA Certification Board or its testing provider within that time period, they may assume the score stands as reported. Candidates passing the examination will not receive a scaled score. Failing candidates will receive a scaled score, along with a diagnostic report indicating content areas of weakness.

The examination score is based upon the total number of correct responses that represent competency. Scores are unrelated to the performance of other candidates taking the examination. If all candidates taking the test are competent, all will pass. If none are competent, none will pass.

## Examination Content

As described, the examination content outline is based upon a Job Analysis research study of the role of the retirement financial advisor professional. The examination construction is based upon the importance rating of the four main content areas. A complete content outline follows:

### ***Domain I: Tax Issues for Retirees (20% of the Examination)***

- A. Conduct general tax return review
- B. Explain the relationship between taxes and Social Security including:
  - 1. Taxability of Social Security benefits
  - 2. Impact of various forms of income on social security benefits
- C. Understand strategies to minimize Capital Gains taxes
- D. Identify tax issues on qualified versus non-qualified assets
- E. Explain the relationship between retirement plans and taxes including:
  - 1. Impact of taxes on retirement plans
  - 2. Other costs associated with withdrawals of retirement assets
  - 3. State income tax concerns
- F. Review tax consequences of various annuity distribution methods
- G. Review other areas of tax planning including:
  - 1. Long-term care premiums deductions
  - 2. 72t distributions for early retirees
  - 3. 72q distributions for early retirees
  - 4. 1035 tax free exchanges (death benefit comparison)
  - 5. 1031 tax favored exchanges
  - 6. Tax deductions for charitable giving
- H. Evaluate estate tax exposure

**Domain II: Investment Concepts in Retirement (22%)**

- A. Familiarize clients with investment categories including:
  - 1. Equities
  - 2. Bonds
  - 3. Annuities including:
    - a. Fixed, Fixed Riders
    - b. Variable, Variable Riders
    - c. Indexed
  - 4. Packaged products (e.g., mutual funds, unit investment trusts, sub-accounts, ETFs)
  - 5. Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs)
  - 6. Tenants-in-Common (TIC)
- B. Select appropriate portfolio strategies including:
  - 1. Basic asset allocation
  - 2. Grangaard strategy
  - 3. Indexed-based model portfolio
- C. Assess portfolio design by utilizing research and rating services (e.g., Morning Star)
- D. Discuss fee based vs. transactional account

**Domain III: General Retirement Principles (18%)**

- A. Income Planning (including)
  - 1. Review of actuarial life expectancy including:
    - a. Health
    - b. Family history
  - 2. Develop realistic budgeting including:
    - a. Cashflow management
    - b. Emergency funding
    - c. Legacy considerations
  - 3. Identify traditional income sources including:
    - a. ERISA pension plans including:
      - i. Carve out Net Unrealized Assets (NUA)
      - ii. Pension maximization strategy
    - b. Retirement accounts including:
      - i. Traditional IRA (Including SEP, SIMPLE, Keogh)
      - ii. Roth IRA
    - c. Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) including:
      - i. Spousal
      - ii. Non-spousal
    - d. Non-qualified annuities
    - e. Savings
    - f. Investments (passive, active)
    - g. Earned income (including hobbies)
    - h. Social Security (when to initiate)

4. Identify non-traditional income sources including:
  - a. Home equity
  - b. Life settlements
  - c. Inheritance
- B. Risk Management including:
  1. Identify insurance options
    - a. Long-term care (e.g., taxable/non-taxable)
    - b. Health insurance (e.g., Medicare, Medigap)
    - c. Life insurance
  2. Consider portfolio protection (insurance)
    - a. Guaranteed lifetime income benefits
    - b. Guaranteed principle benefits
  3. Manage debt
    - a. Credit cards
    - b. Debt consolidation

**Domain IV: Government Programs/Social Security (13%)**

- A. Understand Social Security including:
  1. Minimum qualifications
  2. Disability Benefits
  3. OASDI Contribution base
  4. State and Federal offsets
  5. State and Federal windfall
- B. Understand Medicare including:
  1. Part A – Medical Services
  2. Part B – Hospitalization
  3. Part C – Consolidated benefits
  4. Part D – Prescription drugs
  5. Medicare Contribution base
- C. Understand Medicaid including:
  1. Qualification strategies including:
    - a. Countable vs. non-countable assets
    - b. Medicaid trusts
    - c. Half-a-loaf strategy
  2. Elder law consultation

