

# A Look at Paralegal Training

---

*Article by: Kent Pinkerton*

A paralegal assists lawyers, corporations, or government agencies that must work with the law. Most of the time, paralegals help lawyers to keep afloat of the mounds of paperwork needed in law. They organize, index, photocopy, and run errands. They may also interview witnesses, draft legal documents, or conduct hearings. The tasks of the paralegal depends a large part on what type a paralegal he is, and the amount of training he has received.

The National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA) recommends that all entry-level paralegals have a four-year bachelor's degree. Though only about 50 percent of the working paralegals in 2001 had a bachelor's degree, it is quickly becoming standard for hiring paralegals. The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that the paralegal field is growing faster than most. Extra training can help guarantee a job in this rapidly growing field.

NFPA recommends a formal paralegal training program after a potential paralegal earns a bachelor's degree. The organization provides a directory of accredited programs, for a small fee, through its Web site, and recommends at least 24 semester hours dedicated to legal studies. Online programs also offer additional paralegal training, including emphasizing critical thinking skills, improving communication skills, understanding law procedures and rules, honing legal writing abilities, and practicing interpersonal skills for working with clients, witnesses, other professionals, or the public. The NFPA urges paralegals to critically evaluate all correspondence or online courses, making sure the program provides an adequate, professionally recognized education. Check, for example, that the program is approved by the American Bar Association.

Most colleges and universities offer paralegal certification program, and Kaplan Education Paralegal Programs has training courses in 11 states. Also, the American Institute for Paralegal Studies is one of the oldest paralegal training programs in the country. Paralegals Info provides detailed information about paralegal jobs, schools, training, courses, certificates, and services. Paralegals Info is the sister site of Notary Public Web.