Licensure & Certification Defined

In the United States, a professional credential is a designation of competence awarded in a variety of forms, often a license or a certification. This report provides enrollment and other information on each of the 140 programs mentioned in this document (Appendix D). The following definitions will assist in understanding the information.

**Licensure** is a non-voluntary process by which an agency of government regulates a profession. It grants permission to an individual to engage in an occupation if it finds that the applicant has attained the level of competency required to ensure that public health, safety and welfare will be reasonably protected. Licensing is always based on the action of a legislative body. Once a licensing law has been passed, it becomes illegal for anyone to engage in that occupation unless he/she has a license. Specific education and/or an examination may be part of the requirements for an individual’s license application. Licenses may require continuing education for periodic renewals.

**Professional certification** is a voluntary process by which a non-governmental professional organization grants recognition to an individual who has met certain standards. It is a credential which attests that the individual has demonstrated a certain level of mastery of a specific body of knowledge and skills within the relevant field of practice. Meeting the standard may require any of the following: specific education, work experience, or an examination of knowledge, skills and abilities needed to perform the job. Maintaining certifications often requires continuing education in approved topic areas. Certification is designed to promote and maintain integrity and quality in a given industry.

**State Mandated Certifications.** In some instances, state regulations require that persons employed in a certain profession must hold a certification from a non-governmental professional organization in recognition that certain standards have been met by the individual holding the certification.

*Source: Maryland Community Colleges Report on Non-credit Continuing Education Licensure & Certification Programs, Fiscal Year 2014, prepared by Maryland Community College Association for Continuing Education and Training (MCCACET)*