



Paralegal Core Competencies

Core competencies are essential for achieving success and standing out in any profession, including the paralegal profession. NALA - The Paralegal Association outlines paralegal core competencies that encompass a combination of necessary knowledge, skills, and attributes. These competencies are deeply ingrained in the paralegal role and contribute to long-term professional success. Here are the core competencies for paralegals as developed by NALA's Professional Development Committee:

Ethics

- Handle sensitive info
- Exhibit integrity
- Commit to confidentiality
- Exercise discretion
- Competently avoid the unauthorized practice of law (UPL)
- Courageously maintain ethical boundaries
- Demonstrate professionalism
- Routinely disclose title as nonlawyer
- Disclose potential conflicts as they may arise

Legal Knowledge

- Understand and apply the applicable rules of procedure
- Able to research and apply statutes, regulations, rules, and case law
- Understand and apply appropriate legal vocabulary
- Maintain competency with continuing legal education
- Understand basic financial principles

Durable Skills

- Prepare work and documents accurately, completely, and timely
- Work under pressure of deadlines
- Establish priorities
- Manage multiple time-sensitive projects at once
- Set and communicate realistic goals to manage expectations
- Adapt to changing work requirements
- Follow through on projects
- Avoid distractions
- Balance administrative and billable duties

Critical Thinking

- Soundly use independent judgment and decision-making skills
- Proactively take initiative

Research and Analysis

- Conduct investigations
- Proficiently use electronic research options
- Gather relevant information from a variety of sources
- Identify and analyze relevant facts, laws and issues
- Summarize findings

Technology

- Able and willing to learn and use various technology required in and outside of the workplace, including operating systems and case or project management software
- Able to work with persons of varying technological competency levels

Writing and Communications

- Exhibit attention to detail
- Proofread and edit work and proficiently use redlining
- Understand and use accurate citation formats
- Compose legal documents that are of a substantive nature
- Demonstrate interview skills
- Able to effectively communicate in written and verbal communication with attorneys, clients, coworkers, vendors, court and government personnel
- Ability to build relationships within the legal community

Organization

- Manage legal files, records, transactions, and events
- Manage complex projects
- Understand the importance of, and be able to perform docketing, calendaring, and deadline management
- Practice general office organization and procedures