**Domain V: Estate Planning (17%)**

- A. Develop succession strategies by:
  1. Understanding asset ownership options
    - a. Individual
    - b. Joint tenancy (JTWROS)
    - c. Tenants-In-Common
    - d. Trusts

2. Avoiding probate
  - a. Beneficiary designation
  - b. Account registration
3. Preparing wills
- B. Review gifting considerations by:
  1. Understanding limitations
  2. Skipping a generation
  3. Examining education programs
- C. Appraise charitable giving strategies including:
  1. Foundations
    - a. Private
    - b. Public
  2. Trusts
    - a. Private residential
    - b. Charitable remainder/lead
  3. Cash vs. non-cash donations
- D. Understand estate taxes including:
  1. Federal
  2. State (recent decoupling developments)
- E. Delineate Survivorship including:
  1. Life insurance
  2. Social Security, pension, and IRA continuation
    - a. Stretch IRAs
    - b. Titling of inherited IRAs
    - c. Beneficiary options
  3. Special needs beneficiaries
  4. Spendthrift considerations
  5. Creditor protection
  6. Life estate
- F. Recognize post-death considerations including:
  1. Review and update beneficiary forms
  2. Wills vs. intestate
  3. Advance directives
  4. Power of attorney
  5. Disclaiming inheritance
- G. Utilize special applications including:
  1. Living trusts
  2. Pooled trusts
  3. Irrevocable living trusts
  4. Crummey trust
  5. Crummey trust with spendthrift
  6. QTIP trusts
  7. Wealth replacement trust

**Domain VI. CRFA Ethical Standards (10%)**

- A. Provision of competent services to clients including:
  - 1. Keep informed of current developments and participate in continuous education
  - 2. Offer advice only in areas of competence
- B. Protect clients' confidential information including:
  - 1. Maintain personally identifiable information relating to client affairs
  - 2. Maintain the same confidentiality standards with employers and clients
  - 3. Act in good faith
- C. Practice reflecting professional behavior including:
  - 1. Comply with CRFA rules and regulations
  - 2. Display respect for other professionals representing the competition
  - 3. Notify CRFA Disciplinary and Appeals Committee if one has knowledge of another CRFA violating standards.
  - 4. Reveal knowledge of fraudulent/illegal behavior of a CRFA graduate to supervisor or partners
  - 5. Reveal knowledge of illegal activity within their organization to supervisor or partners
  - 6. Abide by laws and regulations established by governmental agencies and the CRFA Disciplinary and Appeals Committee
  - 7. Abstain from conduct reflecting adversely on his/her integrity or fitness of a CRFA graduate
  - 8. Return client's original records in a timely manner when the client requests them
  - 9. Exercise reasonable and prudent professional judgment in providing professional services
  - 10. Act in the best interest of the client or prospect
- D. Practice reflecting fairness and integrity including:
  - 1. Disclose to client conflicts of interest, CRFA information, and other agency relationships
  - 2. Provide timely written disclosure of all material information relative to the professional relationship.
  - 3. Request compensation which is fair and reasonable
  - 4. Perform services with dedication to the lawful objectives of the employer and CRFA code
  - 5. Provide prospective client references upon request
  - 6. Abstain from soliciting clients through false or misleading communication
  - 7. Abstain from offering professional services in a dishonest or fraudulent manner
  - 8. Avoid giving the client the impression you are representing views of the CRFA unless given authorization to do so
  - 9. Abstain from providing unauthorized or misleading CRFA credentials
  - 10. Conduct themselves with honor and dignity

- E. Organize/maintain client records and affairs including:
  - 1. Act promptly to serve clients, employers, principals, and other users of designee's services
  - 2. Evaluate a client's circumstances prior to making a recommendation
  - 3. Supervise subordinates and do not condone violations of CRFA code
  - 4. Use the CRFA designation only if one is certified and in good standing
- F. Provide objective services to clients including:
  - 1. Display service orientation and problem sensitivity
  - 2. Refer client to other professionals as needed
  - 3. Interpret periodic client reports
  - 4. Be available to answer client questions
- G. Follow disciplinary procedures including:
  - 1. Understand the role of the CRFA Disciplinary and Appeals Committee
  - 2. Understand the grounds for discipline
  - 3. Understand the disciplinary procedure
  - 4. Understand forms of discipline

A set of sample questions are attached to this document as Appendix A.

