

# THE ASPPA Journal

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## Profile on EPIC Advisors, Inc.

by Sarah Simoneaux, CPC

EPIC Advisors, Inc., a retirement plan services provider and recordkeeper in Rochester, NY, believes in the importance of education for all aspects of its retirement plan business. When Jean Dailey, EPIC's senior manager in charge of training, first came to the firm, EPIC's leadership tasked her with finding the best program for retirement plan education and credentialing. Jean notes, "With such a strong commitment to employee education, we had to find the best education program for EPIC's staff. As we researched the alternatives, we realized that the best program was ASPPA's." Jean was speaking from experience, as she holds the CPC, QPA, QKA and QPFC credentials with ASPPA.


**E**PIC began utilizing ASPPA's education and credentialing programs in 2000. The firm currently has 75 employees, 29 of whom are credentialed. EPIC requires all new hires to complete the Retirement Plan Fundamentals program (RPF-1 and RPF-2 examinations). ASPPA credentials are specifically required for the compliance group personnel, who must achieve at least their QKAs within two years. Although they currently have an internal QKA study group that tackles a chapter of the study material each week, the firm is planning to review ASPPA's new webcourse series to supplement existing study materials.

EPIC has recently started a study group for the PFC-1 and PFC-2 examinations (required to attain the QPFC credential). Encouraging the QPFC credential for its advisors and relationship managers is a natural outgrowth of EPIC's commitment to education for its operational and compliance areas. EPIC feels that QPFC-credentialed employees can best deliver the message to employers of the need for fee transparency, fiduciary compliance and consultative

plan design. Manny Marques, CPC, QPA, QKA, QPFC, EPIC's senior manager of client services and a recent QPFC designee, points out the value of studying for the QPFC credential, "The QPFC program is excellent at helping advisors understand the financial aspects of qualified retirement plans, and it is especially good at combining investment and plan design concepts. ASPPA's QPFC is the ideal program to move investment-oriented employees into a consultative advisory role."

Although EPIC's mainstay is 401(k) plans, its book of business also includes 403(b), 457 and non-qualified plans. As a result, 13 EPIC employees recently participated in a study group for ASPPA's Tax-Exempt & Governmental Plan Administration course (TGPC-1) to prepare for the 2009 TGPC-1 examination. It is anticipated that an additional study group will be formed in spring 2010 to prepare for the TGPC-2 examination. (Editor's Note: Completion of RPF-1, RPF-2, TGPC-1 and TGPC-2 examinations qualify candidates for ASPPA's Tax-Exempt & Governmental Plan Consultant credential—TGPC.)

Jean and Manny both point out the importance of EPIC's leadership support for ASPPA education and credentials. The company provides a generous budget for education, reimbursing for study materials and passed examinations. The firm also gives bonuses when employees pass examinations and awards salary increases for those who earn ASPPA credentials. In addition to supporting ASPPA's credentialing programs, EPIC employees also attend ASPPA conferences, ASPPA webcasts and utilize *The ERISA Outline Book* by Sal L. Tripodi, APM, that is published and distributed by ASPPA.

EPIC's commitment to education has directly impacted the firm's bottom line—client surveys consistently cite EPIC's consultative skills at all employee levels as one of the reasons for doing business with the firm. Despite the economic downturn over the last two years, EPIC's client base has continued to grow. "Plan sponsors and institutions will always do business with a knowledgeable, consultative service provider," notes Manny, "and ASPPA's programs have helped us to remain competitive even in an extremely difficult market." 

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*Sarah L. Simoneaux, CPC, is president of Simoneaux Consulting Services, Inc., located in Mandeville, LA, a firm offering consulting services to for-profit companies providing retirement services and to non-profit organizations. Sarah also provides consulting through Simoneaux & Stroud Consulting Services, specializing in business planning, business consulting, professional development, industry research and customized skill building workshops. She has worked in the employee benefits industry since 1981. Sarah was formerly vice president of Actuarial Systems Corporation (ASC). Prior to her position at ASC, she was a partner in JWT Associates, a qualified plan consulting firm in Los Angeles, CA. Sarah has volunteered her services in various capacities to assist ASPPA, and she served as the 2005-2006 ASPPA President. She currently works with the ASPPA Education and Examination Committee and she authored a book for the Qualified Plan Financial Consultant credentialing program. Sarah earned her Certified Pension Consultant (CPC) credential from ASPPA in 1988. ([sarah.simoneaux@scs-consultants.com](mailto:sarah.simoneaux@scs-consultants.com))*