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## Legal Assistant

Format: Self-Pace Online / eLearning  
Program Duration: 6 Months  
Course Contact Hours: 375

### The Legal Assistant

Legal Assistants play one of the most important roles in the legal industry. Though individual attorneys are ultimately responsible for the legal work they produce and the strategies they devise, many tasks – from legal research and writing, source citing, filing, and others – are delegated to legal assistants. As such, it is imperative for successful Legal Assistants to have a fundamental understanding of the primary substantive and procedural elements applicable to the practice of law so that they can support the attorneys as best as possible. To be as successful as possible on the job, Legal Assistants require a broad understanding of the law, various civil litigation principles where Legal Assistants are used most often as well as the ethical considerations that affect every aspect of the job.

### The Legal Assistant Program

This program offers an in-depth view of the role of legal assistants and paralegals play as an essential part of the overall profession. Examining the myriad of skills used by legal assistants everyday alongside the typical legal working environment, students will explore the common areas of law in which they'll likely be working, the various ethical considerations that may arise as well as the sources of law they'll reference every day. Students will also be introduced to various career opportunities available to trained legal assistants. This program also provides students with a comprehensive understanding of professional responsibility in the legal field and how these laws apply to all legal staff, specifically. In addition to the general legal ethical concepts presented in the course, students will research individual state professional responsibility rules as they apply to the overall field and to the paralegal role.

### Education and National Certifications

- Students should have or be pursuing a high school diploma or GED.
- There are no state approval and/or state requirements associated with this program.
- National Certification:
  - **NALS Accredited Legal Professional Exam**
    - **NOTE: To be eligible for the Accredited Legal Professional Exam, NALS requires candidates have at least 1 year of general office experience.**
  - **Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) Certification Exam.**

### **Program Objectives:**

At the conclusion of this program, students will be able to:

- Introduction to the Legal Assisting Profession
- Office Procedures and Technology
- Professional Writing
- Use Microsoft Office

### **Legal Assistant Program Detailed Objectives:**

#### **Introduction to Law & the Legal Assisting Professional Modules**

##### **THE LEGAL ASSISTING PROFESSION**

- Describe the primary responsibilities of the paralegal in the American legal system
- List professional qualifications for a paralegal
- Give examples of how "soft skills" can increase the effectiveness of a paralegal
- Compare different types of legal work settings
- Give examples of legal assistant tasks common to most environments
- Give examples of legal assistant tasks related to particular legal specialties
- Describe the importance of proper billing and accounting practices
- Identify the types of accounts a law practice may require

##### **LEGAL ASSISTANT CAREERS**

- Identify the types of paralegal educational programs
- Describe the professional associations available to the paralegal
- Explain the benefits of networking
- Describe career opportunities for legal assistants
- Explain how a resume is tailored for a legal environment
- Prepare a resume for a legal assistant position

##### **ETHICS OF THE LEGAL ASSISTING PROFESSION**

- Identify guidelines for avoiding unauthorized practice of law by paralegals
- Compare ethical regulation of attorneys with regulation of paralegals
- Describe efforts to regulate the paralegal profession
- Recognize unethical recording of accounting and client payments
- Determine the appropriate ethical response to various legal scenarios
- Discuss how to protect client confidentiality and avoid conflicts of interest

##### **SOURCES OF AMERICAN LAW AND THE COURT SYSTEMS**

- Outline the basic history of the American legal system and its laws
- Describe the sources of law in the United States
- Name the courts included in a typical state court system
- Relate the parts of the federal court system
- Describe the role of the U.S. Supreme Court
- Compare the jurisdiction of federal and state courts

- Describe techniques that support good listening skills in a client interview
- Explain how to prepare for a client interview
- Prepare a checklist for a client interview
- Describe the steps in conducting an investigation
- Identify the parties involved and their roles in the investigation process
- Describe how to select material and expert witnesses

#### **INTERVIEWING AND INVESTIGATING SKILLS**

- Describe techniques that support good listening skills in a client interview
- Explain how to prepare for a client interview
- Prepare a checklist for a client interview
- Describe the steps in conducting an investigation
- Identify the parties involved and their roles in the investigation process
- Describe how to select material and expert witnesses

#### **LEGAL RESEARCH AND WRITING**

- Develop a research plan for a legal question
- Develop search queries for computer-based research
- Contrast traditional paper-based research with online research methods
- Describe ways to update research to reflect current legal developments
- Research a legal matter
- Compare the writing style used in briefs and memoranda
- Identify the purpose of using citations in legal writing
- Describe the purpose and components of legal briefs and memoranda of law
- Write legal briefs
- Draft internal memoranda of law
- Use citations in legal documents

#### **CIVIL LITIGATION AND ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

- List the major pleadings and the parties involved
- Identify the main forms of discovery
- Identify the types of pretrial motions
- Describe the purpose of a settlement conference
- Describe the usual phases of a trial
- Identify the trier of fact for jury and non-jury trials
- Describe the process of appealing a decision
- Describe the possible decisions of an appellate court
- Identify the types of alternative dispute resolution
- Give examples of when to apply each type of alternate dispute resolution

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE LAW**

- Identify the role of administrative law in the legal system
- Compare the possible legislative, executive, and judicial powers of agencies
- Describe an agency's duty to disclose
- Outline the process for judicial review of agency actions

