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Housing Rehab in Rural Communities: Ten Certifications to Consider

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Asbestos Inspector

What we do	Asbestos Inspectors can inspect a home or building, assess conditions, take samples of suspected materials for testing, and advise about what corrections are needed. If repair or removal of asbestos materials is chosen, inspectors can ensure the corrective-action contractor has followed proper procedures, including proper clean up, and can monitor the air to ensure no increase of asbestos fibers.
Typical education & experience requirements	High school diploma, 3 day training, exam. Some states require minimum hours of experience (+1000 hours Illinois, 6 months Massachusetts)
Continuing education	Asbestos professionals must take annual refresher training, usually 4 hours, may be online.
Requirements/ Supervising entity	Federal law does not require persons who inspect, repair or remove asbestos-containing materials in detached single-family homes to be trained and accredited, although some states and localities require it. http://www2.epa.gov/asbestos/protect-your-family Otherwise, training for asbestos professionals is required under the EPA Asbestos Model Accreditation Plan (MAP) which EPA issued under the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act of 1986 (AHERA). The MAP requires the use of trained and accredited asbestos professionals when conducting asbestos inspections, and provides guidance to states on the minimum training requirements for accrediting asbestos professionals.
Approximate initial cost	3-day inspector training costs vary from \$300 (Missouri) to \$725 (Connecticut). State exam fee (\$25 Missouri), business may be required to hold additional licensing.
Approximate annual cost	Annual inspector refresher (\$60 for 4 hours in Missouri, \$135 in Massachusetts). License renewal: \$5 (Missouri) to \$100 Indiana.
Things to consider	Costs of private inspection & testing range from \$100–\$2500, follow-up \$200-400. Be clear on whether the chosen inspector is allowed to conduct both sampling and air monitoring. If you chose to certify, will your jurisdiction require additional business licensing & insurance? Could you market this service?
Where to look for more information	State asbestos contacts: http://www2.epa.gov/asbestos/state-asbestos-contacts If your state does not offer training, you must take an EPA-approved course. http://www2.epa.gov/asbestos/asbestos-professionals

Aging in Place (CAPS)

What we do	The Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS) designation program teaches the technical, business management, and customer service skills essential to providing home modifications for the aging-in-place. Several local jurisdictions, including Atlanta and Austin, already require visitability in all publicly (and some privately) funded homes.
Typical education & experience requirements	Three required courses (two of the three courses focus on marketing and business management), liability insurance, worker's compensation insurance, and valid business license.
Continuing education	12 hours every 3 years from building industry-related educational activities
Requirements/ Supervising entity	Not a required certification. National Association of Homebuilders, 1201 15th Street NW, Washington, DC 20005
Approximate initial cost	\$220–\$330 for course plus \$75–\$110 graduation fee
Approximate annual cost	\$55–\$83 annual renewal
Things to consider	Not a required certification, but may present specialized training and techniques. Two of the three courses focus on marketing and business management. According to HUD, a combination of demographic and economic shifts is creating a large and growing need for affordable and age-appropriate housing opportunities. Most seniors would prefer to age in place; home modifications are critical to this process, but the costs can be prohibitive. Many organizations are using housing as a platform to provide supportive services that adapt to the needs of seniors, allowing them to remain at home and continue to engage with their communities. Could you market this service?
Where to look for more information	www.nahb.org/en/learn/designations/certified-aging-in-place-specialist/how-to-earn-caps.aspx HUD Evidence Matters; Aging in Place: Facilitating Choice and Independence http://www.huduser.org/portal/periodicals/em/fall13/highlight1.html

Building Analyst (BPI Certified)

