



Paralegals Connect

NEWSLETTER

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www.paralegalsconnect.com

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**“Our Groups are
Accelerating
Paralegals,
Future Paralegals,
and Future Attorneys
Worldwide”**



WHO WE ARE

Paralegals Connect was established in 2013 and we have grown significantly since that time. We now have five groups which are all dedicated to providing valuable information and support to succeed in the legal industry. Our groups provide support at every stage of your paralegal career.

Currently, our groups have approximately 12,000 combined active members worldwide. We have become the largest paralegal networking group worldwide!

We invite you to join all five of our groups and become part of our worldwide Paralegal Family.

Paralegals Connect

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ParalegalsConnect/>

Our first and largest group created for paralegals and paralegals-in-the-making to interact with other paralegals worldwide and provide valuable information to succeed in the paralegal industry.

Paralegals Connect: Study Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ParalegalsConnectStudyGroup/>

A group created for those attending a paralegal school or studying for a Paralegal Certification Exam and post questions about your legal studies.

Virtual/Freelance Paralegals Connect

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/VirtualFreelanceParalegalsConnect/>

A group designed for Virtual and Freelance Paralegals and those intending to break free of their 8-5 to go out on their own.

Paralegals Connect Employment Board

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/PCEmploymentBoard/>

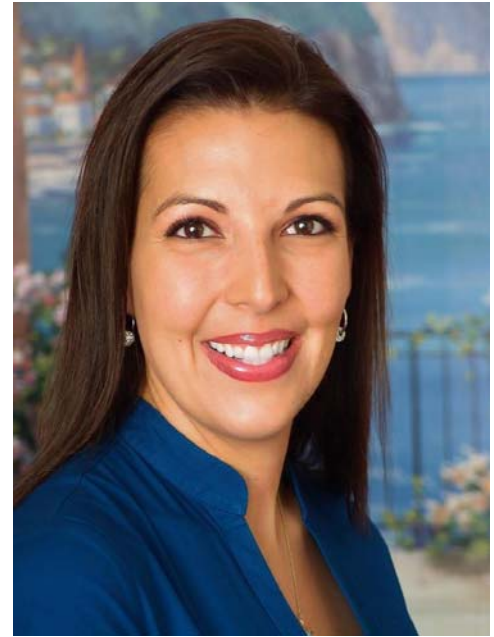
A group designed for those seeking legal employment or internships, and for those seeking to hire legal professionals for their firm.

LSAT Connect

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/LSATConnect/>

A group designed for those studying for the Law School Admission Test.

**“Started from the bottom,
now we’re here”**



CRYSTAL CORNETT, CREATOR OF PARALEGALS CONNECT

My name is Crystal Cornett and I have been a paralegal for 14-years. I was able to get my foot into the legal industry by starting as a receptionist and accounting clerk at a law firm. At that time, I only had a high school diploma and I was a single mom with a 1-year old baby to support, but I wanted to learn all I can to get ahead to support myself and my son.

After a year, I wanted to promote from receptionist to paralegal, but I was told that I did not have enough experience or paralegal knowledge. This encouraged me to attend a 3-month Paralegal Certificate program, where I graduated at the top of my class. After obtaining my certificate it was easier to find a paralegal position.

Later, I wanted to break free from the 8-5 and become a freelance paralegal. I decided to expand my knowledge by attending the Center for Advanced Legal Studies where I earned my second paralegal certificate and an Associate Degree. After I graduated I was given a nice raise at my firm and still have never ventured off into the freelance world, but I still think about doing so at times.

Since then, I have worked very hard and received an abundance of on the job training to become the paralegal I am today. I have practiced in several areas of law including heavy litigation, family law, health law, Social Security, and intellectual property law. I now work for a large firm in Houston, Texas and practice real estate law. Every day I continue to learn and grow in my career.

Several paralegals today have also earned a bachelor's degree or higher education and are obtaining paralegal certification. The more education and experience you receive in this career, the more valuable you will be to a firm.

I created Paralegals Connect to connect paralegals around the world, so we can help each other grow and succeed in our careers. I think being a paralegal is a wonderful career and I encourage others daily to get into this wonderful field.



Your Paralegal Career Begins Here!

Center for Advanced Legal Studies (CALs) is a private, nationally accredited paralegal college. Established in 1987, our focus is providing exceptional paralegal education to our students and dedicated career services for our graduates.

Specialized Paralegal Training

"100 percent of our resources are devoted to paralegal education and training."

