

## PARALEGAL EMPLOYMENT

Where do paralegals work?

- In the Columbus area, approximately 80% of paralegals work in private law firms, 10% in corporations, 5% in financial institutions, and the remaining in other non-traditional roles such as insurance companies, title companies, the court system and governmental agencies.

What are the general duties of paralegals?

- This is dependant upon the area of law in which the paralegal is employed, the nature of their employment, and the amount of responsibility delegated by the attorney/supervisor. Characteristic skills that are necessary for paralegal work include a knowledge of the basic principles of law, clear and concise writing skills, attention to detail, ability to follow instruction and maturity in judgment.
- The salary range of paralegals in Columbus.

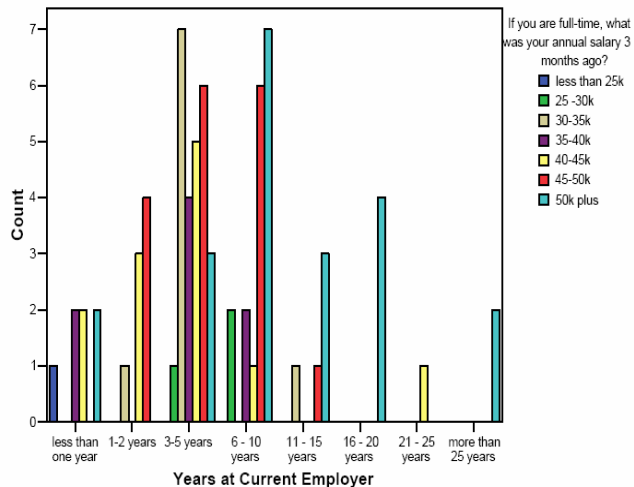


Chart Source: The CBA/PACO Salary Survey 2/3/05

## WHAT IS PACO?

Paralegal Association of Central Ohio (PACO) is a professional association of over four hundred paralegals in the Central Ohio area. PACO exists to promote the use of paralegals; to develop more qualified individuals to enter the profession, to serve as a network for practicing paralegals, to promote paralegal awareness in the community and to serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas and discussion of issues facing the profession. PACO members participate in monthly general membership meetings, brown bag luncheons on various legal topics of interest to the paralegal profession, pro bono activities, student membership drives and other social and informative events throughout Central Ohio.

## PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION OF CENTRAL OHIO

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## PARALEGAL DEFINITION

A paralegal is a person, qualified through education, training, or work experience to perform substantive legal work that requires knowledge of legal concepts and is customarily, but not exclusively, performed by a lawyer. This person may be retained or employed by a lawyer, law office, governmental agency or other entity or may be authorized by administrative, statutory or court authority to perform this work.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARALEGAL PROFESSION

The paralegal concept began its rapid growth in the late 1960's with the realization by more and more lawyers that the utilization of paralegals could increase efficiency and productivity in the law office. Although a paralegal may not give legal advice, he or she may perform many of the tasks that have traditionally been accomplished by the lawyer. The use of paralegals brings more efficient service to the client as a paralegal's time is billed at a lower rate than an attorney's time, a paralegal may free an attorney's time for other matters and a paralegal may be able to do additional work for which an attorney cannot find time.

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Paralegals are trained in several ways, including college and university programs offering an associate's degree or bachelor's degree in paralegal studies. Paralegal schools, many of which require a bachelor's degree and whose concentrated programs are completed within a few months, or on-the-job training. The educational requirements of employers varies greatly. Both employers and prospective students are encouraged to review the curriculum of training institutions that are considered. The various schools and institutions which offer paralegal programs can receive approval from the American Bar Association (ABA) provided their curricula and other requirements meet the ABA's standards. A bachelor's degree is a definite asset and format training is encouraged as a number of those applying for paralegal positions is dramatically increasing. A recent survey of Columbus paralegals indicated that of those responding, 60% have a bachelor's degree.

### PURPOSE

*To promote the interest of paralegals, foster relationships with the legal community, serve the public, advocate the Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility, and endorse the individual missions of PACO and the Columbus Bar Association.*

## HOW TO CHOOSE A PARALEGAL PROGRAM

When considering a paralegal program of study, it is suggested that the following items be considered:

- Compare schools. What are their reputations within the legal community? Talk to current and former students, meet with the admissions personnel, and sit in on classes.
- Determine the qualifications of the instructors. Are they practicing lawyers? Law professors? How many years have they practiced in the area in which they are teaching?
- Investigate the programs' drop out rate, employment rate and the reputation of the school's placement program.
- Find out the program's total cost, including tuition, registration fees, books, etc.
- If you take on a loan to cover the tuition and other costs, what will it cost you to repay the loan and when does repayment begin? Are you eligible for grants? Scholarships?
- Understand the refund policy before you enroll in a paralegal program. The policy for students who drop out should be stated in the contract.
- A list of local schools is available through PACO by contacting [info@pacoparalegals.org](mailto:info@pacoparalegals.org).

We hope that this brochure will provide a starting point for individuals considering enrolling in a paralegal education program. It is recommended that information from each program be obtained directly from the school for review and comparison.