### **Suggested References: Certified Retirement Financial Advisor Examination Preparation**

The CRFA Certification Board provides a suggested reference list as a resource that may be useful to supplement the education and experience related to competent performance as a Certified Retirement Financial Advisor. Candidates are encouraged to review resources and information in content areas where skills or knowledge may be weak. Questions requiring analyses, evaluation and interpretation may be based on facts found in references, but answering the questions may require application skills acquired during the candidate's three years of experience. The CRFA Certification Board does not recommend that candidates memorize all recommended references. The information tested on the examination pertains to the common body of knowledge which is delineated in the CRFA examination Content Outline. All examination items and tasks are confirmed by one or more of the references on the list. Additional information about obtaining recommended texts and study guides may be found on the CRFA website at [www.CRFA.us](http://www.CRFA.us).

The CRFA Certification Board does not endorse any particular text or author. This list is not intended to be inclusive, but reflects references used to support the test development process. Use of the references does not guarantee successful performance on the examination.

*2012 Field Guide to Financial Planning*  
ISBN: 978-1-936362-79-0.  
[www.NUCOstore.com](http://www.NUCOstore.com)



Website: *About Insurance: CE Continuing Education Seminars, Classroom, Self-study and Online*, by Brett Decker. (texts, seminar & webinar materials)  
[www.BrettDecker.com](http://www.BrettDecker.com)

*Professional Retirement Financial Advisor Handbook*  
SCRFA Retirement Academy \* 501 N Mustang Road, Suite D1  
Mustang, OK 73064 \* 405-376-9976 [www.CRFA.us](http://www.CRFA.us)

### **Additional Opportunities for Study**

The SCRFA Retirement Academy Education Board offers workshops and review courses independent of the CRFA Certification Board. The CRFA Certification Board provides no training nor educational materials, and it is important to note that candidates for the CRFA are not required to purchase training or education materials from the Retirement Academy in order to pass the examination.

Attendance at SCRFA Education Board-sponsored courses is not a prerequisite to sitting for the CRFA examination, the courses are not designed to serve as examination preparation classes, nor do they serve any ancillary examination-related purposes. The course curriculums are designed specifically to review broad concepts and offer high-level overviews of Society-relevant topics and sub-topics. More information about educational opportunities may be found at the SCRFA section of the website under the SCRFA Retirement Academy. Education/training courses are neither designed nor marketed to provide the level of detailed review of technical knowledge required for examination preparation.

### **Acronyms used on the CRFA Examination**

<b><u>Acronym</u></b>	<b><u>Expansion</u></b>
AGI	Adjusted Gross Income
CD	Certificate of Deposit
CE	Continuing Education
CGET	Capital Gains Elimination Trust
CRFA	Certified Retirement Financial Advisor
DJIA	Dow Jones Industrial Average
FDIC	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
HAS	Health Savings Account
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
IRA	Individual Retirement Arrangement
IRD	Respect of a Decedent
LTC	Long-Term Care
NUA	Net Unrealized Appreciation
QTIP	Qualified Terminable Interest Property
REIT	Real Estate Investment Trust
RMD	Required minimum distribution

<b><u>Acronym</u></b>	<b><u>Expansion</u></b>
SCRFA	Society of Certified Retirement Financial Advisors
STARS	Stock Appreciation Rating System
UGMA	Uniform Gifts to Minors Accounts
UL	Universal Life
UTMA	Uniform Transfer to Minors Accounts

## **Examination Administration Rules and Regulations**

The Examination Administrator or Proctor is the CRFA Certification Board's designated agent for maintaining a secure and valid examination administration. Any individual found by the CRFA Certification Board or its agent to have engaged in conduct which compromises or attempts to compromise the integrity of the examination process will be subject to disciplinary action as sanctioned by the CRFA Certification Board and delineated in the Society bylaws, the Code of Ethics, and the CRFA Certification Board policies and procedures. Examinations are administered according to a strict protocol to ensure the security of the examination and to protect the right of each candidate to a standardized testing experience. In addition to the attestation on the CRFA Application, as a prerequisite to distribution of examination materials, candidates are required to sign a Security Affidavit agreeing to abide by all rules and regulations, including the following:

