

Legal Assistant

Keep a law practice running: files, deadlines, drafts and clients. A two-year degree gets you in the door.

TYPICAL PAY

\$62,890

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$45k to \$102k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Law firms, corporate legal departments, courts, government...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grade 12
 English and any class that involves careful writing. Learn to type properly and to use a spreadsheet.
- 2 Associate degree or certificate** 1 to 2 years
 A two-year paralegal or legal studies degree at a community college, or a shorter certificate if you already hold a bachelor's degree. Programs approved by the American Bar Association carry extra weight with employers.
- 3 Internship or first job** After the degree
 Firms hire for reliability and attention to detail more than for grades. Filing and scheduling at a small firm is a normal way in.
- 4 Learn the systems** Year 1
 Court filing rules, document management software, billing, and the calendar of deadlines that a case runs on. This takes about a year.
- 5 Certify and specialize** 2 to 5 years in
 The Certified Paralegal credential from NALA (the National Association of Legal Assistants) is the best known national one. Then pick a practice area and become the person who knows it.

Pros and cons

- + A median above \$60,000 on a two-year degree
- + Real legal work without law school debt
- + Skills transfer between firms, companies and government
- The federal outlook is flat, with little or no growth expected
- You do the work but the lawyer signs it and gets the credit
- Deadline pressure is constant and mistakes are expensive

Optional boosts

Electronic discovery. A specialty practice area. Certified Paralegal credential. Trial preparation.

Good to know

It is a big occupation with flat growth

About 376,200 people work as paralegals and legal assistants in the United States, with roughly 39,300 openings a year. Federal projections expect little or no change in total employment through 2...

The degree requirement is all over the place

Asked what their job required, 37 percent of people in this field said a bachelor's degree, 20 percent said an associate degree and 19 percent said a high school diploma. There is no single gate, which is u...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Paralegals and Legal Assistants (23-2011.00)

O*NET OnLine: Paralegals and Legal Assistants

NALA: the Certified Paralegal credential

Austin Community College: tuition table

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/legal-assistant>



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