Your Success is Our Priority

- + Expect smaller classes and more attention from instructors.
- + Your personal needs will be addressed with classes designed around your lifestyle.
- + Courses are designed to educate, prepare, graduate, and secure employment.
- + 100 percent of our resources are devoted to paralegal education and training.
- + Practicing attorneys and experienced paralegals teach law specialty courses.
- + Real world skills are emphasized to meet employers' needs.
- + Financial Aid is available for those who qualify. (FAFSA School Code: 026047)








Attend Class Online or On Campus

- + **Online** - Complete your program in the most interactive online classroom available. See and talk with your professor and classmates in real-time while attending class on your computer, laptop, smartphone or tablet. We bring the classroom to you.
- + **On Campus** - If a classroom setting is your preference, we've got you covered. Classroom instruction provides traditional in-person lecture and increased opportunity for teamwork and collaboration. Weekday and Saturday classes are available.

Securing Employment after Graduation

- + Career Services. We offer a multitude of services to help graduates begin their careers.
- + Resume Review. Professional guidance in preparing your resume for today's hiring managers.
- + Employer Connections. Leverage our relationship with hundreds of law firms and employers.
- + Personal Focus. You receive personal attention; not a bulletin board or a web job bank.
- + Available Externships. Gain real world experience before you graduate.

Accreditation, Memberships & Associations

-  Council on Occupational Education
-  Higher Education Coordinating Board
-  Texas Workforce Commission
-  American Association for Paralegal Education
-  National Federation of Paralegal Associations
-  National Association of Legal Assistants
-  Paralegal Division of the State Bar of Texas

Curriculum

Paralegal Certificate

Essential Paralegal Skills
 8 months . 24 semester hours
\$9,300

If you already have a college degree or are working toward your first college degree, this program is perfect for you!

Core Courses

- Introduction to Law and Ethics
- Interviewing and Investigation
- Legal Research and Writing
- Corporate and Business Law
- Civil Procedure
- Computers and the Law

+ 2 Electives chosen from

- Personal Injury*
- Family Law*
- Intellectual Property
- Real Estate

* Recommended for those continuing on to AAS Degree Paralegal Program



AAS Degree Paralegal Program

Comprehensive Paralegal Skills
 22 months . 62 semester hours
\$23,550 (\$14,350 after Paralegal Certificate)

Our Paralegal Degree Program includes all 24 semester hours completed in the certificate program plus an additional 18 to 21 semester hours of law specialty courses. These electives provide students with the opportunity to study some of the most interesting and exciting areas of law.

This program meets or exceeds the law specialty requirements suggested by various state and national paralegal authorities.

Core Courses (included in certificate)

- Introduction to Law and Ethics
- Interviewing and Investigation
- Legal Research and Writing
- Corporate and Business Law
- Civil Procedure
- Computers and the Law
- Personal Injury
- Family Law

General Education

- English Composition I
- English Composition II
- General Psychology
- American Government I
- Introduction to Speech Communication
- Anatomy & Physiology I

Advanced Electives

- + 6 Electives including Externship (7 w/o Externship)
- Wills, Trusts and Probate
- Criminal Law and Procedure
- Real Estate
- Intellectual Property
- Immigration Law
- E-Discovery
- Advanced Civil Procedure
- Advanced Research and Writing
- Oil and Gas Law
- Externship

Other Requirements: Business Math

Simplify Your Contract Management With Smarter Software



- Award-Winning Contract Management Software

- Easy Searching and Reporting

- Centralized Contract Repository

- Proactive Key Date Alerts

- Now Featuring VISDOM™ AI

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THE HISTORY OF THE PARALEGAL PROFESSION

By: Shanay G. Rowe

The use of trained non-attorneys to assist in the delivery of legal services is a relatively new concept in the history of America. This idea dates back to the 1960s when the lack of access to legal services for low and middle-class American citizens caused the government, community organizations, and the bar association to take a close look at the way legal services were being delivered. In response to the urgent need for legal services, the federal government developed a budget to create low-cost legal clinics, and prepaid legal plans were developed. In the private sector, law offices and the bar association also attempted to develop alternative ways to deliver legal services that would keep costs down without sacrificing quality. One of the solutions that was successful was the use of legal assistants or paralegals. Initially legal assistants were secretaries that were trained on the job to handle more substantial legal work at a much lower hourly rate than the attorney. In 1967, the American bar association (ABA) endorsed the concept of the legal assistant and, in 1968, established its first committee on legal assistants, which later became the standing committee on legal assistants. Its name was changed to the standing committee on paralegals in 2003 in recognition of the growing preference for the title "paralegal." While many studies showed resistance of the idea of paralegals by attorneys, the use of paralegals continued to increase over time.