- During the registration procedures at the test site, candidates must sign the test roster and are required to produce a valid photo identification that includes a signature (Driver's License, Passport, Government issued ID).
- No books, papers, texts, references, or calculators are allowed into the examination room. Scratch paper and a pencil will be provided for use during the examination, and will be collected by the test proctor after testing. An on-screen calculator will be available during testing. No electronic devices of any kind are permitted in the testing room. If any are found, the candidate will be disqualified. If at all possible, personal belongings should not be brought to the testing site. If they are, they will be placed in a secure location, and may not be accessed by the candidate during the examination.
- No food or drink is allowed in the examination site. Candidates with a specific medical condition (e.g., hypoglycemia, pregnancy, diabetes) requiring the consumption of water or food during the examination period must submit a written request to the CRFA Certification Board for a special accommodation prior to the examination.
- Visitors are not permitted in the examination room.
- At no time during the examination may candidates give or receive help to one another, or communicate in any way. Examination Proctors have the authority to remove a candidate suspected of cheating from the examination room, at which time scores will be cancelled, and disciplinary action will be taken.
- Candidates are expected to follow all instructions from examination proctors, printed in test booklets and answer sheets, and/or displayed in the computer-

testing program. Candidates will be provided with the opportunity to ask questions prior to beginning the examination.

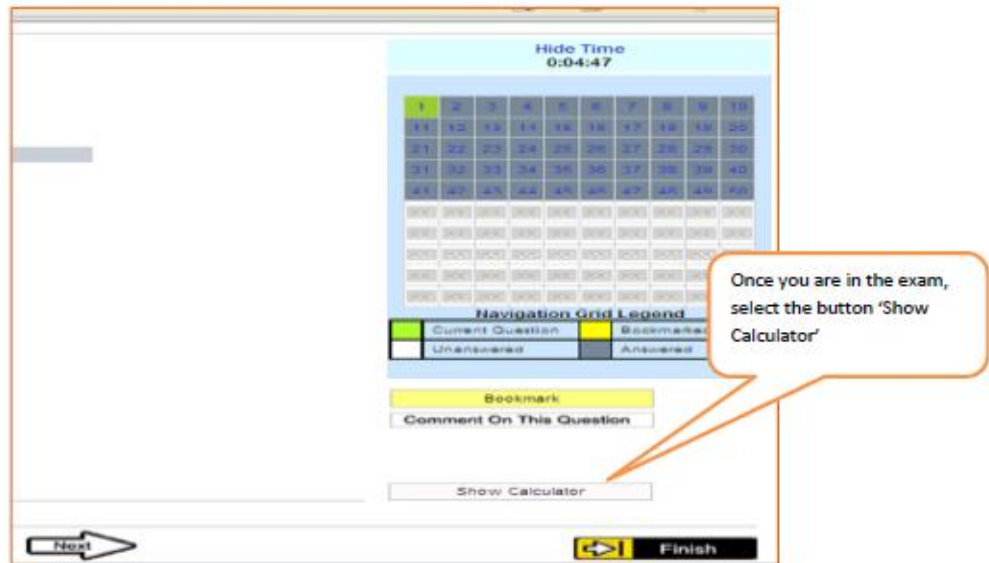
The computer-delivered examinations include a detailed five-minute tutorial program designed to give candidates confidence in the use of the program, as well as familiarity with the system prior to beginning the examination. The tutorial questions are for demonstration purposes only, and do not impact examination scores. Candidates are encouraged to take the time to complete the tutorial as it explains the features of the computerized testing system. The candidate name and the name of the examination will be shown at the upper left corner of the screen. If either of these is incorrect, candidates are asked to inform the proctor. A navigation grid is posted on the upper right of the screen, depicting the number of questions on the examination, and the status of those questions (answered, bookmarked for review, or skipped). A digital clock is also posted indicating a countdown of available time. Registered candidates may take a sample test (content is not retirement financial advisor-related) before going to the test site by accessing the testing contractor's website using the following URL link:

<https://www.iqtesting.com/Default.aspx?FunctionSampleExam&Exam=8>

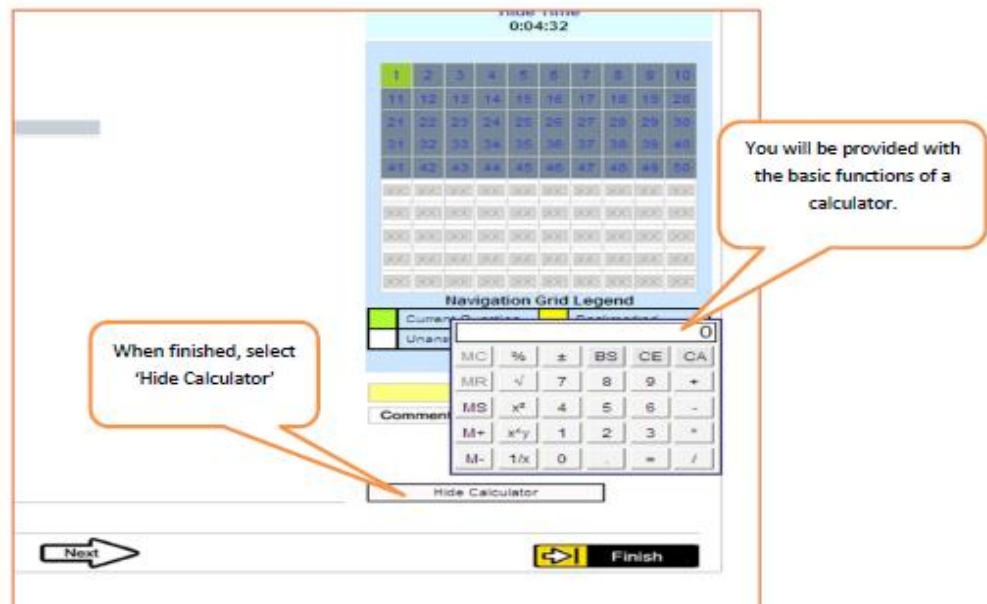
Candidates will be provided with access to an on-screen scientific calculator during testing. The calculator may be accessed and used as follows:

#### On Screen Calculator Tutorial

1.



2.



- Candidates may leave the testing room with express permission from the proctor. Candidates must sign out and sign in from the room and must surrender all testing materials when they exit. Exit from the testing room is permitted for washroom and drinking fountain visits only. Candidates may not access cell phones, nor may they leave the building during breaks. Test timing is not paused for these breaks.
- Disqualifying behaviors include:
  - Creating a disturbance;
  - Aiding or asking for aid from another candidate;
  - Any attempt to remove copy, buy, sell, or reproduce testing materials;
  - Unauthorized possession of test materials;
  - Impersonation of another candidate;
  - Use of contraband materials or equipment in the testing site;
  - Any falsification or misrepresentation of information provided during the CRFA Advisor application process.

## Candidate Comments

Candidates have the opportunity to post comments simply by clicking on the icon entitled *Comment on this Question*. Once the examination is completed, candidates may provide additional feedback and comments on the examination exit survey. Examination proctors may not discuss or comment on the examination contents. All comments and questions are reviewed and considered by the CRFA Examination

Committee; however, security procedures preclude discussion with candidates concerning individual test questions or comments. Candidates should not expect a response to a comment unless it relates to a problem with the examination administration. Candidate comments or lack thereof may be taken into consideration as evidence during the Appeals process (details of Examination Appeal protocol follows).

## **Examination Registration**

CRFA is working with Assessment Systems, our new proctor, and is in the process of transferring our test files to them from our former proctor. The following is subject to change when the transfer is complete.

Once a CRFA application is approved, candidates will receive official notification of their right to register to take the CRFA examination, and instructions on how to do so. The examination is offered via computer administration. It will be offered at various testing locations in your area.

Additional details will be posted when the transition is complete; however, we are currently offering the examination with special handling.

## **Rescheduling an Examination Registration**

Candidates scheduled to take the examination may reschedule or cancel without charge if the request is made five (5) working days in advance of the scheduled administration date. Rescheduling may be performed by contacting Linda Lee at [certification@crfa.us](mailto:certification@crfa.us). The fee for rescheduling a missed examination administration appointment is \$150.

