

Mold Inspector Vetting Guide

How to verify credentials and avoid unqualified inspectors

- ✓ CMI, CMC, CMRS, CIE certifications explained
- ✓ The critical rule: never hire the same company to test and remediate
- ✓ 10 red flags that indicate an unqualified or conflicted inspector
- ✓ Sample vetting questionnaire you can send to providers

Understanding Mold Inspector Certifications

The mold inspection industry has no single federal licensing requirement, which makes certification verification critical. Two organizations issue the most recognized credentials: the American Council for Accredited Certification (ACAC) and MICRO (Mold Inspection Consulting and Remediation Organization). Understanding the certification hierarchy helps you separate qualified professionals from weekend warriors with a moisture meter.

Certification Hierarchy

Level	Certification	Issuing Body	What It Proves
Entry	CIE (Council-certified Indoor Environmentalist)	ACAC	Baseline indoor environmental knowledge; entry-level credential
Professional	CMI (Council-certified Microbial Investigator)	ACAC	Qualified to perform mold inspection, air/surface sampling, interpret lab results, design remediation protocols. Requires 2 years field experience (1 year with science degree)
Expert	CMC (Council-certified Microbial Consultant)	ACAC	Highest ACAC investigation credential. Requires 8 years field experience (4 with degree). Expert-level consulting and litigation support
Remediation	CMRS (Council-certified Microbial Remediation Supervisor)	ACAC	Supervises mold remediation projects. 8 years experience required. Should NOT be your inspector (conflict of interest)

Additional Certifications

Certification	Issuing Body	Purpose
CMI (Certified Mold Inspector)	MICRO	Nationally recognized mold inspection credential; course + exam based
CMR (Certified Mold Remediator)	MICRO	Remediation credential; separate from inspection
	ACAC	

Certification	Issuing Body	Purpose
CSMI (Council-certified Structural Mold Investigator)		Structural damage assessment from mold; specialist credential
CRMI (Council-certified Residential Mold Inspector)	ACAC	Residential-focused inspection; newer credential
CIH (Certified Industrial Hygienist)	ABIH	Gold standard for indoor air quality; requires master's degree + 5 years experience

Full Certification Comparison

Attribute	CMI (ACAC)	CMC (ACAC)	CIH (ABIH)	CMI (MICRO)
Full Name	Council-certified Microbial Investigator	Council-certified Microbial Consultant	Certified Industrial Hygienist	Certified Mold Inspector
Issuing Body	ACAC	ACAC	ABIH	MICRO
Experience Required	2 years (1 with degree)	8 years (4 with degree)	5 years + master's degree	Course completion
Exam Required	Yes — proctored	Yes — proctored	Yes — comprehensive	Yes — online
CE Renewal	Biennial	Biennial	Annual (ongoing education)	Annual
Court Recognition	Widely accepted	Expert witness level	Gold standard	Accepted regionally
Scope	Inspection, sampling, protocols	Full consulting + litigation	All indoor environmental hazards	Mold inspection and sampling
Cost to Obtain	~\$300-\$500 (exam + application)	~\$300-\$500 (exam + application)	~\$500+ (exam + maintenance)	~\$500-\$800 (course + exam)

CMI (ACAC) is the professional baseline.

If an inspector doesn't hold at least a CMI from ACAC, MICRO, or CIH from ABIH, they haven't demonstrated competency through a rigorous, proctored examination. For litigation or insurance claims, look for CMC or CIH.

State Licensing & Regulation

Two-column layout

States That License or Regulate Mold Inspectors

Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Maryland, New Hampshire, Virginia, Tennessee, Illinois (some of the strictest requirements)

States With No Mold Inspector Licensing

Most states have NO specific mold inspector licensing requirement. This makes third-party certification (ACAC, MICRO, ABIH) even more critical — it's the only quality assurance available.

- **Texas:** Mold assessors must hold a Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) license. Requires passing a state exam plus proof of financial responsibility (\$1M+). Verify at tdlr.texas.gov.
- **Florida:** Mold assessors and remediators must be licensed under Chapter 468, Part XVI. Requires training, exam, and insurance. Verify through DBPR.
- **Louisiana:** State licensing through the State Licensing Board for Contractors. Requires exam and insurance.
- **Maryland:** Department of the Environment license required. Training and exam mandated.

Even in non-licensing states, individual insurance companies, real estate firms, and courts may require recognized certification. "No state requirement" does NOT mean "no certification needed for credible work."

The Golden Rule: Separate Testing from Remediation

Why Your Inspector Should NEVER Be Your Remediator

The single most important rule in mold inspection is this: the company that tests for mold should never be the company that remediates it. This is the #1 consumer protection principle in the industry, and violating it creates a direct financial incentive to overstate problems.