With this rapid increase of the use of paralegals, the first formal paralegal training programs were established in the early 1970s. Starting in 1971 with only 11 programs across the country, the ABA decided to adopt guidelines for a paralegal curriculum. In 1975 there were nine ABA approved paralegal programs operating in the United States. In the mid-1970s two of the largest paralegal associations were founded including the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA) and National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA). Paralegal educators also formed their own organization, the American Association for Paralegal Education (AAFPE). In 1976, NALA made history by establishing its Certified Legal Assistant (CLA) program, a voluntary certification program consisting of two days of examinations covering various substantial information needed to successfully perform within the profession. In 1975, the federal government recognized the existence of this new occupation by creating a new job classification.

While the first paralegals were employed primarily to assist small law firms and legal aid organizations, large private law firms soon became the biggest employers of paralegals. Since the 1980s the United States has experienced tremendous growth for the paralegal profession. Job opportunities have expanded in all sectors of employment. Clients have come to accept paralegals and even to demand that they be included on the legal services delivery team as a way of keeping costs down. Paralegals have begun to see themselves as a necessary and autonomous profession in the legal arena and have become more specialized and intentional about building their careers.

While in 1971 there were only 11 formal education programs, current estimates show there are about a thousand paralegal educational programs currently operating. Although estimates vary, most sources state there are more than 200,000 paralegals employed in the United States with well over half of paralegals hold a baccalaureate degree and even more have some formal paralegal education.

Currently, roles for paralegals are changing, requiring a reframing of what paralegals can and should do and the standard of education each paralegal should possess. The idea of nonlawyer practice has emerged as a pressing subject of discussion within the ABA. This interest is related to the need for a new disruption of models for delivery of legal services and has spurred serious nationwide discussions about how to reform legal education and requirements for entry into the legal profession. This cluster of concerns together with the continuing challenge of providing access to legal services for low and middle-income Americans has commanded the attention of legal commentators, educators and the bar. Push back from attorneys about the level of autonomy paralegals should have has stunted the progress of access to affordable legal services. This need is being addressed at the state level by many states including Washington who now offers a limited licensed legal technician programs, and California who regulates legal document assistants.

Current paralegals should understand that with more autonomy comes more regulation and responsibility, which means a standard of education will be developed for paralegals in the future. Paralegals should also be prepared for the technological developments that are happening in local and federal courts and stay up to date on current software, client management systems, and court filing systems.

Although a relatively young profession by many standards, the paralegal profession continues to grow and develop in important ways. Experiences and effective paralegals can lessen the workload for attorneys and help expand legal access to all. It's a good time to become a paralegal. The bureau of labor statistics, looking ahead through 2020, expects the paralegal profession to continue to rapidly grow.

Shanay G. Rowe is a North Philadelphia native that is taking the business world by storm as a paralegal powerhouse. In 2016, Shanay shocked the legal world by establishing herself as an autonomous professional while creating a space for other paralegals to do the same. Branding herself as the Power Paralegal, not only has Shanay landed notable contracts with multiple prestigious law firms throughout the country, she has been featured on multiple podcasts, webinars, and welcomed into reputable entrepreneurial spaces. Shanay is committed to using her platform to empower small business owners and others who are often pushed into the margins of the professional world, to take the leap to create their own space. When she isn't sharing her vast knowledge by speaking at a paralegal program or business seminar, Shanay focuses on civic engagement, being a dedicated mother, and running her flourishing business TelePrep.net Paralegal Services.



PARALEGAL REQUIREMENTS CHECK YES OR NO

By: Elaine Agnew

My journey to becoming a paralegal started right out of high school when I decided to enroll in a community college and then go on to a two-year university to obtain my bachelor's degree in legal studies. Back in the early 1990s, there were only a handful of American Bar Association (ABA) accredited legal studies' programs in Illinois and no requirements for becoming a paralegal. Jump forward almost thirty years to the present, and you will find the same holds true. Are other states like Illinois? The answer may surprise you.

Let's first define what a paralegal is. The ABA defines a paralegal as "a person qualified by education, training, or work experience, who is employed or retained by an attorney, law office, corporation, government agency, or other entity, and who performs specifically delegated substantive legal work for which the attorney is responsible." "Current ABA Definition of Legal Assistant/Paralegal." *American Bar Association*. ABA, 4 Aug. 2008. Web. 18 June 2018.