What We Do	BPI Certified Auditors are typically based in the existing home and retrofit industry. The Building Analyst (BA) exams verify knowledge of the fundamentals of building science, as well as the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to conduct comprehensive building performance audits, including assessing whole-building ventilation, measuring airflow, combustion safety and testing/data collection. BPI is the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) first nationwide Home Energy Score Partner, and uses DOE's Home Energy Score as our rating tool. Qualified Assessors are trained to use software that generates not only the score, but also a prioritized list of recommended energy improvements and their estimated cost savings, tailored to the customer's home.
Typical Education & Experience Requirements	Classroom & field training, 110-question exam, field test exam.
Continuing Education	Written exam or 30 CEUs every 3 years
Requirements/ Supervising Entity	More than 130 utility, state and local energy efficiency programs specify BPI credentials for their participating contractors. Building Performance Institute, Inc. 107 Hermes Road, Suite 210 Malta, New York 12020 Phone: 877-274-1274; 518-899-2727, Bpi.org
Approximate Initial Cost	BPI does not require training, but individuals completing training typically perform better on tests. Costs vary (\$2095 for 5 day live, \$1795 for 3 day blended webinar/field training). BPI Test Centers set their own prices for exams, can be \$250 for the written exam and \$500 for the field exam. Equipment (hygrometer, blower door, duct leakage testing device, digital manometer(s) normally costs between \$3600 and \$4600.
Approximate Annual Cost	Recertification every 3 years
Things to Consider	Are you typically involved with retrofit of existing buildings or new construction? BPI is primarily used in existing homes. Consider rebate programs in your area, budget and overall commitment to home performance. BPI Qualified Assessors are trained to use software that generates not only the score, but also a prioritized list of recommended energy improvements and their estimated cost savings, tailored to the customer's home. What is the availability of assessors in your area? Could you market this service?
Where to Look for More Information	www.bpi.org/bpi_raters.aspx

Healthy Homes Specialist (HHS)

What We Do	Attainment of the HHS credential demonstrates professional direction, achievement and the knowledge to carry out functions and duties of a technical nature in a responsible manner. The HHS exam tests your understanding of the connection between health and housing, enabling you to take a holistic approach to identify and resolve problems that threaten the health and well-being of residents.
Typical Education & Experience Requirements	Be at least 21 years old; five years of experience in housing, environmental health or public health. Complete a written exam.
Continuing Education	15 hours every 2 years
Requirements/ Supervising Entity	National Environmental Health Association, 720 S. Colorado Blvd., Suite 1000-N, Denver, CO 80246-1926
Approximate Initial Cost	\$175 - \$410 for exam. Training, though not required for exam, can cost \$500. This course is offered through NeighborWorks* Training http://www.neighborworks.org/Training-Services/Training-Professional-Development
Approximate Annual Cost	Earn a minimum of 15 hours of continuing education every two years; and renewal fees for your credential every two years (\$125.00 members; \$255.00 non-members).
Things to Consider	Although not a required certification for healthy homes programs, the certification does demonstrate a level of staff training and professionalism which may provide a competitive edge as programs and funding become more competitive. Could you market this service? Few professional fields are growing and changing as rapidly as environmental health, and the connections between health and housing are a key component.
Where to Look for More Information	www.neha.org/credential/hhs.html

