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# The Partner Testing Center Handbook for the Certified Paralegal Exam



The Certified Paralegal Exam is delivered via computer-based testing throughout the United States. NALA utilizes the PSI testing center network for delivery of the examination. This document describes how a school, an employer, or a military base of paralegals may qualify to become a NALA Partner testing center. This is preliminary information, subject to amendment without notice. Watch the NALA website for further announcements.



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## Qualifying as a NALA Partner Testing Center

In 2010, the Certified Paralegal Exam transitioned from paper-pencil to computer-based testing. Today, the examination is available in all PSI testing center locations, located in over 250 testing locations across the country.

Employers, schools, and military bases that are not already designated as a PSI onsite testing center may apply to NALA to become a Partner testing center for the Certified Paralegal Exam. This booklet describes the requirements to be designated as an authorized testing center for the Certified Paralegal Exam and outlines requirements for proctors and examinees.

**Why Serve as a Partner Testing Center for the Certified Paralegal Examination?** Certification as a paralegal is part of the career management tools of all wishing to join this profession and make the paralegal profession the focus of their career life. For employers, certification provides that NALA has verified the education and experience background of the Certified Paralegal and that the paralegal has demonstrated knowledge and skills required to complete the written examination successfully. The examination has surpassed its 45th year of research and development.

The subsequent five-year recertification requirements also allow paralegal employees to demonstrate a commitment to continuing education and continued professional development.

Recognition of the Certified Paralegal program of NALA is nationwide. In private law firms, those with the credential generally have higher billing rates which are accepted by courts when awarding attorney fee award petitions. In corporations, the Certified Paralegal program is utilized as a means of providing a growth path for the paralegal staff members. For all, the CP® Program provides a win-win commitment. Providing the opportunity for students, employees, and military members to take the Certified Paralegal Exam on your premises offers the following opportunities:

**For Schools:**

- Provide a program for students to help them become more competitive in the workplace, enhancing and supporting the degree earned.
- Allow students and graduates to participate in the CP® Program at a lower cost.
- Provide a welcome service to students, graduates, and paralegals in the community.

**For Employers/Military Bases (MB):**

- Provide a service to employees that allows them to participate in the CP® Program at a lower cost.
- Use the CP® Program, including study and preparation, as an employee training/development program.
- Use the CP® Program as a means of reward for employees.
- Use the CP Program as a standard of excellence for non-lawyer services provided by the firm.

## **Qualifying as a Partner Testing Center (Schools/Employers/MB)**

If your school has a relationship with PSI and is a PSI designated testing center, your school is automatically a NALA testing center. No further information is needed or required.

If you want to administer the examination, and your school has an agreement with PSI, check with your school administration. It may be possible for you to administer the CP® Exam as you wish. This would result in **substantial savings** for your students.

Schools offering paralegal training programs may apply to be authorized testing centers for the Certified Paralegal Exam. The school should be a member of the American Association for Paralegal Education or offer a paralegal program that is approved by the American Bar Association. If the school does not meet either of these qualifications, graduates of the school must be eligible to take the Certified Paralegal Exam.

Employers throughout the United States are recognizing the value of the Certified Paralegal program and the growth path this provides for all non-lawyer legal staff. The convenience of offering the examination in the location of the employer is appreciated by the staff and human resources personnel. Generally, employers with a computer lab or training rooms with computer terminals will qualify.

Students or employees desiring to take the Certified Paralegal Exam must meet the requirements for taking the Certified Paralegal Exam. The requirements follow. There are no changes in the eligibility requirements with this procedure.

### **Examination Eligibility Requirements:**

1. Graduation from or completion of a paralegal program that is:

- (a) Approved by the American Bar Association; or
- (b) An associate degree program; or
- (c) A post-baccalaureate certificate program in paralegal studies; or
- (d) A bachelor's degree program in paralegal studies; or
- (e) A paralegal program which consists of a minimum of 60 semester hours (900 clock hours or 90 quarter hours) of which at least 15 semester hours (225 clock hours or 22.5 quarter hours) are substantive legal courses.