Using the ABA definition as a guideline, states have created their own requirements (or lack thereof) for paralegals. Nearly three-fourths of states (including Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska and Rhode Island) do not require any specific education or training to work as a paralegal except that a paralegal must be eighteen years or older and work under the supervision of an attorney. Although Florida is one of those states that requires no specific education or training, the Florida Association of Paralegals report that most law firms only hire paralegals with a degree. "Becoming a Paralegal." *ParalegalEDU.org*. Paralegaledu.org. Web. 18 June 2018.

A few states (including New York) have adopted guidelines to work as a paralegal. The Empire State Alliance of Paralegals Association in New York suggests having at least an associate degree in legal studies. Several states (including Pennsylvania and Ohio) suggest that paralegals voluntarily get certified. *ParalegalEDU.org*. Paralegaledu.org. Web. 18 June 2018.

A few states have established minimum qualifications for working as a paralegal. For example, South Dakota's Supreme Court has adopted a rule that paralegals are required to have either a national certification through National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA), completed an ABA approved paralegal studies program, completed sixty semester hours of coursework in paralegal studies, completed a course of study for paralegals and six months in-house paralegal training, hold a Bachelor's Degree in any subject plus six months in-house training or hold a high school diploma and two years in-house training. *ParalegalEDU.org*. Paralegaledu.org. Web. 18 June 2018.

Washington has gone the extra mile and allows paralegals to present in court for certain ex parte matters such as guardianships and emergency temporary restraining orders. *ParalegalEDU.org*. Paralegaledu.org. Web. 18 June 2018.

As you can see, there is no one way to enter the paralegal profession. However, my suggestion is to complete an ABA approved paralegal program whether that program is completed in two years or four years. Several states have tried to adopt minimum guidelines for paralegal education but have not been successful thus far. *ParalegalEDU.org*. Paralegaledu.org. Web. 18 June 2018. Nevertheless, I believe that in time minimum guidelines will be implemented in many states in the near future. Having an education is always a plus in the paralegal profession. It shows employers that you have basic knowledge of legal terminology, drafting documents and researching. The on the job training will be easier if you have the basic legal knowledge. Plus, education usually means higher pay. Now is an excellent time to become a paralegal. Will you be checking yes or no?

Elaine Agnew is a freelance virtual paralegal who specializes in civil litigation. She enjoys spending time with her family and traveling. You may contact Elaine at

elaine4agnew@gmail.com



PARALEGAL STUDIES CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

FOUR REASONS TO GET YOUR PARALEGAL CERTIFICATE

Paralegals rank among the most important legal professionals in the country. They help attorneys manage nearly every aspect of their law practices, from answering the phones, to interviewing witnesses, to writing legal briefs. But how do you become a paralegal? While some states require residents to have a license or certificate in order to operate as a paralegal, most states have no such regulation. This has led many people to believe that obtaining a paralegal certificate is not important. But the lack of state regulations notwithstanding, getting your paralegal certificate is a very attractive option if you wish to enter or advance in this profession.

By: Avon Alexander
President of Paralegal Institute

Avon Alexander is the President of the Paralegal Institute of Washington, D.C., a paralegal certificate program and paralegal workshop provider located in the nation's capital.

You will gain valuable knowledge

Arguably the most important reason for you to obtain your paralegal certificate is because in the process of completing the certificate program you will gain valuable knowledge about the law and the paralegal profession. Especially for those who have little to no background in the legal field, this foundational knowledge is essential. While it would be impossible for any paralegal certificate program to cover all of the information you may need once you finally land a job, getting your feet wet in knowledge areas such as legal practice areas, legal writing, legal research, and legal citations is sure to be immensely helpful in the short and long term.

Many jobs require you to have a paralegal certificate

Though many states do not require you to obtain a certificate or license before working as a paralegal, many individual employers do. This requirement varies from an employer simply preferring candidates who have obtained their paralegal certificates, to employers who absolutely will not consider anyone who does not have their certificate. In an extreme example, one major employer even said that a four-year degree in paralegal studies is no substitute: no certificate, no job.

Many paralegal certificate programs include internships

One of the best ways to put your newly acquired paralegal training into action is by participating in an internship program. During your internship you will develop your skills as a new (or experienced) paralegal and learn what it's *really* like to work in a law firm. It is not uncommon for particularly outstanding interns to be offered a job at the end of their work terms. Additionally, interns who do a good job are usually able to secure a letter of recommendation from their superiors. These letters are looked upon favorably by potential employers.