Failure to appear at any scheduled examination site without contacting CRFA or failure to reschedule an examination date within a one-year window will cause the forfeiture of all application fees. Candidates may reapply for the CRFA program by paying the full application fee. It is the candidate's responsibility to contact the CRFA Certification Coordinator to reschedule a test administration.

## **Examination Scoring and Reporting**

Assessment Systems, the professional testing company that supports the CRFA Certification Board in the development, administration, scoring and reporting of the CRFA examination, facilitates research studies with a committee of CRFAs to establishing passing scores for each examination. Using Modified Angoff V standard-setting procedures, the CRFAs are asked to review every question on the examination and provide empirical judgments of the likelihood of competent Retirement Financial Advisors answering the question correctly. Through this process, a raw score representing competency is established. The raw passing score is translated onto a scaled reporting score. Passing the examination requires a scaled score of 70.

1. Candidates passing the examination receive notice of successful performance. The CRFA examination is a minimum competency examination, and is not intended to distinguish scores above the passing point. Numeric scores are not reported above the passing point.
2. Failing candidates receive a numeric scaled score and a report indicating content areas of weakness. The report is designed to provide a tool for study and preparation for retaking the examination.
3. At the testing site, candidates receive a preliminary printed score report upon completion of the examination; at certain times within the test development process, scores may be withheld pending test/question statistical review. In either case official scores are sent via USPS from the CRFA home office.
4. Examination scores will be provided only to the candidate, and will NOT be provided over the phone, fax, or internet.

### **Retesting for Failing Candidates**

Failing candidates are allowed to reapply to retake the examination upon payment of a \$175 reexamination fee. The first retake may take place as soon as the reexamination fee is received and processed, but no sooner than fourteen (14) days after the original examination date. Candidates failing the exam a second or any number of additional times, must wait a minimum of thirty (30) days to retest. An additional \$175 reexamination fee must be paid for any subsequent retest.

### **Examination Appeals**

Examination candidates have the right to appeal examination results within the following specified criteria established by the CRFA Disciplinary and Appeals Committee.

#### **Section 1: Grounds for Appeal**

1.01.1 Appellants may appeal examination results in situations restricted to extraordinary circumstances that:

- Arise coincidentally with the examination administration;
- Are outside the control of the appellant;
- Made the appellant's experience different from other candidate's (related to the examination administration) AND/OR affected the candidate's ability to receive credit for a test question (related to the examination content);
- Were severe enough to account for examination failure;
- Were properly reported to the Examination Administrator and the CRFA Certification Board

Unless **all** of the above circumstances are met, no circumstance will be considered grounds for appeal.

1.02 If written documentation of the extraordinary circumstances is not received by the CRFA Certification Board within seventy-two (72) hours of a computer-administered examination, an appellant will forfeit the right to appeal.

Section 2: **Method of Appeal**

Appeals shall:

- Be set out in writing;
- Detail the nature of the appeal and all particulars necessary for the appeal to be adjudicated;
- Be mailed or couriered to the CRFA Certification Board;
- Include a non-refundable fee of \$100.

Section 3: **Appeal Procedure**

3.01 Level One: CRFA Disciplinary and Appeals Committee and a CRFA Certification Board representative:

- a) An appeal shall be submitted to the CRFA Certification Board Disciplinary and Appeals Committee within fourteen (14) days of the receipt of examination scores. All communication from the CRFA Certification Board will be mailed to the address stated on the submitted appeal.
- b) A representative of the CRFA Certification Board and a member of the CRFA Disciplinary and Appeals Committee shall determine the validity of the appeal based upon the submitted documentation, as to the existence of extraordinary circumstances described in Section 1.01.
- c) A CRFA Disciplinary and Appeals Committee representative shall notify the appellant by mail within ten (10) business days of receipt of the appeal whether the appeal has been accepted or denied. Accepted appeals will be brought to the consideration of the CRFA Disciplinary and Appeals Committee.

