

Job Searches for New Paralegals

You are looking for your first paralegal job. Congratulations! Paralegals work hard, but finding a paralegal job doesn't have to be hard.

You already know the basics: check one or more job sites for paralegal/legal assistant jobs. Don't forget NALA, your local/state paralegal associations, and your state and local bar associations. NALA posts available jobs under the Career Center tab. Check whether your local or state association also has a job bank.

Job sites include (but are certainly not limited to) Indeed, Career Builder, SnagAJob, LinkedIn, Simply Hired, Monster, Robert Half, Law Jobs, Law Crossing, Martindale, LegalJobs.net, Careers.com, Special Counsel, and many others. Don't forget your state job website, and USAJobs.gov for federal jobs.

Include searches for law, legal, policy, paralegal, and justice.

Remember there is no "perfect job." Know what you are looking for, but keep in mind that sometimes you need to take a job that isn't exactly what you are looking for in order to get started. Many experienced paralegals started as receptionists and administrative assistants then convinced their employers that they would make good paralegals.

Network. Everyone talks about networking, but what does that mean? Join your local paralegal association, attend CLE in person, talk to other members, volunteer with the association (it looks great on a resume, too), volunteer in general. The people you meet become resources for telling you about available jobs, and as references for jobs you apply for. Remember though, that while you are networking, others are interested in what you can offer them, rather than what you want from them. Make an impression on others by being interested in what they are doing and what they need; it shouldn't be all about your job search. Networking works: when I gave notice at my last job, I immediately emailed an association member I knew was job hunting. If she hadn't been a member or hadn't talked to me- about my kids and a shared interest in horseback riding that she was pursuing while out of work- I wouldn't have known she was looking. Guess what? She got the job!

Sometimes there is a difference between Paralegal and Legal Assistant jobs. Technically, the definition is the same, but more companies are starting to delineate between them. Read job descriptions and ads carefully. But don't forget that there is no perfect job. If you find yourself not applying for anything, you may want to rethink how you are evaluating the job postings. Don't turn your nose up at a decent job just because the first duty listed is answering phones.

Know the firm or company you are applying for. When you find a job you want to apply for, make sure to learn about the company first. Check out the website for descriptions of the firm and attorneys, pictures, whether they list support staff on the website, if they have a blog, In the News pages- you are looking for general information and details on company culture; do a basic internet search for news involving that company; find out the disposition of cases they file in court; talk to other members of your local association, especially if you can find someone who works there. Possibly a big one: check your state and local bar associations for disciplinary proceedings. You may

not want to work for an attorney who is constantly in trouble with the bar, or a firm who has had five out of six attorneys reprimanded in the past few years.

The best advice ever? Don't give up. You may not wake up tomorrow with your dream job, but keep on looking. Really good jobs are out there!

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