Many paralegal certificate programs have job assistance programs

In many parts of the country paralegals earn good money, but first you have to get your foot in the door. Looking for your first legal field related job can be daunting if you have to do it all on your own. Sure, you could apply to all of the job openings you find online and hope you get a call back, but what about the jobs that are never posted online at all? Many of these jobs are filled through word-of-mouth recommendations and referrals. If you obtain your paralegal certificate from a program that has a strong job assistance department, you could benefit from the connections and relationships with the job market that the institution has built over the years.

PARALEGAL STUDIES



ABA APPROVED OR ACCREDITED?

People love to give advice. Just ask them. People love to know things. I certainly do. Paralegals and attorneys are no different. When someone asks for advice about choosing a paralegal program, you often here **'Is it ABA accredited?'** or **'Just be sure it's accredited by the American Bar Association'**. This sounds like reasonable advice. It's short and to the point. Thank you for your question. I have provided you with a sensible answer. Good day to you.

The problem with this advice is that it is at worst wrong, and at best incomplete and lazy. I've even heard paralegal school administrators say it. It can be confusing. So to clarify...

The American Bar Association (ABA) is not authorized to accredit paralegal programs. The [ABA is authorized to accredit law schools](#) only and nothing more. The ABA instead 'approves' paralegal programs and this process is not recognized by the Department of Education. This distinction has been a source of confusion for many years and has led some to falsely believe they must attend a paralegal program that is 'ABA Accredited'. Many states require attorneys to attend an ABA accredited law school to sit for the state bar exam to become licensed to practice law in that state. Maybe this is where the confusion begins. But there is no such requirement for paralegals. So, what is the difference between accreditation and approval and why does it matter?

For those of us who work in education, accreditation is a big deal. It means that the college or university has met rigorous standards established by one of several accrediting agencies approved by the United States Department of Education. It takes a lot of time and resources to acquire and maintain accreditation, so if we seem a little defensive it is only because we have heard 'is it ABA accredited' or similar at least once too often.

True accreditation unlocks important benefits for students. One of the most significant benefits is the ability to apply for federal financial aid, also known as Title IV. This includes low interest student loans and PELL grants. Without these financial options many would find it very difficult to attend college. Similar is true of veterans' benefits provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). It is accreditation that enables these benefits.

So, what's wrong with ABA approval? Nothing at all. The ABA approval process is demanding and seeks to ensure that paralegal programs meet and maintain rigorous minimum standards. It is an additional layer of oversight and accountability that many consider to be a benefit to paralegal programs. Without question it helps improve a program's reputation as the American Bar Association is a respected leader within the legal community. However, having worked for an ABA approved paralegal program for 15 years and having experience with three different accrediting agencies, I can say with confidence that most of the 'standards' are the same or very similar to those of true accreditors, with only a few features creating a distinction. So, what does the American Bar Association require in its approval process that isn't necessarily a requirement of national or regional accreditation of paralegal programs? I've listed some key items below. There may be others, but these are noteworthy.

- The program must be accredited by an approved institutional accrediting agency
- The program must be at least 60 semester hours, or equivalent, in length
- The program must contain 18 semester hours of academic general education courses
- The program must contain 18 semester hours of law specialty courses
- Students must complete at least 10 semester hours of law specialty courses through traditional classroom instruction

It's difficult to take issue with most of these requirements. They do add sufficient length to programs and ensure there is adequate attention paid to both law specialty and academic courses. But it is the last item that makes all the difference for students.

The ABA does not allow 100% online programs. (Insert incredulous, snarky comment here) Its 2018 and every recognized educational authority has embraced or at least accepted online learning as a mature, effective, efficient, and viable option. This acceptance is especially important for nontraditional students. You are likely a [nontraditional student](#) if you are over 25 years old, have a job and/or family, and can't attend full-time classes on campus. Welcome to the club. Like many, you have personal obligations that make attending traditional college extremely difficult. Technology and innovation to the rescue.

Over the past 20 years technology has come a long way and distance education now bears little resemblance to the correspondence programs of the past. For example, students in our online paralegal programs can see and hear their instructors and classmates in real time from the comfort of their homes. They love it! Further, our learning outcomes are as good, and often better, than those achieved in our traditional classroom-based courses. Online education has been a game-changer for so many and the future looks even brighter. Still, the American Bar Association appears to not agree. Why? You will need to ask them.

