

Certification and Professional Associations

Compiled 2026-08-22 · Research data, not legal, tax, or medical advice

Research: Patient Advocate Certification + Professional Associations

Collected 2026-08-22. Confidence markers preserved from source research.

BCPA (Board Certified Patient Advocate) — PACB

- **Not legally required.** Patient advocacy is not a licensed profession in any US state. BCPA is a voluntary private certification. No license/certification needed to sit the exam.
- **Eligibility, two paths:** (a) bachelor's degree or higher; (b) equivalent experience pathway, documented in a 250-500 word narrative citing the PACB Job Task Analysis Study. All applicants: self-assessment quiz (informational only) + two letters of recommendation.
- **GAP:** exact minimum experience HOURS for the experience pathway are not published on current pages. Confirm with PACB (help@pacboard.org / 929-430-7222). Gigi qualifies on experience regardless; if she holds a BSN she qualifies on the education path outright.
- **Cost:** \$425 total (application + exam sitting), due at submission, fully refunded if the application is not approved. A scholarship program exists.
- **2026 exam windows** (remote-proctored online, no test centers):
 - Spring: applications Nov 15 2025 - Mar 27 2026; exam window Mar 7 - Apr 4 2026
 - Fall: applications May 1 2026 - Oct 23 2026; exam window Oct 3 - 31 2026
 - Results ~2 weeks after window close. Dates "subject to change."
- **PLANNING NOTE:** the Fall 2026 application window is OPEN right now and closes Oct 23, 2026. Exam sits Oct 3-31, 2026.
- **Recertification:** every 3 years. Either 30 hours PACB-approved CE (incl. 6 hrs Ethics, 3 hrs JEDI) or retake the exam.
- **Code of Ethics:** PACB publishes "The Code of Ethics for BCPAs." Exam questions are answered through an ethical-standards lens. Full itemized text not retrieved.
- Source: pacboard.org (eligibility, faq, exam, renewal-guidelines pages), accessed 2026-08-22.

Training programs — 2026 status

Program	Status	Notes
UC Berkeley Extension, Cert. in Health Advocacy	DISCONTINUED	Stopped new registrations Sept 1, 2022. Historically ~\$3,400, 8 courses, 153 hrs. Do not reference as an option.
Cleveland State University, Online Patient Advocate Certificate	ACTIVE	Explicitly maps to PACB competencies, preps for BCPA exam. 8 courses x 4 weeks. Tuition not confirmed (page 403'd).
University of Miami, Patient Advocacy Certificate (HCA 301)	ACTIVE	8 modules, online, self-paced, ~4 months, BCPA exam prep. Tuition not confirmed (page 405'd).
Sarah Lawrence College, MA in Health Advocacy	PAUSED	Not accepting new applications. Content moving to archives.slc.edu.
Notre Dame de Namur University	DOES NOT EXIST	Conflation with Univ. of Notre Dame (Indiana) undergrad rare-disease research minor. Not a professional cert.

Professional associations

APHA — The Alliance of Professional Health Advocates (aphadvocates.org) — **CONFIRMED ACTIVE**

Membership tiers:

- **PACE — \$89/yr.** Discounted training, networking, trend programming, mentorship eligibility.
- **Premium — \$289 first year, \$259 renewal** (or \$29/mo x 12). Adds speaking ops, **business and contract templates**, directory listing eligibility, medical professional consults, patient request access.
- **Premium+ADL — same price as Premium.** Adds directory-listing management for inbound patient requests.
- **PracticePartner — \$1,299/yr** (or \$149 first month + \$129/mo x 11). Adds **E&O insurance**, HIPAA-compliant practice management system, invoicing support, client management assistance.
- This is the association that supplies business-formation and contract templates to independent advocates. Relevant to Gigi's startup checklist.