NOTE: Under Category 1(e), an applicant may combine college hours from more than one institution. The applicant must have graduated from a paralegal program consisting of a minimum of 15 semester hours (or 225 clock hours or 22½ quarter hours.) Evidence of the minimum hours required under Category 1(e) must be provided with the application form.

2. A bachelor's degree in any field plus one year's experience as a paralegal. Successful completion of at least 15 semester hours (or 22.5 quarter hours or 225 clock hours) of substantive paralegal courses will be considered equivalent to one year's experience as a paralegal.

3. A high school diploma or equivalent plus five (5) years’ experience as a paralegal under the supervision of a member of the Bar, plus evidence of a minimum of twenty (20) hours of substantive continuing legal education credit to have been completed within a two (2) year period prior to the application date.

**What are the testing center requirements?**

**Equipment.** The examination is delivered via a secured internet connection. Through the internet connection, candidate responses to questions are recorded directly on the test server. The testing center is not required to download any programs or data.

Minimum requirements for examinee computers are:

<b>HARDWARE SPECIFICATIONS</b>	
<b>Minimum Memory</b>	4 GB RAM 20 GB free hard drive space
<b>Proctor and Examinee Operating System</b>	Windows 7, Windows 10 (32 or 64 bit)
<b>Video</b>	19" monitor - Landscape Orientation  1024 x 768 screen resolution or higher, 24 bit or higher.
<b>Pointing Device</b>	Microsoft or compatible mouse.
<b>Network</b>	It is recommended that networks be hard wired to the testing facility to avoid security breaches.
<b>Internet Access</b>	All stations must have internet access. No Laptops/ tablets are allowed.
<b>Bandwidth</b>	Broadband internet 5MB/s download, 1 MB/s upload per examinee workstation (minimum 10MB/s download and 5MB/s upload)
<b>Google Chrome</b>	Chrome is recommended for the PSI – DYI (Partner) Event Testing Console

Exam candidates are not allowed to access other websites or programs during testing, nor may candidates load information on the workstation drives. It is the responsibility of the testing center and proctor to ensure compliance with this requirement.

The workstation environment must be:

- Quiet, well lit, comfortable temperature
- Visible so that proctors can easily monitor examinees
- Clear of personal items. A place should be provided to store personal items, or they may be placed at the front of the room with the proctor.

NALA reserves the right to refrain from using a testing center based on examinee or proctor complaints, or upon finding the testing center equipment and environment do not meet the above specifications.

**Proctor Information.** Authorized testing centers for the Certified Paralegal Exam are required to provide proctors.

NALA requires that a proctor be designated and approved by NALA for each testing session. Qualified proctors include:

- Instructors (do not teach paralegal courses)
- Paralegal program directors (do not teach paralegal courses)
- Retired instructors or retired paralegal program directors
- Professional educators (other instructors at the school who do not teach paralegal courses)
- Professional proctors routinely used by the school
- Attorney/employers
- Human resource professionals
- Members of NALA with the Certified Paralegal credential (must be certified at least five years)

*Note: Paralegals who do not hold the NALA CP® credential are ineligible to proctor.*

Proctors are required to complete a separate form submitted with the Partner testing center application form. The purpose of this form is to identify proctors and record the proctor contact information. In addition, through this form, the proctor acknowledges that he/she is familiar with the workstations/computer lab the testing center will use, and that he/she will be available for further training by NALA, specific to proctoring the Certified Paralegal Exam.

The form also lists proctor duties, an attestation that the proctor will follow the duties, and a confidentiality agreement.

NALA reserves the right to refrain from using a proctor based on examinee or testing center complaints, or non-compliance with the proctor duties and confidentiality agreement. NALA will work with the testing center designee to locate another proctor, however, if one cannot be located, the testing center cannot be an authorized center.

Authorized proctors may serve as proctors for the Certified Paralegal Exam at any authorized testing center. Once a proctor is approved, a proctor form for subsequent testing windows is not required.