If you have read this far I suppose I should get to my point. ABA approval is one small consideration of what constitutes a good paralegal program. If attending an ABA approved program is truly that important to someone, then they should find a program close to them and enroll. But please bear in mind, not all ABA approved programs are the same. There are short certificate programs, programs that require a bachelor's degree to enter, associate and bachelor's degree programs, vocational programs, and even some non-accredited programs – all approved by the American Bar Association. It's naive to think they are all the same. As with many 'standards', the American Bar Association attempts to establish comprehensive minimum standards. Schools are free to exceed them, and many do.

If someone asks for advice regarding choosing a paralegal program, I would suggest:

–Are you looking to attend paralegal classes on campus or online?

o On campus? Great! You might want to conduct some thorough research to see what is within commuting distance. Make sure they are **accredited!** There might even be an ABA approved program close to you.

o Online? Fantastic. There are some strong accredited online programs available. Please research thoroughly because they aren't all the same. What is their reputation? What technology do they use? Can you see and hear your instructors and classmates? Can you ask questions in live class?

In all cases, find out how long their program has been in operation and how many paralegal credentials they confer each year. Do they offer career services and what is the employment rate of their graduates? If placement statistics aren't published clearly on their website – move on. Who teaches the classes? Practicing attorneys? Great! How long have they been on staff? It's best to have experienced faculty.

But, by all means, please don't tell them – just make sure it's ABA accredited.

Who wrote this and what's his problem?

Eric H. Happe is Director of Distance Education at Center for Advanced Legal Studies in Houston, Texas. He is a graduate of the Paralegal Certificate program and worked as a paralegal (in the trenches) for six years before returning to Center for Advanced Legal Studies in various administrative capacities. Eric taught Computers and the Law and was instrumental in the development of online paralegal programs at CALS. Eric was an outspoken proponent of withdrawing from ABA approval to better serve students who wanted to take their paralegal courses online and has never looked back. Please feel free to connect with him on LinkedIn.



JOB SEARCH 101



Exactly what are job seeking marketing tools? Think about a product and how it is marketed to consumers to purchase. All branding is cohesive and reflects an image to promote the value and benefits of that product. The question is why should the consumer invest in this product "A" instead of product "B"? This analogy can be asked when managers make a hiring decision. Your branding and image should promote your value and benefits of being purchased or hired. Several products you will need to begin an effective job search that represents your image: Killer Cover Letter, Genuine Resume, Bodacious Business Cards, a Powerful LinkedIn Profile and a strong desire to hustle in Networking opportunities. Hustling meaning being active in professional organizations and demonstrating your personality and interpersonal skills that really can't be captured on a resume. To develop your marketing tools, below is a brief overview of some of the key components.

Killer Cover Letters

Cover letters can be written inside of an email that has a resume attachment as well as formatted in a block letter and sent snail mail. Three basic paragraphs of a cover email/letter: Introduction, The Match Up and The Ask.

Introduction, which states how you found the job and all possible don't begin with: "I found your position for paralegal on Indeed.com." Be unique and catchy with your opening phrase, because this is your "Hook". A hook is used to grab the readers' attention and want them to read more. Hooks can be in the form of a question, "Are you a one lawyer firm, that is in desperate need to resemble a lawyer with a staff of ten, but is limited on staffing budget? I can be your staff of 10 and here is how!" Other options include name dropping a reference and utilizing a quote by someone famous or in your field that has made a noticeable contribution to society that inspires you or your work ethic.

The Match paragraph indicates how your skills meets or exceeds the job description. Use the exact wording from the job description but enhance your resume verbiage to reflect the perfect match. Utilize a T-chart (can be easily done with a table with no lines). On the right side indicate the job requirements on the left indicate how you meet those job requirements.

The Ask paragraph is simply asking for an interview and thank them for their time and consideration. Most importantly include your email and phone number in the paragraph and state that you will follow-up with them in the near future.

Creating a Genuine Resume

As we all probably experienced, writing your own resume is extremely challenging. This is a general guide to develop a current trendy resume.

First, let's not state the obvious, everyone knows what a phone number and an email address looks like. Don't put: CELL: 555-555-1212 or EMAIL: yourSexyness@gmail.com. Speaking of what not to do, don't utilize a personal email address such as yourSexyness@gmail.com on a professional image, instead perhaps create a professional email account that is solely dedicated to your job search.

The resume header should include your name in a relatively large font and contact information. Your contact information including a phone number (with a professional voicemail greeting), email, LinkedIn URL and optional- a city, state and zip code. Including your physical address on your resume may be a risk to your safety.

The Opening Statement

Some call this section many differ things, such as introduction, descriptor or opening statement. If you have the word "OBJECTIVE" on your resume that is to be considered outdated.