Greater National Advocates (GNA) — gnanow.org — ACTIVE, patient-facing directory

Free public directory across 5 advocate categories: Medical Guidance, Special Care & Aging, Insurance & Billing, Wellness & Lifestyle, Survivor Support. **FREE for advocates** - no cost for the directory listing or the Patient Advocacy 360 (PA360) community. GNA states this is deliberate, to remove financial barriers to entering the profession. Source: gnanow.org and gnanow.org/pa360.html, accessed 2026-08-22. This should be step one for Gigi: a free listing in a national patient-facing directory.

NAHAC — National Association of Healthcare Advocacy — ACTIVE at nahac.com

- CORRECTION (2026-08-22):** an earlier pass declared NAHAC defunct. That was a wrong-TLD error. **nahac.org** belongs to the unrelated "Nevada Affordable Housing Assistance Corporation." The real association is **nahac.com**.
- Membership requires being a practicing independent patient or health care advocate and committing to NAHAC's Revised Code of Ethics (2022).
 - Dues amount NOT published on the "How to Join" page. UNCERTAIN.
 - CE webinars: \$40/credit for non-members vs \$10/credit for full members; member webinars otherwise free on demand.
 - Founding member of CHCAO (Coalition of Health Care Advocacy Organizations) with Greater National Advocates, Patient Advocacy Council Board, and HealthAdvocateX.
 - Corroborating evidence NAHAC is real and current: it appears on PACB's own pre-approved CE provider list.
 - Source: nahac.com/how-to-join, nahac.com/chcao, accessed 2026-08-22.

PACB pre-approved CE providers (useful for Gigi's recert planning)

Arizona Association of Patient Advocates, APHA, Certified Senior Advisor, HealthAdvocateX, NAHAC, Pulse Center for Patient Safety, Triage Cancer. Note: **no universities on this list** — the academic certificates below are not PACB CE providers. Source: pacboard.org/pre-approved-ce-list, accessed 2026-08-22.

Texas legislature

No bill found in the Texas 89th Legislature (2025-26) regulating or licensing "patient advocate" as a title. **NEGATIVE RESULT FROM SEARCH ONLY** - not confirmed against capitol.texas.gov bill search directly. Low risk either way, but worth a direct check before making a claim about it in writing.

Open gaps

- Exact BCPA experience-pathway hour thresholds
- Cleveland State and Miami tuition figures
- GNA membership pricing
- Direct capitol.texas.gov confirmation

CONFLICT LOG — two research passes disagreed

Item	Pass 1 said	Pass 2 said	Resolution
NAHAC	Defunct, nahac.org is a housing nonprofit	Active at nahac.com	Pass 2 correct. Wrong TLD in pass 1. NAHAC is real.
Univ. of Miami cert	ACTIVE (HCA 301, 8 modules, ~4 months)	Not found in current ucontinue.miami.edu catalog	UNRESOLVED, low stakes. Verify directly if Gigi wants it.

Item	Pass 1 said	Pass 2 said	Resolution
Cleveland State cert	ACTIVE, 8 courses x 4 weeks	Could not locate program page, 404s	UNRESOLVED, low stakes. Verify directly.
UC Berkeley cert	Discontinued Sept 2022	Discontinued Sept 2022	Agreed. Do not reference.
Sarah Lawrence MA	Paused	Exists, not accepting applications	Agreed.
Notre Dame de Namur	Does not exist, conflation	Not found on ndnu.edu	Agreed. Does not exist.

Additional programs surfaced (secondary source, unverified against each school)

Assumption College (MA or post-bachelor's certificate, online), Southern Vermont College (bachelor's/certificate in Healthcare Management and Advocacy), University of Wisconsin (two graduate certificates), Whatcom Community College (6-month course with field experience). Source: healthadvocateprograms.com master list, accessed 2026-08-22. Treat as a directory, not confirmed.

BOTTOM LINE FOR THE DECK

Gigi does not need any of this to start. Patient advocacy is unlicensed in every state. The credential is a credibility asset, not a gate. Cheapest credible sequence: free GNA directory listing, then APHA PACE at \$89/yr (or Premium at \$289 for the contract templates and HIPAA forms), then BCPA at \$425 when she wants the letters after her name. The Fall 2026 BCPA application window closes Oct 23, 2026 if she wants to sit this year.