**Examinees.** If applicable, NALA requests that the testing center submit the application forms for all examinees as a group for processing. This will ensure that the examinees will be assigned to the specific testing center.

If the examinees will be filing application forms individually, NALA will accept a list of examinees from a proposed testing center. Students or employees who submit their application form directly to NALA should be instructed to note on their application that they will be attending the testing center provided by your school or business. Application forms must include all supporting documentation of eligibility.

Communications about the qualifications of examinees and information needed to complete an application for the Certified Paralegal Exam is directed to the examination candidates only. This is confidential information, and NALA is only able to discuss questions about the status of a specific examinee with the examinee.

All examinees must meet the requirements for taking the Certified Paralegal Exam. There is no minimum participation requirement for NALA authorized testing centers.

**This program is NOT for those applying for special accommodations available under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Those qualifying for accommodations under these provisions must attend an onsite PSI testing center.**

NALA requests authorized testing centers be available to others not identified by the school as examinees. This would include paralegals in the immediate community who wish to take the examination at the testing center, as well as new graduates, or those who are new to the community. Testing centers are contacted by NALA on a case-by-case basis as these requests arise.

## **Fees and Charges**

No payment to NALA is required to be an authorized testing center for the Certified Paralegal Exam.

NALA collects the required initial PSI testing center fee from examinees during the CP® Exam application process. This program allows the Partner testing center to charge examinees on a pro-rata basis for the testing center facility and proctor fees. It is the responsibility of the testing center to collect the fee, as well as fees from “no-shows” and dis-honored checks.

## **How to Apply**

Applications are accepted year-round and examinees are encouraged to submit the application as soon as qualified.

The Knowledge Exam section of CP® Exam may be administered anytime during the year, with the exception of federal holidays. The Skills Exam section of CP® Exam will be administered in four testing windows – February, April, July, and October with the exception of federal holidays. However, times must be provided to NALA in advance to allow time for the system to be updated.

Testing centers must be designated a minimum of one month prior to the opening of a testing window. Testing centers are encouraged to submit the required applications well in advance of the deadline to ensure the center is approved.

The following is required:

- Completed Partner Testing Center Application Form
- Completed Partner Testing Center Proctor Application Form (for each proctor)
- Completed Partner Testing Center Confidentiality Agreement Form (for each proctor)

Authorized testing centers for the CP® Exam are not required to re-submit application forms for each testing window. NALA will, however, check with testing centers on a regular basis to be sure the information is up to date.

Authorized proctors for the CP® Exam do not need to apply for each testing window. However, NALA will communicate regularly with proctors to ensure contact information is correct. New proctors are required to complete a proctor application form and be approved by NALA.

## **After Being Approved as a Partner Testing Center**

### **Scheduling the Examination Testing Times**

The Center may schedule testing for the Knowledge Exam at any time - depending on facility and proctor availability, except federal holidays, when server maintenance is performed.

The CP® Exam will consist of two required sections taken in the following order:

#### **Knowledge Exam**

- The Knowledge Exam will consist of multiple-choice questions covering the topic areas listed in the Exam Specifications on the website [www.nala.org](http://www.nala.org).
- The Knowledge Exam will be administered on-demand, year-round at testing centers with preliminary result reporting upon completion.
- Three (3) hours testing time will be provided for the Knowledge Exam.
- Candidates must successfully complete the Knowledge Exam in order to be eligible to take the Skills Exam.

#### **Skills Exam**

- The Skills Exam will consist of a written assignment; specifications are set forth in the Exam Specifications on the website [www.nala.org](http://www.nala.org). Examinees will be graded on their ability to:
  - identify which facts are relevant and state them concisely and accurately;
  - identify the threshold or main issue and any secondary issue(s);
  - identify the relevant legal authority and apply it to the facts; and



- draw persuasive logical conclusions.
- The Skills Exam will be administered during four testing windows each year: February, April, July, and October.
- Two (2) hours testing time will be provided for the Skills Exam.
- Scratch paper may be provided to examinees

Successful completion of both the Knowledge and Skills Exams is required to obtain the Certified Paralegal credential.

