



# NWMAF

National Women's Martial Arts Federation

**Thank you for your interest in becoming a National Women's Martial Arts Federation (NWMAF) certified self-defense instructor.** For more than 30 years, NWMAF has been in the forefront of certifying and supporting female-identified self-defense teachers through professional development. The NWMAF's training programs provide opportunities for new generations to take on this important work. We look forward to helping you achieve your certification and to welcoming you into our national network of affiliated instructors.

### **Who Is This Application For?**

This application is intended for individuals who want to become NWMAF certified self-defense instructors but do not have access to an Accredited Empowerment Self-Defense Instructor Training Program. Instructors who do have access to these Accredited Programs must still apply for certification, but the requirements are simplified, since it is assumed that they will fulfill most of the requirements through their school.

### **Overview of Requirements for Certification:**

NWMAF certification is for experienced self-defense instructors who have **taught or co-taught a minimum of 50 hours of self-defense** (these hours must be separate from ongoing martial arts classes). In addition, an applicant must have **trained for at least three years (approximately 500 hours)** in a self-defense or martial art system. You will be asked to document your training and teaching experience later in this application.

Unlike most other certification programs, NWMAF does not train instructors to teach a specific curriculum. What unites NWMAF certified self-defense instructors is our commitment to framing self-defense teaching around call a **feminist empowerment model** (sometimes shortened to simply, **'empowerment model'**). The model refers to a shared vision of self-defense that is broad and flexible enough that instructors can implement it in a variety of ways.

The feminist empowerment model is rooted in an understanding of violence, particularly gender-based violence, as a widespread social problem perpetuated by imbalances of power and disrespect for others. Violence takes varied forms and can be perpetrated and experienced by individuals as well as groups. The feminist empowerment model of self-defense provides analysis, accurate information, strategies, tools, and support for individuals and communities to recognize, interrupt and prevent violence in ways that are both effective and do the least harm. Teachers who are informed by a feminist empowerment model are diligent in their attempts to create physically and emotionally safe learning environment and to promote self-determination in the classroom. They have respect for the knowledge and skills that students have gained from experiences of violence in their own lives and in their communities. They are

also committed to expanding students' awareness of violence experienced by others. Some teachers have the additional goal to encourage active peace-making and anti-violence activism.

Additional background materials on core competencies, dealing with diverse groups, and mentoring can be found at [www.nwmaf.org](http://www.nwmaf.org). You may find these resources helpful as you articulate your own version of the feminist empowerment model.

The NWMAF is committed to accessibility, and in support of this goal, we encourage instructors to offer programs that require a relatively small time commitment. We, therefore, require your application to include **written curricula for two basic programs as part of this application**: a single session workshop (1-3 hours) and a multi-session course (8-24 hours).

### **SPO Certification**

We recognize that some self-defense instructors do not teach multi-session courses. If this is true of you, you may instead request the SPO ("short program only") level of certification. SPO applicants do not need to submit curricula for a multi-session course. This is the only difference between the two certifications.

If you are an experienced self-defense teacher who works within the feminist empowerment model, but have never written down what you do, then creating written curricula for the two types of required basic programs will be your first step on the path to certification. Many of us have found documenting our curricula is useful when requesting funding and support from our communities as well as providing guidelines for training other instructors. Ideally your written curricula will:

- be in outline form with clear time allocations given for each section (the reviewers understand that when implementing the outline adjustments may need to be made depending on each situation)
- Indicate what type of activity is happening (lecture, small group discussion, line drill, practice with partners, role plays, etc.)
- avoid jargon that your reviewer won't understand (i.e. the 1-2-3 drill)
- Include more detailed teacher-notes that support the outline you use in class.

Since it is difficult to ascertain a teacher's effectiveness on the basis of written materials alone, the application for certification requires that you also **show how you teach**. Options for showing how you teach include:

- 1) Submitting a recorded video of one of your short workshop programs (technological sophistication not required since it's not for public consumption)
- 2) Making arrangements for a reviewer to observe or participate in one of your workshops in person
- 3) Making arrangements for a reviewer to observe a workshop remotely using a video-chat or web-conferencing technology
- 4) If a video recording or direct observation is not possible, we will also accept an audio tape of a short workshop program.

If you would like for a reviewer to observe a workshop (in person or remotely), please contact us at [certification@nwmaf.org](mailto:certification@nwmaf.org) to have a reviewer assigned to you.

