

NEW MEXICO JUDICIAL BRANCH

PARALEGAL

(Classified)

This job description is ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY and is not a comprehensive listing of all functions performed.

SUMMARY

Under general supervision of an attorney or a District or Metropolitan judge; perform highly skilled non-routine legal support work in a legal office or court setting; interview clients; manage cases; compose legal correspondence and other legal documents as directed, and perform a variety of paralegal duties in specific areas of law.

QUALIFICATIONS

A Paralegal shall have several qualification options; however, all shall be in accordance with the State Bar of New Mexico, Rules Governing Paralegal Services, Paralegal qualifications, Rule 20-115. [Approved, effective January 30, 2004.]

A paralegal shall meet one or more of the following educational, training or work experience qualifications:

A. graduation from a paralegal program that is:

- (1) approved by the American Bar Association;
- (2) an associate degree program;
- (3) a post-baccalaureate certificate program in paralegal studies; or
- (4) a bachelor's degree program;

B. graduation from a post-secondary legal assistant program which consists of a minimum of sixty (60) semester hours or equivalent, as defined by the American Bar Association guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs, of which at least eighteen (18) semester hours or equivalent are general education courses and eighteen (18) semester hours or equivalent are legal specialty courses;

C. a bachelor's degree in any field plus 2 (two) years of substantive law-related experience under the supervision of a licensed attorney. Successful completion of at least fifteen (15) semester hours of substantive paralegal courses may be substituted for one year of law-related experience;

D. graduation from an accredited law school and not disbarred or suspended from the practice of law by the State of New Mexico or any other jurisdiction;

E. certification by the National Association of Legal Assistants, Incorporated, the National Federation of Paralegal Associations, Incorporated or other equivalent national or state competency examination plus at least one (1) year of substantive law-related experience under the supervision of a licensed attorney; or

F. a high school diploma or equivalent plus seven (7) years of substantive law-related experience under the supervision of a licensed attorney.

Other: Completion of a post offer background check may be required.

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Knowledge: Knowledge of the differences between authorized practices and the unauthorized practices of law; legal terminology and procedures; court rules, policies, and operations; case management systems and applicable software; New Mexico Statutes Annotated (NMSA); forms of opinions and legal writing styles; The Gregg Reference Manual, Lexis, Westlaw, Westcheck and other electronic legal databases and research systems; Supreme Court Rules and Regulations; New Mexico One Source; New Mexico Judicial Branch Personnel Rules, and other legal reference materials; court procedures versus legal advice; court equipment, computer systems, and applied programs; organization management; sources for fact gathering, data collection, and retrieving information; proper English usage, grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and basic math.

Skill & Ability: **Skill** in avoiding the unauthorized practice of law and the giving of legal advice; performing legal research and analysis; to work independently and perform difficult, highly detailed work under pressure; applying and communicating complex rules; dealing with conflict and recognizing hostile individuals; work effectively with emotionally distraught or potentially dangerous individuals; identifying potentially dangerous situations; applying effective interview techniques; applying proper English grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling; effective communication, both oral and written; use of legal reference materials; preparing legal documents and correspondence; compiling information and preparing reports; using computers, including hardware and software; understanding and utilizing legal terms and phrases; public speaking; maintaining confidentiality, professional demeanor, and composure. **Ability** to exercise independent judgment in appraising situations and making decisions and recommendations; think critically and propose ideas and plans for program development and assist in implementation of same; work with security personnel; establish priorities; multitask to achieve objectives; effectively manage time within restrictive time frames; provide guidance, consultation, and assistance to new law clerks and Legal Office Specialists in technical and procedural aspects of their job; deal with higher courts; remain impartial; utilize conflict resolution techniques; communicate orally and in writing; establish and maintain cooperative working relationships; utilize and update legal reference materials; follow written and oral directions; organize and maintain accurate records and files.

EXAMPLES OF WORK PERFORMED

Interview customers and identify relevant legal issues, and provide appropriate legal forms, procedural information and referrals according to court rules and guidelines; analyze circumstances and make recommendations regarding complex situations; review court rules and make recommendations on how to address non-routine issues that may fall outside court rules and guidelines; interview customers (pro se litigants and attorneys) in person, by telephone or correspondence; assist customers and explain to those interviewed the court's rules and regulations, policies and procedures for attorneys and for individuals who wish to represent themselves without an attorney; perform advanced legal research; prepare legal pleadings; make innovative recommendations for improvement in court rules and guidelines; handle non-repetitious and unique tasks as well as routine matters; draft new policies, forms,

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and procedures, and provide program leadership; may develop or manage arbitration and settlement facilitation program; assist the public and other court staff; attend court hearings, mediation and other proceedings; keep Law Library current; present and train others in Continuing Legal Education and other training and educational programs; keep judges informed regarding proposed court rules, statutes, procedures, law changes; work with IT personnel and provide resource to others regarding automation and new computer and other technological procedures; review case history; prepare and organize appointments and referrals for arbitration and mediation; draft contracts; assist attorneys in the delivery of legal services; revise court forms to ensure they are in compliance with New Mexico statutes and court rules; referral information; ensure intake forms from each customer interviewed are accurate and complete; conduct legal factual and general research; analyze circumstances and process cases; coordinate the timely processing of documents; answer telephones and provide information as needed; manage office files and records; maintain and manage case flow; draft and prepare correspondence and documents; maintain daily cash drawer; provide customer service and information to the general public, attorneys and other state agencies; independently draft routine orders; calendar hearings; prepare statistical reports; coordinate with other agencies and court staff to manage cases and case documents; prepare agendas, schedule appointments and meetings; manage administrative minutes; serve as a liaison with other court staff, state agencies and the public and provide assistance to other legal divisions as requested. **May** serve as a Court Monitor; perform bill analysis and design and implement improvements to assigned special programs.

WORK CONDITIONS/Essential Functions

The essential functions are representative of the work environment and physical demands an employee **may** expect to encounter in performing tasks assigned to this job.

The employee will work closely with judges, attorneys, and the public. The work is performed in an often fast paced and stressful work environment and the employee may have to make quick decisions under stress. The work requires the extensive use of computers and is performed in an office or court setting. The employee is regularly required to sit for long periods of time, read typed and/or handwritten material; perform repetitive hand, arm and finger motions as well as use manual/finger dexterity and may also be required to move, lift, pull and carry up to 25 pounds; travel (valid driver's license required), work overtime and/or flexible hours, weekends, and holidays; and may be exposed to fluctuating building temperatures. The employee may be exposed to hostile or violent situations that may arise when dealing with individuals involved in court cases; be exposed to disturbing and/or hazardous court exhibits.