Home Energy Rating System (HERS) Rater

What We Do	Working primarily in new home construction, a HERS rater uses an energy efficiency software package to perform an energy analysis of the home's design plans. Upon completion of the plan review, the rater will work with the builder to identify the energy efficiency improvements needed to ensure the house will meet ENERGY STAR performance guidelines. The system was largely developed to assess a home's energy use and use those results to rate the home against a standard home built to code.
Typical Education & Experience Requirements	Candidates must successfully complete training by a RESNET Accredited Rater Training Provider and must be certified by a RESNET Accredited Rating Provider. Each candidate rater must key perform functions in the presence of trainers. Certified Raters must also pass examinations. One week training and test prep recommended. Then must contract with a RESNET accredited Rating Provider.
Continuing Education	18 hours of professional development every three years
Requirements/ Supervising Entity	RESNET's standards are officially recognized by the federal government for verification of building energy performance for such programs as federal tax incentives, the Environmental Protection Agency's ENERGY STAR program and the U.S. Department of Energy's Building America Program. The 2015 International Energy Code and many state and local governments have added a HERS Index Score target as a performance compliance option to their building energy code. RESNET-accredited Rating Providers for RESNET (Residential Energy Services Network)
Approximate Initial Cost	\$100 test fee, training \$1200-\$2500, equipment (hygrometer, blower door, duct leakage testing device, digital manometer(s) and register tape) normally costs between \$3600 and \$4600.
Approximate Annual Cost	Raters pay fees to a provider to perform quality assurance some annual ratings (\$300 to \$1400 per year). Professional Liability insurance for RESNET Rater members typically costs a beginning Rater are around \$1500 per year.
Things to Consider	This rating system is used primarily in new home construction. Are you typically involved with retrofit of existing buildings or new construction? What's your motivation? Consider rebate programs in your area, budget and overall commitment to home performance. What is the availability of raters in your area? Could you market this service?
Where to Look for More Information	RESNET website: www.resnet.us/rater/certified/default.htm National Registry of Accredited Rating Providers at: www.resnet.us/programs/providers/directory.aspx

Lead Inspector/Risk Assessor

What We Do	A lead inspector conducts a surface-by-surface investigation to determine whether there is lead-based paint and where it is located. Inspections can be legally performed only by certified inspectors or risk assessors. A lead risk assessor is a specially-trained inspector who conducts an on-site investigation to determine the presence, type, severity, and location of lead-based paint hazards (including lead hazards in paint, dust, and soil) and provides suggested ways to control them. Risk assessments are often required for federally-funded projects, and can be legally performed only by certified risk assessors. http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/enforcement/lshr_renovators.cfm
Typical Education & Experience Requirements	Inspector/risk assessor requirements vary from High school diploma to combined college & years of experience with added apprenticeship period. From 24 to 48 hours of classroom training is required. Additional 8 hours of training for XRF.
Continuing Education	Refresher training varies from annually to every 3 yrs.
Requirements/ Supervising Entity	The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Lead Safe Housing Rule (HUD's LSHR, which is found in HUD's regulations at 24 CFR Part 35, Subparts B through M), generally applies to work performed in target housing units receiving HUD housing assistance, such as rehabilitation or acquisition assistance. When HUD funds pay for this work, funding often flows from HUD through cities, states or other program participants, and addressing lead-based painted surfaces becomes a routine part of the job. HUD's specific requirements depend on the amount of Federal rehabilitation assistance the project is receiving. Most states (39) are authorized to administer their own lead-abatement programs. The EPA administers the lead-based paint program in all other areas including: Alaska, Arizona, Florida, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Wyoming or American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Marianas and Tribal Lands. For a map of lead paint abatement programs: http://www2.epa.gov/lead/lead-based-paint-activities-professionals#map

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Lead Inspector/Risk Assessor (continued)

Approximate Initial Cost	Training cost varies from \$425 (Texas) to \$2475 + a \$4500 apprenticeship fee (Massachusetts). Exam fees from \$50 (Arkansas) to \$230(California). XRF training is often free from manufacturers. Purchase of an XRF can cost \$13,500–\$25,000, and are available for rent by day, week or month in some areas.
Approximate Annual Cost	Varies from \$50 (Connecticut) to \$325 (Massachusetts) per individual and additional \$250–\$625 for the company. Lead inspectors and risk assessors generally carry professional liability errors and omissions insurance. Almost all XRF devices currently on the market are required to be specifically licensed. Different states have different licensing requirements; therefore do not rely only on the device manufacturer's recommendations for licensing. Licensing for XRF from the NRC or an authorized state can cost \$500 annually.
Things to Consider	How many licensed inspectors already are in your territory? And what is the cost/availability? In some areas, inspections are competitively priced at around \$350 per unit. In others (Arizona) it can cost several thousand dollars and take days to get an inspector to travel to your location. And you will incur these costs again for re-inspection. Given the variations in cost/expenses and training requirements, there can be a significant investment in training staff and procuring equipement. In areas with lead program-specific funding and a shortage of inspectors, it may be a cost-effective investment. Could you market this service?
Where to Look for More Information	Finding an accredited training provider is the first step in getting certified. Use this searchable database to help locate accredited training programs in areas where EPA administers the lead-based paint activities program or contact the National Lead Information Center at 1-800-424-LEAD (5323). For overview of other states, Contact your state's Department of Health for individual regulations. Or try http://leadcertification.org/states.php.