Two-column comparison

Independent Inspector	Inspector/Remediator Combo
Paid flat fee regardless of findings	More mold found = more remediation revenue
No financial incentive to exaggerate	Direct profit motive to overstate
Report serves as unbiased scope of work	Report conveniently requires their services
Post-remediation clearance is credible	"Passing" their own clearance test is meaningless
Industry standard practice	Considered unethical by ACAC, IICRC, and most state regulators

If a company offers "free mold testing" and also does remediation, run.

Free testing is a sales tool. They will find mold (every building has some) and quote \$5,000-\$15,000 in remediation. Pay \$300-\$700 for an independent test instead.

States that legally require separation

Texas, New York, and several others mandate by law that the same entity cannot perform both assessment and remediation on the same project.

10 Red Flags of an Unqualified Inspector

1 Offers both testing and remediation.

The biggest conflict of interest in the industry. An inspector who profits from finding problems will always find problems.

2 "Free mold inspection" marketing.

Legitimate inspections cost \$300–\$700. Free inspections are a sales funnel for remediation services.

3 No verifiable certifications.

Cannot produce ACAC, MICRO, or ABIH credentials. Vague claims like "certified mold specialist" or "board certified" with no verifiable number.

4 Uses "black mold" scare tactics.

While *Stachybotrys chartarum* exists, many black-colored molds are relatively harmless. Fearmongering about "toxic black mold" is a manipulation tactic.

5 Recommends excessive sampling.

A standard 2,000 sq ft home needs 3–5 air samples. If someone proposes 10+ samples without clear justification, they're padding the bill.

6 No outdoor control sample.

Every credible air sampling protocol requires an outdoor baseline sample. Without it, indoor results are meaningless. If they skip this, walk away.

7 Won't provide a written protocol.

A qualified inspector delivers a written report with specific findings, lab results, photos, and remediation recommendations. Verbal-only results are unacceptable.

8 No E&O insurance.

Errors and omissions insurance protects you if the inspector misses something. Ask for proof of coverage and policy limits.

9 Pressure to decide immediately.

Legitimate inspectors present findings and let you evaluate. High-pressure tactics ("this is urgent — we need to start remediation today") are a sales technique.

10 Lab results from unknown or in-house labs.

Credible inspectors use accredited third-party labs (AIHA EMLAP accredited). In-house labs create the same conflict of interest as combined testing/remediation.



When Certification Level Matters (Decision Matrix)

Two-column layout

HIRE CERTIFIED (CMI minimum, CMC/CIH preferred) WHEN

- Real estate transaction (buyer or seller)
- Health symptoms suspected mold-related
- Post-water damage assessment
- Insurance claim documentation
- Litigation or legal dispute
- Post-remediation clearance testing
- Commercial property assessment
- Multi-unit property inspection

CERTIFICATION LESS CRITICAL WHEN

- Routine annual maintenance check with no symptoms
- Visible minor surface mold on bathroom tile (clean it yourself)
- Even here: if you hire someone, verify basic credentials

Cost comparison

Factor	Certified (CMI/CMC/CIH)	Uncertified / "Mold Specialist"
Inspection + 3 samples	\$400-\$750	\$200-\$400
Lab used	AIHA-accredited third-party	Unknown or in-house
Report quality	Detailed protocol with photos	May be verbal or cursory
Court admissibility	Strong	Likely challenged
Professional oversight	ACAC/ABIH ethics code, CE	None
E&O insurance	Standard	Varies
		May not be accepted

Factor	Certified (CMI/CMC/CIH)	Uncertified / "Mold Specialist"
Post-remediation clearance	Accepted by contractors and insurers	

Sample Vetting Questionnaire

Mold Inspector Vetting Questionnaire — Send This Before Hiring

Copy and send these questions to any mold inspector you're considering. Their answers will tell you everything you need to know.

1. Credentials & Independence

- What certifications do you currently hold (CMI, CMC, CIH, CSMI)?
- What is your certification number? Can I verify it online?
- Are you licensed in this state (if applicable)?
- Do you perform mold remediation in addition to inspection? (If yes — disqualify)

2. Experience & Capabilities

- How many years have you been performing mold inspections?
- Approximately how many inspections do you perform per year?
- Do you have experience with [specific situation — post-flood, commercial HVAC, crawlspace]?
- What type of air sampling equipment do you use?

3. Lab & Reporting

- What laboratory processes your samples? Are they AIHA EMLAP accredited?
- Do you include an outdoor control sample with every air sampling job?
- What is your standard report turnaround time?
- Will the report include a written remediation protocol if mold is found?

4. Insurance & Business

- Do you carry errors & omissions (professional liability) insurance? What are your limits?
- Do you provide itemized invoices that separate inspection fee, sampling, and lab costs?
- What is your cancellation policy?

5. Sampling Protocol

- How many air samples do you recommend for my property size?
- Under what circumstances would you recommend surface sampling vs. air sampling?
- Do you perform moisture mapping / thermal imaging? Is it included or extra?

6. References

- Can you provide 2-3 recent client references?
- Can you share a sample inspection report (redacted)?

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