The form the reviewer will use as a guideline for evaluating your application can be found in Appendix A. Among the things your reviewer will be evaluating are:

- How you use the empowerment model in your self-defense teaching
- What methods you use to establish and maintain an atmosphere of physical and emotional safety and respect in your classroom
- How you present information and data and provide a context to help students understand their applicability
- How you describe, demonstrate, and create opportunities for students to practice both verbal and physical skills and how you present the relationship between them.

NWMAF affiliated self-defense instructors benefit greatly from sharing skills and building relationships with other teachers at the annual NWMAF conference. There is also a hope and expectation that certified instructors will get involved, and when possible, take leadership in carrying NWMAF's self-defense work forward. For these reasons, **applicants are required to attend the Self-Defense Instruction Conference (SDIC) prior to submitting their application for certification.** Applicants are also required to attend a Self-Defense Empowerment Model Course. This model course is also presented at the annual NWMAF conference, and applicants may take the course there. Additionally, presenters of past model courses and instructors at accredited schools may also present a model course. Contact [selfdefense@nwmaf.org](mailto:selfdefense@nwmaf.org) or [certification@nwmaf.org](mailto:certification@nwmaf.org) for Model Course options, or look for Accredited Schools at [nwmaf.org](http://nwmaf.org).

Attending these will also provide you with an overview and understanding of the variety of ways NWMAF instructors put the feminist empowerment model into practice.

#### **Checklist for Submitting your NWMAF Self-Defense Instructor Certification Application**

- ☐ Current NWMAF membership. Applications will not be accepted from non-NWMAF members or applicants whose membership has lapsed
- ☐ Application for certification
- ☐ Written curriculum for short workshop (1-3 hours)
- ☐ Written curriculum for multi-session course (8-24 hours) (unless applying for SPO Certification)
- ☐ Video or audio recording of a short workshop you have taught (waived if reviewer is able to observe you teaching first-hand)
- ☐ Letters of Reference: Three letters of reference. At least one must be from a student, and all three may be from this source. Other options include a self-defense teacher you have taught with and/or from a representative of an agency or organization for which you have taught self-defense
- ☐ Attestation from your primary martial arts instructor that you have trained consistently for at least 3 years, or written explanation as to why you cannot obtain this attestation

- ❑ Application Fee: Send a non-refundable check or money order payable to NWMAF for \$125.00 (US funds) to Certification Coordinator Amy Jones (see address below), noting on the memo line that the check/money order is for “application for certification.” This fee will be valid for five years from your certification date as long as your yearly NWMAF membership is up to date. Re-certification is required every 5 years. The fee may be negotiable in certain cases.

E-mail your completed application to the Certification Coordinator at [certification@nwmaf.org](mailto:certification@nwmaf.org) (subject line: “Certification Application,” or send two printed copies along with your check, letters of reference and additional materials as required. Be sure to sign where necessary.

If you cannot send electronically, please mail all materials to:

Amy Jones, NWMAF Certification Coordinator  
c/o Culture of Safety, LLC  
6509 N. Ashland Ave; Unit 2  
Chicago, IL 60626

Amy will assign your application to two reviewers (unless reviewers have already been assigned). One reviewer will call you after both have reviewed your materials. Your reviewer may have questions about your application as well as make suggestions for ways your curriculum and/or discussion can be enhanced to implement the feminist empowerment model. You will receive written feedback from your reviewer on your answers to the application questions, your written curricula, and your demonstration (video, audio, or in person). Once a final decision has been made to certify you, your NWMAF certificate will be mailed to you or presented at the next NWMAF Special Training.

## NWMAF Self-Defense Instructor Certification Application

Please fill out this application completely by responding to each question. Use additional space as needed. Typed applications are required (hand-written applications not accepted).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City and State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (day): \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (eve): \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Your Self-Defense Background and Experience

1. Please describe your motivation for becoming an empowerment self-defense instructor and seeking certification from NWMAF. Please let us know if you are also a member of, or certified by, any other self-defense organization and, if so, which one(s).
2. Indicate whether you are applying for SPO (Short Program Only) Certification or Full Certification.
3. Describe your training for teaching Self-Defense
  - a. Training in a Martial arts or Self-Defense System (Minimum requirement: 3 years). Indicate approximately how many hours you've trained. If currently active in a martial arts or self-defense system, what does this include?
  - b. Additional training and experiences that have contributed to 1) your understanding of gender and violence, 2) your ability to communicate effectively with students of diverse races, economic backgrounds, sexualities, ages, social backgrounds, in particular survivors of violence, and 3) to creating a physically and emotionally safe learning environment for all students.
  - c. List the sessions (year and title, if applicable) of the Self-Defense Empowerment Model Course in which you have participated, the instructor, and briefly describe what was the most important "take-away" from this experience.
  - d. List at least one session from the SDIC/Self Defense Instruction Conference, the instructor, and briefly describe what was the most important "take-away" from this experience.
4. Describe your Self-Defense teaching experience.