Mold Assessor/Inspector

What We Do	An assessment of mold is a process performed by a mold assessor that includes the physical sampling and detailed evaluation of data obtained from a building history and inspection to formulate an initial hypothesis about the origin, identity, location, and extent of amplification of mold growth of greater than 10 square feet. http://www.myfloridalicense.com/dbpr/pro/division/Servicesthatrequirealicense_mold.html The Institute of Medicine (IOM) has found evidence to link indoor exposure to mold with a variety of upper respiratory and asthma symptoms. Some states and jurisdictions are considering regulations regarding mold professionals licensing. Laws are already established in the states of Texas,
Typical Education & Experience Requirements	Louisiana, Florida, Maryland, New York and Washington, DC. 24–76 hours of education in advanced mold assessment techniques including mold, water, and respiratory protection (PPE). 2–3 day training classes (\$400-700). Florida mold assessors must have (a) 2 year degree in a related field of science from an accredited institution and a minimum of one year of field experience or (b) a high school diploma or equivalent with 4 years of documented field experience. In Texas, applicants must submit an application and fee, pass a state approved examination, and submit to a criminal background check.
Continuing Education	Varies by location (Florida requires 14 hours annually)
Requirements/ Supervising Entity	Local states or jurisdictions
Approx. Initial Cost	Varies by location. In Florida, applications can cost \$125, license \$100.
Approximate Annual Cost	Varies by location. In Texas: \$600+. States may require insurance, which typically includes general liability and errors and omissions for both preliminary and post remediation mold assessment in an amount not less than \$1,000,000, and a general liability insurance policy in an amount of not less than \$1,000,000 that includes specific coverage for mold-related claims.
Things to Consider	Currently, there are no EPA regulations or standards for airborne mold contaminants. The CDC does not recommend routine sampling for molds. If your jurisdiction requires it, follow local guidelines. Otherwise, if there is mold growth in the home, clean up the mold and fix the water/moisture problem. The EPA has a free, on-line mold course: http://www.epa.gov/mold/mold-course/index.html
Where to Look for More Information	EPA: http://www.epa.gov/mold/, CDC: http://www.cdc.gov/mold/ NORMI National Organization of Mold Remediators and Mold Inspectors (NORMI) http://www.normi.org/ or contact 877.251.2296.

Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) Certified Renovator

What We Do	EPA's 2008 Lead-Based Paint Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) Rule (as amended in 2010 and 2011), aims to protect the public from lead-based paint hazards associated with renovation, repair and painting activities. The rule requires workers to be certified and trained in the use of lead-safe work practices, and requires renovation, repair, and painting firms to be EPA-certified. These requirements became fully effective April 22, 2010.
Typical Education & Experience Requirements	Must be age 18, Renovators are certified upon completion of an EPA accredited renovator training course. Their course completion certificate serves as their certification credential. The initial training is 8 hours.
Continuing Education	To remain certified a renovator must complete a 4 hour refresher training course every 5 years. If certification expires, the 8 hour course must be taken again to regain certification.
Requirements/ Supervising Entity	These areas have state jurisdiction over the program: (AL, DE, GA, IA, KS, MA, MS, NC, OK, OR, RI, UT, WA or WI). All others apply through the EPA
Approximate Initial Cost	Varies by state. Initial training cost approx. \$100–\$250
Approximate Annual Cost	No annual fees
Things to Consider	If your agency receives federal funds for your projects (including rental assistance) HUD's Lead-Safe Housing Rule and RRP already apply to you. http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/enforcement/lshr_renovators.cfm Compliance is not optional. Fines for non-compliance can reach \$37,500 per violation.
Where to Look for More Information	Contractors working in Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin must contact the state to find out more about its training and certification requirements. These states are authorized to administer their own RRP programs in lieu of the federal program. In other states: National Lead Information Center http://www2.epa.gov/lead/forms/lead-hotline-national-lead-information-center

Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) Certified Firm

What This Means	Any firm that is paid to perform work that disturbs lead paint or conducts lead dust sampling in housing or child-occupied facilities built before 1978 must be certified.
	This may include residential rental property owners/managers, maintenance staff, general contractors, renovators and remodelers, and special trade contractors including painters, plumbers, carpenters, electricians, and kitchen and bath specialists.
	EPA has defined the term "firm" to mean a company, partnership, corporation, sole proprietorship or individual doing business, association, or other business entity; a Federal, State, Tribal, or local government agency; or a nonprofit organization.
Typical Education & Experience Requirements	Firms must register & complete brief application; Employees must be trained.
Continuing Education	N/A
Requirements/ Supervising Entity	These areas have state jurisdiction over the program: (AL, DE, GA, IA, KS, MA, MS, NC, OK, OR, RI, UT, WA or WI). All others apply through the EPA
Approximate Initial Cost	\$300 for EPA RRP certification, (\$550 if combined with other LBP activities). Additional state fees may apply
Approximate Annual Cost	Recertify every 5 years \$300, (\$550 if combined with other LBP activities) Additional state fees may apply
Things to Consider	If your agency receives federal funds for your projects (including rental assistance) HUD's Lead-Safe Housing Rule and RRP already apply to you. http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/enforcement/lshr_renovators.cfm
	Compliance is not optional. Fines for non-compliance can reach \$37,500 per violation.
Where to Look for More Information	http://www2.epa.gov/lead/details-certification-requirements-firms Contractors working in Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin must contact the state to find out more about its training and certification requirements. These states are authorized to administer their own RRP programs in lieu of the federal program.
	In other states: National Lead Information Center http://www2.epa.gov/lead/forms/lead-hotline-national-lead-information-center

Universal Design Certified Professional (UDCP)

What We Do	The Universal Design Certified Professional (UDCP) Program addresses the concepts of Universal Design; client's needs assessment, design applications, construction techniques, electrical systems, and plumbing systems. A UDCP handles renovations that are appealing not only for "aging in place," but for anybody who wishes to move about his or her home freely, without barrier and without giving their home that "institutional" look. Families who have members with special needs also benefit from a UDCP.
Typical Education & Experience Requirements	Be primarily engaged in remodeling, have 2 years continuous experience in remodeling industry, 8 hours of Universal design remodeling/building-related education, complete written exam
Continuing Education	8 hours universal design remodeling/building-related continuing education, participation in chapter/community service projects, and paying the required fees
Requirements/ Supervising Entity	National Association of the Remodeling Industry, P.O. Box 4250, Des Plaines, IL 60016
Approximate Initial Cost	Exam & study materials: \$250-350, plus \$200–\$300 for on-line prep program, \$250–\$350 for initial certification
Approximate Annual Cost	Annual renewal \$49–\$98
Things to Consider	Age and special needs of your population. Is this a priority for your organization? Are there local, trained professionals? How much would an assessment by an outside professional cost? What would be the lead time? Could you market this service?
Where to Look for More Information	www.nari.org/industry/development/certification/ universal-design-certified-professional-udcp/

Evaluation: Is This Certification Right For Us?

Certification (What are we considering?)
Is it Required? (By a funder or regulatory agency?)
Is it Desired? (Will the education/knowledge help us to do a better job?)
Potential Staff Members/Position (Who would we certify?)
Initial Cost
Ongoing Costs
Equipment Cost
Insurance (Individual and agency?)
Business Licensing
Cost of Private Professional
Local Availability of Private Professional
Program Applicability (i.e., Lead-specific)
Marketability (Can we sell this service for a profit or to fulfill the mission?)

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