3.02 Level Two: Disciplinary and Appeals Committee

- a) Only appeals brought forth for consideration by the CRFA Disciplinary and Appeal Committee and a CRFA Certification Board representative will be reviewed by the Appeals Committee. Review will take place within sixty (60) days of receipt of the appeal from the CRFA Certification Board.
- b) The CRFA Disciplinary and Appeals Committee shall review the following:
  - The appellant's statement of appeal;
  - A statement from the CRFA Certification Board representative concerning the exam process relative to the appeal;
  - Examiner reports and comments submitted by the appellant at the time of the examination.
- c) The CRFA Certification Board shall notify the appellant of the CRFA Disciplinary and Appeal Committee decision – by mail – within fifteen (15) business days of the hearing.
- d) No member of the CRFA Disciplinary and Appeals Committee will communicate directly with an appellant. Communication concerning the Appeal will be made between the CRFA Certification Board and the appellant.

#### Section 4: ***CRFA Disciplinary and Appeal Committee Decisions***

4.01 The CRFA Disciplinary and Appeal Committee may put forth the following decisions based upon evidence presented by the appellant and by the CRFA Certification Board:

- Grant the appeal;
- Deny the appeal;
- Deny the appeal and grant the appellant an attempt at the next examination administration without cost to the appellant.

4.02 All decisions of the CRFA Disciplinary and Appeal Committee are final.

#### **Award of the Certified Retirement Financial Advisor (CRFA) Credential**

Upon notification from the CRFA Certification Board that a candidate has successfully completed all certification requirements, candidates may use the title of *Certified Retirement Financial Advisor*, as long as all requirements for certification are maintained. Upon receipt of permission from the Certificant, newly credentialed CRFAs will be added to the CRFA Registry if permission was indicated on the CRFA Application. The CRFA designation may be used as part of a signature (i.e., on letterheads and business cards) and in accordance with the rules and regulations within the state the CRFA practices.

#### **Maintaining the CRFA Credential: Recertification and Continuing Education**

The CRFA Certification remains valid for one (1) year from the date of successful completion of the CRFA Certification requirements, including passing the examination. Continuing competence is documented through participation in continuing education, and maintaining status as a CRFA in good standing. To maintain this status, CRFAs must:

- Abide by the CRFA Code of Ethics and re-attest to this agreement on an annual basis and;
- Earn and submit documentation of the successful award of fifteen (15) hours of retirement-focused Continuing Education (CE) credits, four (4) hours of which must be related to Professional Ethics; or
- Retest and pass the certification examination with a scaled score of 70 or higher; and
- Attest to his or her good standing according to the CRFA Code of Ethics including the Standards of Practice and Policies; and
- Pay the \$295/\$345 recertification fee. This fee is subject to increase upon approval of the CRFA Board of Certification. Membership will be notified thirty (30) days, via e-newsletter, prior to increase in fees.

CE credits may be earned by attending educational seminars offered through SCRFA Retirement Academy Education Board of Directors sponsored conventions or other programming recognized by the CRFA Certification Board, such as college academic



courses. Individuals or organizations may apply to the CRFA Certification Board for consideration of recognition of educational programming for CE credit. Full information concerning CRFA recertification policies may be found on the CRFA section of the Society website.

Members are responsible for updating contact information which may be accessed online at [www.CRFA.us](http://www.CRFA.us) in the Certificant Login section. The CRFA Certification Board reserves the right to audit recertification documentation and applications. Failure to recertify within the one-year window will result in the revocation of the CRFA Credential, and members must complete the full application and examination process to recertify.

A CRFA may appeal the denial of any continuing education units or issues associated with recertification to the CRFA Disciplinary and Appeals Committee. To file an appeal, submit a written document that outlines the appeal to the CRFA Certification Coordinator at [Certification@CRFA.us](mailto:Certification@CRFA.us).

### **Fee Schedules**

Certified Retirement Financial Advisor Program Application: \$595 (\$50 non-refundable)  
Test Center computer exam admin      No Charge

Rescheduling an Examination within established deadlines:

Computer examination administration:      No Charge

Rescheduling an Examination outside of established deadlines:

Computer examination administration:      \$150

Failure to reschedule within a one-year window of the originally scheduled exam date will result in forfeiture of the entire \$595 CRFA Application Fee.

