What Is Personal Certification — and Why It Matters in Supported Employment Services

A Plain Language Guide to Understanding Certification, Accreditation, and Support Standards for Workers Supporting Individuals with IDD

🧾 What Is Personal Certification?

Personal certification (also called **certification of a worker's competencies**) is one of the main ways to prove that a worker has the right **knowledge, skills, and experience** to do their job well.

It means that an **independent certification body** has checked and confirmed that the worker is competent to perform a specific role — for example, a **Direct Support Worker (DSW)** helping someone with **intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)** find and keep a job.

📌 Definition:

Certification of a worker's competencies means a demonstration by an independent party that a worker has sufficient knowledge, skills, and experience (competence) to perform work in compliance with specified requirements.
📝 This is a **form of conformity assessment** — a structured way to check and confirm that people and organizations meet standards.

🧩 What About Accreditation?

Before a certification body is allowed to certify individuals, it must prove its own competence. This is called **accreditation**.
Accreditation ensures that the certification body uses **fair, transparent, and professional procedures** and follows **international standards**.

📌 **In the U.S., these are the main accreditation bodies for personal certification**:

- **Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE)** through the **National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA)**
- **American National Standards Institute (ANSI)** — accredits to **ISO/IEC 17024**, the international standard for personal certification

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🔍 How Do I Know if Certification Is Required?

Many workers in the support services field — including DSWs, counselors, or those supporting employment goals — may perform work aligned with occupations listed in the **Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) 2018** system.

To check whether **certification is required** for a specific occupation in one or more U.S. states, you can consult the **U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH)**:
🔗 https://www.bls.gov/ooh

This applies in three key ways:

1. To the **occupation of the support worker** (e.g., Rehabilitation Counselor, Social Worker, or Job Coach).
2. To the **occupation a person with IDD wants to enter**, which may require certification or licensing (e.g., Certified Nursing Assistant, Security Guard).
3. To help assess the **quality of the service or training** a person with IDD receives — if the work involves certified roles, the worker supporting them may need to understand those standards.

This helps ensure that both the **service provider** and the **person being supported** understand what's expected and what's required under national and state systems.

🔄 How Do These Fit Together in SEMP?

In the **Supported Employment (SEMP)** service field, many people are unfamiliar with how **accreditation** and **certification** work — and why these are essential for service quality. Here's how they connect:

Element	What It Checks	Who Is Involved
Accreditation	Is the certification body competent and fair?	ICE, ANSI, others
Certification	Is the worker competent?	Certified body certifies a DSW or other role **Example:** CRCC certifies CRCs
Support Standards	What should workers know and follow?	AMSI and other consensus-based standards

✅ Together, these processes support better **quality in services for individuals with IDD** — especially in **job coaching, career planning**, and **employment support**.

🎯 Why This Matters

In the SEMP service system:

- **Certification** proves that workers are competent — not just trained, but **evaluated**.
- **Accreditation** ensures that certification programs are **trustworthy** and meet **global standards**.
- **Support standards** define what **competent work** looks like, especially in the complex and person-centered world of employment services for people with IDD.

📌 **Certification programs that follow ISO/IEC 17024** help the field grow professionally, increase public trust, and ensure fair opportunities for the individuals supported and the workers themselves.

💬 Final Note

This guide is a starting point for understanding how **personal certification, accreditation, and support standards** work together to build **inclusive, high-quality employment services**. A system built on these tools is better equipped to meet the needs of individuals with IDD — and to **recognize and reward** the professionals who support them.