

While lawyers assume ultimate responsibility for legal work, they often delegate many of their tasks to paralegals. In fact, paralegals continue to assume a growing range of tasks in the Nation's legal offices and perform many of the same tasks as lawyers.

One of a **Paralegal's** most important tasks is helping lawyers prepare for closings, hearings, trials, and corporate meetings. Paralegals investigate the facts of cases and ensure all relevant information is considered. They also identify appropriate laws, judicial decisions, legal articles, and other materials that are relevant to assigned cases. After they analyze and organize the information, paralegals may prepare written reports that attorneys use in determining how cases should be handled. Should attorneys decide to file lawsuits on behalf of clients, paralegals may help prepare the legal arguments, draft pleadings and motions to be filed with the court, obtain affidavits, and assist attorneys during trials.

Paralegals also organize and track files of all important case documents and make them available and easily accessible to attorneys. Paralegals help draft contracts, mortgages, separation agreements, and trust instruments. They may also assist in preparing tax returns and planning estates. Some paralegals coordinate the activities of other law office employees and maintain financial records for the office.

Paralegals are found in all types of organizations, but most are employed in **law firms**, **corporate legal departments**, and **various government offices**. In these organizations, they may work in all areas of the law, including litigation, personal injury, corporate law, criminal law, employee benefits, intellectual property, labor law, bankruptcy, immigration, family law, and real estate. Within specialties, functions often are broken down further so that paralegals may deal with a specific area. For example, paralegals specializing in labor law may deal exclusively with employee benefits

Salary Information:

- Paralegal:
\$48,790 Median Salary (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008)
- ***Paralegals and Legal Assistants for the Rochester, New York area:***
\$42,000 Median Salary (Career One Stop, 2008)
[*Salary varies based on education/advanced degree, work-experience & setting/location]

Additional Information:

- American Association for Paralegal Education:
www.aafpe.org
- National Federation of Paralegal Associations:
www.paralegals.org