- a. How and when did you meet the required minimum of 50 hours of being a primary or co-instructor of self-defense? Include a document listing the programs you have taught or co-taught including how long they were and what audiences they served.
  - b. Describe your experience in teaching students that are different from you in terms of age, ability/disability, gender identity, national origin, race/ethnicity, religion, sexuality, social class, etc. Describe lessons you have learned from working with students whose experience of violence is very different from your own and what you have done to make your teaching relevant to them.
  - c. Describe your strengths as a teacher and what you find most challenging.
  - d. Describe your standards for physical, emotional, and sexual boundaries between teachers and students
5. Please let us know the context of your teaching. Are you a solo practitioner, or do you work as part of a team? If you are part of a team, are you the head of that team, and if not, who is? How large is the team? How are new instructors and/or assistants recruited?
6. How did you learn to be a self-defense instructor? Did someone teach you, or are you self-taught? Was your training an apprenticeship model, a classroom learning model, or some combination? Are you connected to other NWMAF-certified instructors, or an NWMAF-affiliated school?
7. If you are a solo practitioner, describe your plans (if any) for passing on your knowledge and experience to others.

**Appendix A:**  
**Guidelines for Reviewer's Evaluation of the**  
**NWMAF Application for Certification**

*When you receive the application, make contact with your co-reviewer and develop a time-line for completing your evaluation. Choose one reviewer to communicate with the applicant and contact her as soon as possible to tell her the time-frame within which she can expect to receive feedback. If you have questions about the application, call the applicant before completing the feedback form. When you are giving feedback, please address the written application, the written curricula and your observation of a video or audio recording, or direct observation.*

1. Considering the applicant's answers to the four broad application questions, does the applicant demonstrate sufficient motivation, training, teaching experience, and awareness of issues for self-defense teaching?
2. Through the application, curricula, and demonstration of teaching, does the applicant demonstrate a feminist empowerment framework for understanding violence and self-defense? Is there an appropriate balance among the three major components (framework, verbal, and physical)?
  - Give at least one example of how the applicant demonstrated this framework.
  - What recommendations, if any, do you have for the applicant to more effectively include this content given time constraints?
  - Any other comments?
3. Through the application, curricula, and demonstration of teaching, does the applicant demonstrate the understanding of and ability to create a physically and emotionally safe learning environment?
  - Give at least one example of how the applicant created a physically and emotionally safe learning environment.
  - What recommendations, if any, do you have for the applicant to more effectively include accomplish this, given time constraints?
  - Any other comments?
4. Through the application, curricula, and demonstration of teaching, does the applicant demonstrate respect and effectiveness in working with students whose experience of violence is different from their own? Does the applicant make an effort to expand students' awareness of violence that they have not personally experienced?
  - Give at least one example of how the applicant does this?
  - What recommendations, if any, do you have for the applicant to more effectively demonstrate teaching diverse groups of people?
  - Any other comments?

5. Through the application, curricula, and demonstration of teaching, does the applicant demonstrate how she helps students understand why they would need awareness and verbal skills? Does the applicant demonstrate awareness and verbal skills? Does the applicant provide opportunities for students to practice these skills?

- Give at least one example of how the applicant effectively talked about, demonstrated, and created awareness and verbal skills drills.
- What recommendations, if any, do you have for the applicant to more effectively include this content given time constraints?
- Any other comments?

6. Through the application, curricula, and demonstration of teaching, does the applicant help students understand the practicalities and the ethics of using physical tools? Does the applicant demonstrate physical tools? Does the applicant provide opportunities for students to practice these skills?

- Give at least one example of how the applicant effectively talked about, demonstrated, and created drills for developing physical skills.
- What recommendations, if any, do you have for the applicant to more effectively include this content given time constraints?
- Any other comments?

Final Recommendation:

This applicant should be

\_\_\_\_\_ Certified as an NWMAF Empowerment Self-Defense Instructor

\_\_\_\_\_ Assigned a mentor to help her improve specific deficiencies (explain) and invited to resubmit her application once these deficiencies have been addressed

\_\_\_\_\_ Not considered for certification (explain)