

VLTA's Virginia Certified Title Settlement Agent Course

Description

To become licensed as a barber in Virginia, you must complete a 1,500-hour training program and pass an exam. Remarkably, there is no training or exam required to conduct a closing, send documents to record, or manage millions of dollars of other people's money. A bad haircut will eventually grow out. But no one forgets when the closing is a disaster.

The duties of a settlement agent extend far beyond the closing table. A settlement agent is responsible for escrow, closing and settlement services, defined by statute to include placing orders for title insurance, receiving and issuing receipts for money received from the parties, ordering loan checks and payoffs, ordering surveys and inspections, preparing settlement statements or closing disclosures, determining that all closing documents conform to the parties' contract requirements, setting the closing appointment, following up with the parties to ensure that the transaction progresses to closing, ascertaining that the lenders' instructions have been satisfied, conducting a closing conference at which the documents are executed, receiving and disbursing funds, completing form documents and instruments selected by and in accordance with instructions of the parties to the transaction, handling or arranging for the recording of documents, sending recorded documents to the lender, sending the recorded deed and the title policy to the buyer, and reporting federal income tax information for the real estate sale to the Internal Revenue Service.

Where does one go to learn all this stuff? The traditional route is to learn by doing—shadowing an experienced settlement agent who shows you the ropes. But consistent mentorship doesn't always happen. Perhaps the traditional route that most of us have experienced is more like being thrown into the fire, figuring it out as you go along.

This should not be the case when it comes to the services performed by a settlement agent, especially when you think of the responsibility and liability that you have when managing deeds, security instruments, and other people's money.

Thankfully, this is not the case. The VLTA has a course that addresses this need: the Virginia Certified Title Settlement Agent (VCTSA) course. After providing a big picture of real estate transactions and the role of the settlement agent, as well as defining the statutory procedure for registering as a settlement agent, this course takes a largely chronological approach. Acknowledging that the settlement agent must follow three sets of instructions from the lender, the title agent, and the parties themselves, the course describes the various activities that the settlement agent performs, grouped as pre-closing activities, closing activities and post-closing activities.

Practical focus is given to helping the student understand and explain the loan package and other settlement papers at closing, providing the student with a customizable, sample script. Attention is then given to other activities, like managing the escrow account and restraints on marketing and fees. The course concludes by talking about the digitization of the real estate process and what the future may hold for us all in the land title industry.

Says Ali Newkirk, after taking the course:

My ONLY regret regarding Kevin's VCTSA class is that I didn't take it sooner. It is a valuable resource for anyone new to sitting at the table. His sample scripts are fantastic. I hear myself going to Kevin's version if the client still looks puzzled after delivering my personal go to. His method of dealing with a reader works. I have used it successfully more than once. He goes into great depth on all subjects and gives practical advice along the way. I highly recommend this course for anyone at any stage of their career as a settlement agent.

The VLTA stands alone in offering a course such as this one. And I am very proud to play a part in this much needed resource. For more information and to register for the course, click [here](#).

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Kevin T. Pogoda serves as First Vice President and Virginia State Manager, Northern Division at Old Republic National Title Insurance Company. In his capacity as Virginia State Manager, Kevin regularly speaks as an instructor before various groups, including attorneys, real estate agents, title examiners and title settlement agents. Kevin is also a Past President of the Virginia Land Title Association and is the proud recipient of VLTA's Distinguished Service Award for 2017 and the 2021 VLTA Presidential Award for Service.

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