Paralegal

SWC Paralegal Studies Programs

Southwestern College offers two paralegal programs: Paralegal Studies and Paralegal Studies: Bilingual (Spanish-English). Both programs prepare students for rewarding careers in the legal industry as paralegal professionals working under the direct supervision of lawyers in the public and private sectors. A paralegal's responsibilities can be broad and varied including preparing and translating legal documents, interviewing clients, performing legal research, investigation of facts, preparing cases for trial, organizing and managing documents. Paralegals often work with attorneys in specialized areas of law such as immigration, family law, probate, workers compensation, criminal law and civil litigation.

Paralegals are also known as Legal Assistants and are regulated by California law under the Business & Professions Code §6450. . Paralegals are required to work under the supervision of an attorney, and may not give out legal advice.

Degrees/Certificates
- **Associate in Science degree in Paralegal Studies**
- **Associate in Science degree in Paralegal Studies: Bilingual**

Degrees are awarded upon completion of 60 semester units, which include general education courses, as well as the required legal courses listed under Program Requirements. Students must obtain a minimum grade of "C" in each of the legal courses.
- **Certificate of Achievement in either program**

For those students who possess an associate degree or higher a certificate will be awarded upon completion of the required legal courses listed under Program Requirements with a minimum grade of "C" in each course.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why choose a paralegal career?

Paralegals work side by side with lawyers and other legal professionals. Paralegals work under the direct supervision of an attorney, drafting documents and preparing them for filing, performing legal research, assisting the attorney with trial preparation, and working with clients. Paralegals have the satisfaction of helping clients while working in an environment that is intellectually challenging and fulfilling.

Where do paralegals work?

Paralegals work in many different venues. You will find them in law offices, the courts, legal departments in financial institutions, real estate offices, government agencies, and corporations. Some paralegals prefer helping others and choose family law or legal aid. Others like the excitement of criminal law and work with either criminal prosecutors or criminal defense attorneys. The greatest demand for paralegals is in the area of civil litigation. Civil litigation includes cases involving breach of contract, employment discrimination, fraud, personal injury, professional malpractice, and construction defect to name a few.

What types of duties do paralegals perform?

- Interviewing and assisting clients;
- Drafting and analyzing legal documents;
- Conducting legal research and analyzing laws or appellate court decisions that were made in similar cases.
- Organizing documents and/or case files;
- Investigating the facts of a case;
- Preparing written reports for lawyers that summarize your investigations or research;
- Locating and collecting records or information in preparation for lawsuits;
- Assisting attorneys in obtaining and preparing evidence for trial;
- Planning, developing, and managing cases;
- Collecting, compiling, and utilizing technical information to make an independent decision and recommendation to the supervising attorney.

Wages and outlook

- In the U.S., the number of jobs for paralegals is expected to grow faster than average through the year 2015. The expected growth in the population should create more jobs for paralegals. Law firms are trying to meet customers' needs and lower the costs involved in running a business.
- In San Diego, salaries for paralegals range between $40,000 to $60,000 per year depending on the area of law and the size of the law office. Wages also vary by education. In general, the more education, the higher the