The opening statement does not need a title or if you prefer a title "Professional Summary" or "Profile" is acceptable. Resumes should try to be only one page, so I don't recommend wasting space to include "Professional Summary" or "Profile". This paragraph should briefly answer three questions: (don't put the word "introduction" on your resume either.)

Who are you in functional terms? What value (strengths) do you bring to the table? If hired, how will you benefit my firm? (Basically-what can you do for me, even though it's your resume.)

Two examples:

Paralegal with over 10 years of extensive office administration and operational experience. Ability to effectively solve problems, maintain confidentiality with discretion to build clients' trust and confidence. Skilled in developing and maintaining administrative and procedural processes that reduce redundancy and achieve organizational goals.

Highly driven, self-motivated real estate paralegal with strong knowledge of all aspects of real estate closing processes including preparation of HUD Settlement statements, CDs and closing documents as well as familiarity with new TRID guidelines. Ability to deliver accurate documents and intense research with focus on maintaining client relations to maximize profits and reduce cost.

Other key sections of a resume include:**Career Accomplishments:**

This section is more for a seasoned professional and highlights your value. When creating this section keep in mind a mathematical modifier, percentage and amount of time. For instance: Increased client billing hours by 62% within 5 months. Also, sneak in an achievement and make sure you have from 3 to 5 items keeping to a one or two-page max resume.

Competencies:

(Can be more specific such as "Legal Assistant Competencies") This section is for the skills that you excel in your field. Task could include: Prepare Legal Documentation/E-filing/Criminal Law.

Technology Overview:

Format like the previous section, include all software that you are familiar.

Experience Section:

Make sure that this section is labeled appropriately according to your own experience. If you have legal experience name this section **LEGAL EXPERIENCE**. If you have customer service experience, name a section **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**. Being more specific in your experience brings the hiring managers attention to your past background.

Education & Credentials:

When creating this section, put the most recent first. If you have any education beyond high school do not list your high school. This section can be versatile to change into continuing education credits and additional training accomplished.

Bodacious Business Cards:

Your business cards should reflect your image, from graphics to the font. Information to include: Name, Title, Any Specialties, Phone, Email, Social Media Sites (Linkedin/Twitter/Blog), Portfolio site, Leave the back bare and a light color for note takers.

Optional information to include on your business cards:

Logo or Branding Statement and never include a photo. In creating business cards, you can do it yourself, utilize an online source (Vistaprint is a great option) or a local print shop.

Remember the key is being consistent and proficient in your reflecting a professional image. Hiring managers can infer and make assumptions based on the information from your written marketing materials such as, detailed oriented, writing and basic English skills. Also, another great point to remember is when you are writing your cover letter and resume, omit the "personality fluff". Hiring managers are more focused on your skills and abilities to do the job rather than if you are "motivated to succeed" or "enjoys innovative challenges". Let your personality shine during the interview, but first captivate the hiring manager demonstrating you have what it takes to get the job done!

Author Laura Preusse, M.S., Director of Career Services at Center for Advanced Legal Studies

Laura Preusse, M.S., has a background in public education as a Business and Technology Teacher. She has taught general business, computer, and career related courses. Ms. Preusse developed a passion for and coaching job search strategies and resume development within in the Houston unemployment community with affiliations Between Job Ministries and Texas HR Pros in Transition. Previous employment includes working as a freelance resume writer and career coach; Director of Career Services for a small nonprofit school; and a Career Advisor at The Art Institute of Houston with a 100% placement rate for consecutive quarters in the Interior Design Program. In January 2018, Ms. Preusse accepted her current position as Director of Career Services at Center for Advanced Legal Studies (CALs). During her brief tenure, she has inspired an online job board for CALs recent graduates; designed and offered virtual workshops on Employment Seeking Strategies to students, graduates, alumni and the public. With innovation, collaboration, and technology she looks forward to bringing more visibility to assist CALs graduates in overcoming employment obstacles.

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CERTIFICATE OR CERTIFIED WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Certificate, or certified, that is the question. If you're like many paralegals, or aspiring paralegals, you may have wondered what the difference is between a paralegal certificate and a certified paralegal. Well you're in luck, I'm going to break it down for you and how they may benefit you and your career. Each year, the paralegal field is becoming more competitive and it's important to make the most of your education and training. Whether you are still in high school figuring out where to go with your higher education, looking for a career change, or looking to enhance your paralegal career, there are plenty of options to help you get into the field, grow as a paralegal, and increase your value as a paralegal.

