

Legal Secretary Jobs: Gatekeepers of the Law

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There are several routes you can take in your goal of becoming a legal secretary. Depending on the size of a law firm, their specialties and their budget, requirements will differ regarding your background training and experience. Before sending out your resume, first look at your own objectives – what is your immediate goal? What are your long-term goals? Do you want to embark on a job, or a career? Do you have the time or the money to spend on furthering your education now? How about in the future? Do you have any specialized administrative, clerical or legal knowledge already? Are you a fast learner in a new environment? Once you've answered these questions, you're ready to begin mapping your career as a legal secretary.

Many smaller, less-busy legal offices, especially in more rural areas, are willing to hire legal secretaries with little or no clerical or administrative experience, as they have the time and resources to devote to training you in your new role. Busier offices will often require a higher-degree of training or more extensive background, as they need a legal secretary who will hit the ground running. However, the larger the legal office is, the more support staff there tends to be – and in that, you may find your best opportunities. A larger office will probably have levels of support staff – from entry-level legal secretaries to high-level legal assistants – and so opportunity for advancement is more prevalent. Because of those levels, a larger office is also more likely to hire on entry-level candidates who require more base training.

To ensure the highest level of success in your quest to become a legal secretary, ensure that your computer and typing skills are polished, your customer service skills impeccable and your ability to multi-task and organize refined. Familiarize yourself with clerical and administrative duties common to secretaries in all professions, including greeting clients in an assured, professional manner; handling routine written, electronic and vocal communication with ease; preparing professional correspondence correctly and confidently; and maintaining an on-going task list in order to stay on top of your duties. You should also be comfortable with procedures for appointment-setting, travel planning and note taking.

Continuing education is available to help you along the way to becoming a legal secretary. From old-fashioned correspondence courses in secretarial work to new-fangled online classes featuring more modern concepts, you can find the right fit for the skills you need to acquire. Check with your local community colleges to see which software or professional courses they offer as continuing education, or towards secretarial or administrative certification. Also check for citizen-based legal courses open to the public – brushing up or enhancing your knowledge of the law is your best bet to success.

If you enjoy the challenge of a rewarding career mixed with a job where every day presents new opportunities, consider becoming a legal secretary. You'll become a valued asset in any office you join, while enhancing your knowledge of the law and furthering your clerical and administrative skills. In the long run, you'll find yourself in a career with opportunities to go above and beyond the ordinary while achieving a skill set that makes you extraordinary. Robert Proctor is part of Legal Week Jobs, a website specialising in legal jobs and recruitment including graduate, paralegal, solicitor & legal secretary jobs.

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