

# Legal Assistant (Paralegal)\*

Business, Management & Administration Career Cluster

(AAS Non-transfer Degree)

SAN JUAN COLLEGE

## NATURE OF WORK

Paralegals assume a range of tasks in the nation's legal offices and perform many of the same tasks as lawyers. However, they are still explicitly prohibited from carrying out duties that are considered to be the practice of law, such as setting legal fees, giving legal advice and presenting cases in court. Assisting lawyers in preparing for closings, hearings, trials and corporate meetings is one of a legal assistant's most important tasks. Legal assistants investigate the facts of cases and ensure that all relevant information is considered. Duties of a legal assistant differ widely based on the type of organization in which they are employed.

## WORKING CONDITIONS

Legal assistants employed by corporations and government usually work a standard 40-hour week. Legal assistants who work for law firms sometimes work very long hours when they are under pressure to meet deadlines. Legal assistants do most of their work at desks in offices and law libraries. Occasionally, they travel to gather information and perform other duties.

## TRAINING & QUALIFICATIONS

The most common way to become a legal assistant is through a community college legal assistant program that leads to an associate's degree. The national Association of Legal Assistants has established standards for certification requiring various combinations of education and experience. Legal assistants who meet these standards are eligible to take a two-day examination, given three times each year at several regional testing centers. Those who pass this examination may use the designation Certified Legal Assistant (CLA).

## JOB OUTLOOK

Legal assistant positions are projected to grow faster than the average for all occupations through 2016. Employment growth stems from law firms and other employers with legal staffs increasingly hiring legal assistants to lower costs and increase the availability and efficiency of legal services. Private law firms will continue to be the largest employers of legal assistants, but a growing array of other organizations such as the federal and state government, corporate legal departments, insurance companies, real estate and title insurance firms and banks hire legal assistants.

## CAREER OPTIONS

Paralegal

## ESTIMATED SALARY RANGE

New Mexico—\$18,000 - \$40,391

Nationally— \$33,920 - \$54,690

(depending on skill, experience and responsibilities)

## RELATED OCCUPATIONS

Law clerk, title examiner, abstractor and, claims adjuster, appraiser, examiner, investigator, lawyer, and attorney.

## SJC Basic Program Information

This degree program is accredited by the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) and is approved as a Navajo Nation Bar Association Advocacy Training Program.



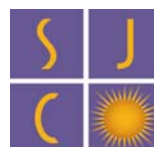
## For further information go to:

[www.sanjuancollege.edu/pages/158.asp](http://www.sanjuancollege.edu/pages/158.asp)

[www.sanjuancollege.edu/pages/4176.asp](http://www.sanjuancollege.edu/pages/4176.asp)

[www.careers-nm.org](http://www.careers-nm.org)

[www.bls.gov/oco/ocos114.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos114.htm)



\*Most of this information is from the Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2008-2009

Reviewed on April 21, 2009