Those who appear at the testing center to retake a section of the examination are not required to follow a specific schedule and may take the section needed at any time the testing center is opened by the school, business, or military base. The tests are timed by the examination software, however, proctors will be provided the time schedule for their information. NALA must be advised of the schedule adopted by the testing center a minimum of two weeks in advance of the first test session to provide sufficient time to send the required exam materials.

### **Summary Of Details Needed For All Testing Centers**

Planning for a testing window begins well in advance of the first day of testing. To provide for a smooth testing session, information about the examinees, schedules, and proctors is needed. An email message is sent to all testing centers requesting this information. This information must be received in order to provide the required information for the exam administration.

### **Deciding If the Center Is Open Only to Students or the Public**

Testing centers may be open only to employees, students, graduates, or to all in the area who need to take the examination, as determined by the testing center. The following procedures will apply:

<b>The Following Procedures Are For All Partner Testing Centers:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proctors are required to complete the proctor training and submit proof of completion.</li> <li>• NALA will email the group unlock event code and the one time password (OTP). This information is REQUIRED for the testing.</li> <li>• Advise NALA of any changes in scheduling.</li> <li>• NALA will also advise the testing center contact if we hear from examinees regarding a schedule change.</li> <li>• All examination materials, including login credentials, are confidential. Care must be taken to ensure all information pertaining to the examination is properly secured.</li> </ul>

**If your center is ONLY open to a group of students or others who are known to you:**

- Your center name will not appear on the list of approved testing centers on the NALA website.
- You will need to provide a list of examinees to NALA 15 days prior to the opening of the testing window.

*NALA will verify that the examinee applications are approved for the window.*

- You will need to advise NALA of the testing days and times for the examinees at least two weeks prior to the first testing session.
- It is recommended that the center establish a specific schedule – it is much easier to work with examinees if a schedule is published.
- NALA needs to know the schedule so the testing system may be updated. The actual schedule is up to the center to set. NALA will make examination assignments available at any time during the testing window.

*NALA requires all new proctors to participate in proctor training prior to the opening of the testing window. The training is web-based but must be completed prior to proctoring the exam. Proof of completion is required. Proctor credentials will not be released without verification the training has been completed.*

**If your center is open to ALL eligible examinees:**

- Your center name will appear on the NALA website at: <https://nala.org/certification/examinee-information/> (under the PSI Partner Testing section)
- Please provide the following information for the website at least 15 days prior to opening of the window:
  - Contact person and email address
  - Dates and schedule for exam sections
  - Cost (determined by centers)
  - Appointment notes
  - Cancellation notes
- Please provide a list of examinees to NALA at least 15 days prior to the opening of the testing window, **if known to you.**
- For those who are **not** known to you, examinees will submit a schedule to you through the NALA website at site at: <https://nala.org/certification/examinee-information/> (under the Partner Testing Centers section, then click your location's name). From a link on the contact person's name, an email window will open and the examinee will complete a schedule form. When completed, the email will be sent to NALA and to the testing center contact at the same time.
  - NALA will verify if the person is an approved examinee. Please be sure you receive this authorization prior to scheduling an appointment from the examinee.
  - NALA will advise the testing center proctor if the person is authorized to take the exam.

**If an examinee contacts you without using the link, please contact NALA so we may verify eligibility and note their testing schedule.**

When your center and proctors are designated as examination centers, we will ask if your center is open to all or just your students or employees.

## **Examinee Experience**

Examinees at NALA authorized testing centers will experience the same rules and regulations required of examinees of onsite testing centers and remote proctoring, including:

- Showing proper ID before entering test room
- Agreeing to the terms and conditions of test delivery

The Board Policy statement and Terms and Conditions documents are attached. This requires examinees to:

- Honor confidentiality of the exam
- Follow rules of proper conduct
- Follow instructions of proctors

Examinees will be provided their login ID by NALA. This information is required to login to the computer-based testing website. Further details will be provided to the testing center contact and proctor for review upon receiving approval from NALA as an authorized Partner testing center.