If you are coming out of high school, or looking to go back to college, an Associate or bachelor's degree in Paralegal Studies is a great route to go. If you already have a degree, or if you don't have the ability to go back to school, there are other options to make yourself more marketable to firms and to further your paralegal education. A paralegal certificate is a program usually offered through a college or university, after you've received an Associate or Bachelor's degree. Some schools require an associate or bachelor's degree in another field; other schools only require a high school diploma or equivalent before beginning the paralegal certificate program. This program will consist of a certain number of credit hours of legal and management courses. These courses will help prepare you for the responsibilities you can expect to take on in a paralegal position.

Do you already have an education? Maybe you don't have the time or desire to take any additional classes, but you still want to further your career as a paralegal. A degree or certificate is probably not for you. So, what's next? Perhaps becoming a certified paralegal is what you are looking for.

Becoming a Certified Paralegal requires passing an exam, in addition to meeting certain education and experience requirements. These exams are offered through certifying organizations such as the National Organization of Legal Assistants (NALA) or National Federalization of Paralegal Associations (NFPA). They are designed to test various skills you will need to be a well-rounded, professional and ethical paralegal. While it has never officially been established as a Board Certification, the concept is similar. NALA and NFPA, along with a few other similar organizations, offer an opportunity to test your skills in the paralegal field to become certified. Typically, the organization offering the exam will also require the examinee meet certain requirements prior to testing. For example, NALA requires a person to have a certain level of education along with a number of years of experience depending on your level of education.

The certification exam will test your skills in communication, ethics, legal research, judgment and analytical abilities, along with substantive law. I became certified through NALA in 2017. After obtaining my Bachelor's Degree in Paralegal Studies from St. Petersburg College and spending a few years in the legal field, I decided it was time to take the next step. Since I already had a Bachelor's degree in Paralegal Studies, there was no reason for me to take the courses for the certificate. So, how did I decide which certification exam to take?

There are a few great options, so the decision wasn't an easy one. Ultimately, it came down to which organization was better known in my geographical area. NALA, established in 1976, offers a Certified Paralegal (CP) designation and Advanced Certified Paralegal (ACP) designation. NFPA offers the Paralegal CORE Competency Exam (PCCE), established in 2011, and Paralegal Advanced Competency Exam (PACE), established in 1996. As of 2017 NALA has 19,438 Certified Paralegals according to their website's statistics. According to the NFPA website, there are 169 paralegals, throughout the United States, that have the PCCE designation and 575 that have the PACE designation as of 2014.

Florida has the most NALA Certified Paralegals in the United States with a total of 4,876 as of 2017. Texas is following with 3,365; and the next state is Arizona with 1,394 NALA Certified Paralegals. Out of the remaining states, the range of NALA Certified Paralegals is 2 – 1,376 from Vermont to California. Since NALA has been around much longer it is bound to have more certified members; however, that does not mean it is better than another certification organization.

In most states it is not required to be certified, have a certification, or even a college degree to be considered a paralegal. As the profession continues to grow and becomes more competitive I'm sure this will change. As with all aspects of the legal field, each state is different. With so many great options, it is important to do your research for your state and become familiar with the various options and requirements for the paralegal field in that state. Talk with other paralegals in your area, check with the local and state bar associations, and check to see if there is a paralegal organization in your area. Each of these channels would be a great way to start your research and figure out which direction would be best for you.

Written by: Kristin L. Tormey

Kristin L. Tormey, CP, FRP, is a marital and family law paralegal at Koch & Hoffman, P.A. She has been working as a family law paralegal since 2011. She received her Bachelor of Applied Science in Paralegal Studies from St. Petersburg College in 2014 and became a NALA Certified Paralegal in 2017. Kristin is also a Florida Registered Paralegal and is an active member of the Paralegal Association of Florida. She has been appointed by the Florida Supreme Court to the Unlicensed Practice of Law, Committee A to serve a 3-year term. Kristin has also been working with her firm on implementing new marketing ideas. She is the social media manager for the firm, creates videos, graphics and manages the firm's website. In addition to her job, Kristin spends some of her free time helping others. She is a volunteer with Lawyers for Literacy where she assists underprivileged students increase their reading skills and volunteers with a local animal shelter. Kristin writes a blog reflecting her life experience, both personal and in the legal field. She loves to read, write, kayak, exercise her Australian Shepherd, and explore new places. Feel free to contact her on LinkedIn or via email at legallyparalegal.com.



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Richard Pannell, Director
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