#### **CRIMINAL LAW AND PROCEDURE**

- Describe the elements of a crime

- Outline the various types of crimes
- Identify the participants of crime from a fact pattern
- Describe inchoate crimes
- Explain constitutional protections and defenses
- Outline the stages of criminal proceedings

#### **TORTS**

- List examples of intentional torts
- Define negligence
- Explain the four elements of negligence
- Define negligence defenses
- Define strict liability

#### **CONTRACTS**

- Identify the elements of a contract
- Explain the six contracts subject to the statute of frauds
- Outline the methods available to discharge a contract
- Summarize the various contract remedies available
- Define a Uniform Commercial Code sales contract

#### **PROPERTY**

- Define personal and real property
- Describe the different types of ownership interest in real property
- Summarize the methods of transferring ownership of real property
- Explain the landlord-tenant relationship
- Describe the types of intellectual property

#### **FAMILY LAW**

- Describe pre-marriage legal concepts
- Identify marriage requirements
- Distinguish between annulment and divorce
- Identify the laws pertaining to property division, spousal support, child custody, and child support
- Identify documents necessary for a divorce

#### **ESTATE PLANNING AND PROBATE**

- Describe the different types of wills
- Describe when the intestacy statute applies
- Outline probate procedure
- Distinguish a living will from a health care proxy
- Differentiate between the various types of trusts
- Identify how trusts are terminated

#### **BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS**

- Define agency relationship
- Identify the parties to an agency
- Define sole proprietorship
- Describe the difference between general and limited partnership
- Define Limited Liability Company (LLC)

- Describe the different classifications of corporations
- Explain the roles and duties of shareholders, officers, and directors in corporations

### **Basic Office Functions Modules:**

#### **MOUSE, KEYBOARD, HARDWARE**

- Use a mouse for onscreen navigation
- Use the primary function keys on a keyboard
- Use keyboard shortcuts
- Identify hardware components of a computer (monitor, CPU, drives)

#### **SOFTWARE AND APPLICATIONS**

- Define software and identify types
- Navigate system software
- Open an application
- Save a file; Locate a file

#### **INTERNET, EMAIL AND SOCIAL NETWORKING**

- Use of a search engine
- Adjust Internet privacy settings
- Compose and email
- Attach a file to an email
- Use email options, such as folders, signatures, and calendars
- Describe the benefits of social networking

### **Effective Professional Writing**

#### **GOOD PROFESSIONAL WRITING**

- Name three criteria for good writing
- Ask the central question you need to answer before you begin writing
- List the three levels of potential readers within an organization
- Name three ways of applying basic psychology to encourage readers to read your message
- List five elements that contribute to an appropriate tone in most writing

#### **A PLANNED APPROACH TO WRITING**

- Write an outline with the appropriate level of detail
- State the first two questions that a reader asks when receiving a memo, letter, proposal, or report
- Name four criteria of good evidence
- Describe direct and indirect patterns of organization and explain when each should be used
- Name and define five common sequences of supporting ideas
- Set up a business letter in the correct format
- Name the main parts of a memorandum
- Describe what the minutes of a meeting are used for
- Cite the main purposes of written proposals and reports
- State eight things to be explained in the body of a proposal

### **EFFECTIVE WRITING**

- Identify the three basic sentence patterns
- Explain what a topic sentence is and what it does
- Structure sentences to emphasize or deemphasize ideas
- Explain the elements of a dictionary entry
- Describe the difference between the denotation and the connotation of a word
- Define subject-verb agreement
- Explain the uses of warm and cold language
- Edit to make writing more concise

### **WRITING FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT**

- Name three techniques to make your writing powerful and precise
- Identify when to use active and passive verbs
- Define concrete nouns and abstract nouns
- Explain the uses of the three end marks of punctuation
- List and illustrate the most common uses of the comma, semicolon, colon, apostrophe, and dash
- Cite two basic rules for the use of quotations
- Identify strategies for rewriting and revision
- List potential sources of information for business writers
- Give examples of three kinds of questions and explain their usefulness
- Identify major kinds of reference material available at libraries
- Cite guidelines for creating visually appealing documents
- Cite recommendations for using a computer to help in your writing
- State the safest policy for dealing with the limitations of privacy for email
- Describe basic copyright policies for material that appears online

### **MICROSOFT OFFICE**

- Use an integrated software package, specifically the applications included in the Microsoft Office suite
- Demonstrate marketable skills for enhanced employment opportunities
- Describe proper computer techniques for designing and producing various types of documents
- Demonstrate the common commands & techniques used in Windows desktop
- List the meaning of basic PC acronyms like MHz, MB, KB, HD and RAM
- Use WordPad and MSWord to create various types of documents
- Create headings and titles with Word Art
- Create and format spreadsheets, including the use of mathematical formulas
- Demonstrate a working knowledge of computer database functions, including putting, processing, querying and outputting data
- Define computer terminology in definition matching quizzes
- Use the Windows Paint program to alter graphics
- Use a presentation application to create a presentation with both text and graphics
- Copy data from one MS Office application to another application in the suite

- Use e-mail and the Internet to send Word and Excel file attachments
- Demonstrate how to use the Windows Taskbar and Windows Tooltips
- Explain how copyright laws pertain to data and graphics posted on the Internet
- Take the college computer competency test after course completion
- Follow oral and written directions and complete assignments when working under time limitations

**Note:** Although the Microsoft Office Module is not required to successfully complete this program, students interested in pursuing free Microsoft MOS certification may want to consider completing this Microsoft Office Module at no additional cost.