

## WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

If you are interested in learning more about this profession, there are several things you can do. Determine if there is a local professional paralegal/legal assistant association in your area. Check the telephone directory or contact one of the national associations listed on the back of this brochure. If no such local association exists, call your local bar association to determine if they know of employers in your area who employ paralegals/legal assistants. Networking with practicing professionals employed in your community will be a valuable resource of information regarding the requirements local employers are seeking in prospective candidates. It can also provide additional insight into the roles paralegals/legal assistants play and the duties they perform.

The national associations listed on the back of this brochure are also valuable sources of information about the profession, including employment opportunities, educational programs, compensation, and benefits.

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The following organizations participated in the development of this brochure:

American Association for Paralegal Education  
2965 Flowers Road South, Suite 105  
Atlanta, GA 30341  
770-452-9877  
770-458-3314 (fax)  
[www.aafpe.org](http://www.aafpe.org)

American Bar Association  
Standing Committee on Legal Assistants  
541 North Fairbanks Court, Mail Stop 15.1  
Chicago, IL 60611  
312-988-5618  
312-988-5483 (fax)  
[www.abanet.org/legalassts](http://www.abanet.org/legalassts)

Association of Legal Administrators  
175 E. Hawthorn Parkway, Suite 325  
Vernon Hills, IL 60061-1428  
847-816-1212  
847-816-1213 (fax)  
[www.alanet.org](http://www.alanet.org)

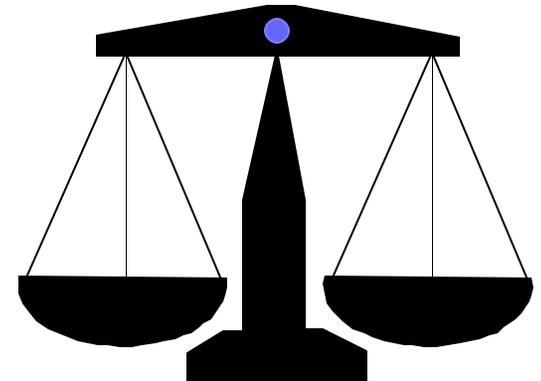
Legal Assistant Management Association  
2965 Flowers Road South, Suite 105  
Atlanta, GA 30341  
770-457-7746  
770-458-3314 (fax)  
[www.lamanet.org](http://www.lamanet.org)

National Association of Legal Assistants  
1516 South Boston Avenue, Suite 200  
Tulsa, OK 74119  
918-587-6828  
918-582-6772 (fax)  
[www.nala.org](http://www.nala.org)

National Federation of Paralegal Associations  
P.O. Box 33108  
Kansas City, MO 64114-0108  
816-941-4000  
816-941-2725 (fax)  
[www.paralegals.org](http://www.paralegals.org)

## PARALEGAL / LEGAL ASSISTANT

**Join the challenging  
and rewarding legal  
profession**



## WHAT IS A PARALEGAL/LEGAL ASSISTANT?

Paralegals, also called legal assistants, are professionals who are qualified through education, training and work experience to perform substantive legal work. They work with attorneys to provide economical, quality legal services and to make legal services more available to the general public. The profession began in the 1960's and has grown rapidly since that time. It has routinely been ranked as one of the fastest growing professions in the nation. There are now more than 130,000 paralegals/legal assistants employed throughout the United States.

## WHAT DO PARALEGALS/LEGAL ASSISTANTS DO?

The work they perform has expanded in the past thirty years and varies depending on the environment in which they work and the area of law in which they practice. They work in many different areas of law, such as litigation, real estate, corporate, probate and estate planning, intellectual property, family law, labor law, and bankruptcy. Paralegals/legal assistants are prohibited from practicing law, which means they cannot:

- give legal advice;
- represent a client in court;
- establish a fee; or
- accept a case on behalf of a client.

As important members of the legal team, their knowledge and understanding of legal concepts and the law combined with a practical knowledge of legal forms and procedures make them a valuable resource in providing legal services.

Typical responsibilities include:

- investigating facts;
- performing legal research;
- drafting legal documents;
- assisting at trials and hearings;
- reviewing and organizing records and documents;
- participating in corporate work and real estate closings;
- interviewing witnesses; and
- maintaining corporate records.

## WHERE DO PARALEGALS/LEGAL ASSISTANTS WORK?

They work in many different settings with both private employers and the government. Law firms, small firms and large law firms with multiple offices in the United States and abroad, employ the vast majority. Employers also include corporations, such as insurance companies, retail corporations, manufacturing companies, banks, and other financial institutions. Those preferring to work in the public sector will find employment opportunities in local, state, and national government, the courts, as well as non-profit agencies. The environment in which you choose to work will depend on your background and the type of law in which you are interested.

## WHAT QUALIFICATIONS MUST PARALEGALS/LEGAL ASSISTANTS MEET?

Requirements vary. Check with your state or local bar association and paralegal/legal assistant associations. Paralegals/legal assistants have diverse training and educational backgrounds. Education, however, is the key to career preparation. Many enter the profession after completing a formal paralegal/legal assistant

educational program. There are over 1000 such educational programs in the United States, varying in length and scope. The most common are certificate programs, Associate's degree programs, and Bachelor's degree programs.

The nature and quality of the program you attend will affect your ability to find a position and the type of employer who will consider you for employment. Therefore, choosing a program is extremely important. For more information about selecting a reputable educational program contact one of the associations listed on the back of this brochure and ask for the brochure entitled "*How to Choose a Quality Paralegal Education Program.*"

## WHAT SKILLS SHOULD PARALEGALS/LEGAL ASSISTANTS HAVE?

Success will depend on your ability to master both analytical and technical skills. The development of good problem-solving and organizational skills is essential, as is the ability to write and speak clearly and concisely. Also crucial is attention to detail and the ability to prioritize. The ability to work independently and to function effectively as a team player are key interpersonal skills you must have to work successfully in a legal environment.

The use of technology is also a critical component in providing quality and effective legal services. Keeping abreast in this dynamic area is key to long-term success.

The ever-changing legal environment presents an ongoing challenge to develop new skills and to seek continuing legal education.