

WHAT IS A NOTARY SIGNING AGENT

Q: What functions do Notary Signing Agents perform?

A: The Notary Signing Agent meets with the borrower at a designated location, ensures that the borrower signs, initials and dates the loan documents in all appropriate places and then notarizes the borrower's signature where necessary. Once this is completed, it is the Notary Signing Agent's responsibility to see that the signed and notarized loan documents are delivered to the closing agent or other designated office.

Q: Why is there a need for Notary Signing Agents?

A: The concept of having a specialized witness visit a borrower's home or business to expedite loan signings was unknown before the 1990s. In the past, able-bodied borrowers would have to travel to a lending, escrow or title office to sign loan papers. However, record low interest rates, a boom in refinancings, a growing corporate preference for "out-sourcing" and demands for faster service have changed signing procedures. In today's competitive loan market, borrowers no longer tolerate the inconvenience of having to leave work or home to sign loan papers. Therefore, closing or signing agencies contract with Notaries who travel to the borrower and ensure that the needed documents are correctly and expeditiously signed, dated, notarized and returned.

Q: How does this benefit the borrower?

A: By meeting the borrower at home or another convenient location for the signing, the Notary Signing Agent eliminates the need for a time-consuming trip by the borrower to close the loan. This is more convenient for both the closing agent and the borrower. The Notary Signing Agent also provides assurance that the signed and notarized documents will be delivered by the pertinent deadline.

Q: Why use Notaries for this service?

A: Notaries, in their unique role as public officers employed in private enterprise, are required by law to display a high level of honesty and integrity in their work, which gives lenders confidence in them as trustworthy Signing Agents. In addition, Notaries can be found in every part of the United States, providing a reliable nationwide resource for borrowers that is available even in remote locations.

Q: What are the requirements for a Notary Signing Agent?

A: First, the person must be a commissioned Notary Public. Each state has different requirements for Notary applicants. The Notary Signing Agent must be well-versed in correct notarization procedures and familiar with the documents being presented to borrowers. A good Notary Signing Agent is professional, well-organized and, above all, highly responsible.

Notary Signing Agents can also distinguish themselves by completing a specialized certification program that recognizes them as competent and knowledgeable in the field. Certified Notary Signing Agents are in great demand by lenders.

Q: Who selects the Notary Signing Agent?

A: A closing agent, who may be an escrow officer or attorney, may select a Notary Signing Agent directly, or request a Notary's assistance through a third-party document signing service or other intermediary. Many closing firms and signing services keep lists of Notaries on file in order to locate a Notary quickly.

Q: What are the costs for Notary Signing Agent services? (Or Why do Notary Signing Agents Earn More than Notary Publics?)

A: The Notary Signing Agent's fee covers tasks beyond notarization that usually include identifying document signature spaces, courier services, and ensuring that the package is returned to the issuing agency in a timely manner. Like attorneys or real estate agents who also are Notaries, Notary Signing Agents wear "two hats," deriving income not only from their notarial services, but also for performing other functions.

Fees for Notary Signing Agent services vary according to the type of transaction, amount of travel involved, extra duplication & handling of documents, & the amount of advance notice provided on the signing. Usually, these costs are included by the title company as part of their closing/settlement fees.

Most state laws regulate fees that can be charged for each notarization and these fees should be recorded in a journal of notarial acts. The additional income for services as a Notary Signing Agent may also be noted in the journal or in a separate log kept for that purpose.

Q: Does the Notary Signing Agent replace an attorney or closing agent?

A: No. The Notary Signing Agent is prohibited by law from preparing documents or answering specific questions about the loan. If the borrower has questions during the signing, the Notary must refer them to the closing agent or the lender. Notary Signing Agents work for closing agents.

The Notary Signing Agent's duty is to make sure each signer is physically present and is identified appropriately, that all documents are signed and initialed, and that each signature that requires notarization is properly notarized. The Notary Signing Agent is also responsible for ensuring that the documents are returned to the lender.