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

The Certified Paralegal Exam was developed by NALA -The Paralegal Association and has been provided to the paralegal profession since 1976. The program is administered by the Certifying Board for Paralegals.

## **Examinee Attestation**

All examinees are required to sign the following attestation on the application for the Certified Paralegal examination. This serves a reminder of your pledge of confidentiality, and reasons for suspension of authorization to use the Certified Paralegal credential:

I hereby declare that the above information is complete and truthful. I further pledge not to divulge the contents of any examination questions for certification as a paralegal by National Association of Legal Assistants, Inc. (the "Examination Questions"), and agree to be bound by the Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility of NALA, Inc. Inasmuch as it is and ever will be impracticable and extremely difficult to determine the actual damages resulting to National Association of Legal Assistants, Inc., should I divulge the contents of any Examination Questions, I agree to pay the National Association of Legal Assistants., as liquidated damages and not as a penalty, the sum of \$500 for each breach of my agreement not to divulge the contents of any Examination Questions. I further understand that the CP designation may be suspended or revoked and that I may be prohibited from taking any further NALA exams, including, but not limited to, any specialty practice area exams or retaking the general certification exam for the following reasons:

- falsified information on any document submitted to the Certifying Board;
- been disciplined for the unauthorized practice of law since applying for the Certified Paralegal credential;
- failed to meet continuing legal education requirements;
- divulged the contents of any examination question;
- been convicted of a felony since applying for the Certified Paralegal credential;
- failed to notify NALA of updates to their application for the Certified Paralegal credential;
- violated the NALA Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility;
- violated the Certified Paralegal Program Handbook;
- violated the "Terms and Conditions of Testing"; or

- engaged in any other conduct determined by a majority vote of the Certifying Board to be unethical or unprofessional.

In addition, an Examination Candidate is also subject to disciplinary action if the Candidate is found to have committed either of the following:

- unfairly gained exam information by using unauthorized materials or websites during the examination; or
- provided any assistance to another candidate at any time during the exam preparation or delivery period.

## Terms and Conditions – Exam Delivery

Prior to allowing examinees to sign-in to the testing site, all examinees are required to review the terms and conditions related to taking the CP® Exam via computer-based testing. The information contained in the terms and conditions are also provided to examinees with the login ID and other instructions. Each examinee will be required to check “I accept these terms and conditions” prior to starting an examination.

## Results

### Knowledge Exam

The Knowledge Exam is a computer-based, year-round, on demand, multiple choice examination with 120 questions.

- 100 items will be scored.
- 20 items will be pretested for statistical analysis.
- Three (3) hours testing time (90 seconds per item) will be provided for all subsequent Knowledge Exams.
- Result reporting will be available upon completion with on-demand testing year-round.
- Candidates MUST first pass the Knowledge Exam before proceeding to the Skills Exam.
- Candidates are eligible to take the Knowledge Exam only after they have graduated from a paralegal educational program, if using the eligibility pathway; or have the required minimum experience, if using the experience category. The new system of on-demand testing will remove deadlines to apply for the examination. Candidates will be able to apply when they are eligible.
- Once candidates receive the authorization to test for the Knowledge Exam, candidates will have up to three attempts within 365 days from the initial authorization to test date to pass the Knowledge Exam.
  - If the candidate does not take all three attempts of the Knowledge Exam within 365 days of the initial authorization to test date, the application is voided. A new application and fee are required to reapply for the Certified Paralegal Exam.
  - If the candidate does not pass the Knowledge Exam in three attempts during the 365 days, a new application, fee, and testing center fee are required to reapply for the Certified Paralegal Exam.
- Candidates MUST wait 90 days between each of the three attempts of the Knowledge Exam and must submit a retake application, fee, and testing center fee to NALA to initiate each additional attempt and receive a new Testing Ticket notification.