Retesting for Failing Candidates:

Computer examination administration: \$175 for first retest, and \$150 for second retest

Recertification:

1-29 days from listed expiration date - \$295 (Charter Member)/\$345 (Non-Charter Member)

30-90 days outstanding - \$295 (Charter Member)/\$345 (Non-Charter Member) plus \$25 late fee

91-180 days outstanding - \$295 (Charter Member)/\$345 (Non-Charter Member) plus \$45 late fee

181-365 days outstanding - \$295 (Charter Member)/\$345 (Non-Charter Member) plus \$100 late fee

Note: A charge of \$25 will be levied for checks issued with Insufficient Funds, or for attempts to pay via Credit Card should the card be denied during processing.

## Appendix A. Sample Questions

**Item #:** 104 () **Status:**    **Key:** C

\*\*\*\*\*Exam Specifications\*\*\*\*\*

**Specification 1:**3B General Principles: Risk Mgmt

**Specification 2:** 1 ID insurance options

**Specification 3:** a Long term care

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@.    A client spent six months in a nursing home last year and received \$27,000 (\$150/day) in benefits from a non-qualified, long-term-care insurance plan. The client's AGI was \$75,000 and their nursing home expense was \$31,500 (\$175/day). How much of the nursing home costs can the client deduct on their Schedule A as a medical expense?

- (A)    \$31,500
  - (B)    \$27,000
  - (C)    \$25,875
  - (D)    \$23,850
-

**Item #: 141 () Status: Key: B**

\*\*\*\*\*Exam Specifications\*\*\*\*\*

**Specification 1:**2A Investment Concepts: Familiarize clients with investment categories

**Specification 2:** 2 Bonds

\*\*\*\*\*

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@. An advisor is evaluating the details of the following bond for a client:

- Market Value: \$120,000
- Par Value: \$100,000
- Coupon Rate: 5.5%
- Maturity Date: December 1, 2015

When does the issuer guarantee that the client will get any principal back?

- (A) The client will receive a certain percentage back every 6 months with the bond interest payment.
  - (B) On December 1, 2015, the client will receive the face value of the bond.
  - (C) The client will get 10% back each year for the next 10 years.
  - (D) The client will not get any principal back; the purpose of the bond purchase is to buy a stream of interest payments.
-

**Item #:** 132 () **Status:** **Key:** D

\*\*\*\*\*Exam Specifications\*\*\*\*\*

**Specification 1:**4C Government Programs and SS: Understand Medicaid

**Specification 2:** 1 Qualification strategies

**Specification 3:** a Countable vs noncountable assets

\*\*\*\*\*

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@. A client has the following assets with valuations:

- House \$300,000
- Car \$ 25,000
- Stocks & Bonds \$150,000 (jointly owned)
- IRA's \$ 75,000 (owned by a well spouse)
- Annuities \$125,000 (owned by a well spouse)
- Personal Property \$60,000

If Medicaid allows spouses to retain \$101,640 of assets and \$2,541.00 per month of income, a Medicaid analysis indicates that which of the following total amounts reflects the non-countable or exempt assets?

- (A) \$60,000
  - (B) \$250,000
  - (C) \$379,900
  - (D) \$385,000
-

**Item #:** 129 () **Status:** **Key:** D

\*\*\*\*\*Exam Specifications\*\*\*\*\*

**Specification 1:**4C Government Programs and SS: Understand Medicaid

\*\*\*\*\*

- 
- @. All of the statements apply to Medicaid and long-term care EXCEPT
- (A) A well spouse may have to sell assets to pay nursing home expenses for a sick spouse.
  - (B) Medicaid is the primary source of public financing for long-term care services in the US.
  - (C) A state may go after life insurance proceeds that were intended to benefit a surviving spouse.
  - (D) Medicaid cannot file a claim against the estate of a recipient.
-

**Item #:** 122 () **Status:** **Key:** D

\*\*\*\*\*Exam Specifications\*\*\*\*\*

**Specification 1:**1A Tax Issues: Conduct general tax review

\*\*\*\*\*

- 
- @. Which of the following questions can be answered by reviewing a client's tax return?
- (A) Does the client own any annuities?
  - (B) Does the client own any savings bonds?
  - (C) Does the client own any life insurance policies?
  - (D) Does the client own any investment real estate?
-