

Introduction to Legal Concepts

Lesson 1 - Legal Secretary Introduction

WORKBOOK

Legal Secretary Introduction - Overview

- Legal Secretary Overview
- Potential Careers
- The Lawyer's Assistant
- The Career of a Lawyer's Assistant
- Employment Outlook

Legal Secretary

- Job Description
 - A legal secretary is an administrative assistant trained in the field of law
 - The legal secretary serves in a clerical capacity; however, in many small law offices, the legal secretary may also engage in writing legal drafts and creating legal correspondence on behalf of the attorney
 - The line between legal secretary and paralegal are often blurred; however, a paralegal normally has an at least associate degree with specialized legal training in the various fields of law
 - This course will present you with the basic training required for a legal secretary

Potential Careers

- This course prepares you to enter the legal field as a:
 - Legal Secretary
 - For a law firm
 - For a government agency (Prosecutor or Public Defender's Office)
 - In the legal department of corporations
 - Working with insurance companies
 - Working with real estate companies
 - Other fields where a basic knowledge of legal procedures would be beneficial to the employer

Legal Secretary Job Functions

- Daily tasks performed by a legal secretary include:
 - Delivery of legal paperwork to the courts and other attorneys
 - Typing correspondence and legal paperwork
 - Maintaining the legal calendar to post:
 - Court dates
 - Appointments
 - Meetings
 - Deadlines
 - Answer phones
 - Greet clients
 - Managing billing & expenses
 - Office Management
 - Ordering Supplies

Required Traits

- Legal secretaries will often specialize in the same field of law as the attorney for whom the work
- If you work for a trial attorney, it is not uncommon for you to be in court with the attorney
- As a trusted member of the law firm:
 - You must be precise in your work
 - Respect confidentiality requirements
 - Organize, classify, and categorize paperwork
 - Use legal billing and accounting systems
 - Possess excellent judgment
- Be prepared to extend your education to the level of a paralegal (Associate or Bachelor Degree)

Employment Outlook

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics presents the following for Paralegals and Legal Assistants
 - <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/legal>

Quick Facts: Paralegals and Legal Assistants	
2012 Median Pay	\$46,990 per year \$22.59 per hour
Work Experience in a Related Occupation	None
On-the-job Training	None
Number of Jobs, 2012	277,000
Job Outlook, 2012-22	17% (Faster than average)
Employment Change, 2012-22	46,200

Legal Secretary Introduction - Review

- Legal Secretary Overview
- Potential Careers
- The Lawyer's Assistant
- The Career of a Lawyer's Assistant
- Employment Outlook



Questions

and

Answers

Review Questions:

1. True or False: Training or experience as a legal secretary qualifies you to work in only private law firms.
 - A. True
 - B. False
2. True or False: The difference between a legal secretary and a paralegal is that a paralegal has been to law school.
 - A. True
 - B. False
3. True or False: The only way to move from a legal secretary to a paralegal is to obtain certification by passing an exam.
 - A. True
 - B. False
4. True or False: Advising clients is an important part of the job of a legal secretary.
 - A. True
 - B. False
5. True or False: This training will prepare you for an entry-level role as a legal secretary in a law firm, governmental agency, or corporate legal department.
 - A. True
 - B. False

Answer Key:

1. B

False. Having knowledge of legal terminology, legal processes, and the ability to prepare legal documents, means that you have skills that many employers find valuable. Not only will you be attractive to private law firms, but also insurance agencies, court offices, real estate offices, and businesses of all types.

2. B

False. Generally, a law clerk is someone who has been to law school, whereas a paralegal is someone with some college level education (Associates or Bachelor's degree) and special training in legal research.

3. B.

False. A certification examination is an option to advance your career by demonstrating your commitment to the paralegal profession.

4. B

False. The legal secretary's role does not include offering advice or counsel to clients of the office. Not only is this discouraged, it is unlawful and constitutes the Unauthorized Practice of Law. So, while you will be interacting frequently with clients, if they ever ask substantive questions about their case, always direct them to an attorney.

5. A

True. Many secretaries don't seek any training after high school and want to start a career as a legal secretary. Because you have completed this training, you will have an advantage over the competition, in that you have a basic knowledge of legal concepts, terms, and processes. Explain to your potential employers that by taking this training, you are demonstrating a commitment to your new career and your desire to become a valuable part of their legal team.