### Skills Exam

The Skills Exam consists of an essay. It is administered during four testing windows each year: February, April, July, and October.

- Two (2) hours testing time.
- Candidates who pass the Knowledge Exam will receive authorization to take the Skills Exam.
- Candidates have up to three attempts within 365 days from the authorization to test date to pass the Skills Exam.
  - If the candidate does not take all three attempts of the Skills Exam within 365 days of the initial Skills Exam authorization to test date, the application is voided. A new application, fee, and testing center fee

- are required to reapply for the Certified Paralegal Exam. The candidate is required to start over by taking the Knowledge Exam.
- If the candidate does not pass the Skills Exam in three attempts during the 365 days, a new application, fee, and testing center fee are required to reapply for the Certified Paralegal Exam. The candidate must start over by taking the Knowledge Exam.
- Candidates MUST wait 90 days between each of the three attempts of the Skills Exam and must submit a retake application, fee, and testing center fee to NALA to initiate each additional attempt and receive a new Testing Ticket notification.

## **Appeal of Results**

An examinee may appeal, in writing, to the Certifying Board for review of the Board's actions concerning examination results. The specific procedure for the appeal of examination results is posted on the NALA website.

## **Confidentiality of Examinees**

The names of examinees for the Certified Paralegal Exam are considered confidential and not released by NALA to any person, except examination proctors, without express approval of the examinee.

## **Other Certified Paralegal Program Requirements**

This policy statement refers strictly to the delivery of the CP® Exam. It is the responsibility of each examinee to be familiar with the other policies and requirements of the Certified Paralegal Program, including but not limited to the continuing education requirements to maintain the CP® credential, and examination and testing center fees.

## **Testing Terms and Conditions**

You are asked to agree to the following terms and conditions related to computer-based delivery of the Certified Paralegal examination any time you sign-in to the test website. This information was provided to you with your examinee information from NALA.

PLEASE read the following carefully – some of the terms are duplicative of requirements of PSI testing centers, others are specifically required of all NALA examinees.

By clicking “I accept these terms and conditions,” you are agreeing to the following:

- I have read the “Policy Statement” and I am familiar with its provisions.
- I will be continuously monitored during my appointment.
- I consent to video and audio recording of my test session and to the examination of the video and/or audio recording of my test session in the event any questions should arise concerning possible violations of the procedures and/or rules of the test center. (May not apply to all centers.)
- I will follow instructions of the test proctor, represent myself honestly, and conduct myself quietly to avoid interfering with the performance of other examinees.
- I will only use authorized computer equipment.
- I will not open software programs on the computer provided by the testing center.
- I will neither give nor receive any form of unauthorized assistance during the examination or any breaks.
- I will not bring into the testing room any unauthorized items such as food, drinks, purses, briefcases, backpacks, cell phones, pagers, notes, note pads, photographic equipment, or any electronic devices. If I am observed using an electronic device, including a cell phone, in violation of these rules, it may be confiscated and sent to NALA for examination.
- If I have questions or concerns about the test environment, I will quietly notify the test proctor.

- I will report all problems related to the testing center, proctor, or computer delivery of the exam to the proctor immediately and NALA afterward. If an examinee does not report problems with exam delivery immediately to the proctor, NALA will trust there are no problems, and there is no basis for complaint after the examination session has ended.
- I will allow testing center staff 30 minutes to resolve any technical problems that may arise (including power failure). I have the option of continuing the examination or requesting a reschedule of the examination for technical or other problems outside of my control taking more than 30 minutes to resolve.
- I will sign in and out every time I enter or leave the testing room.
- During testing, the exam timer will remain running during any unscheduled breaks; therefore, it is in my best interest to use the restroom or otherwise address personal needs prior to beginning my test.
- I will remain in the test center and may leave only to use those restroom facilities that are closest to the test room. I will not leave the building. I will not access a phone or my personal belongings, except in the case of an emergency. Under such circumstances, I will notify the test proctor before accessing a phone or my personal belongings.
- I will not remove any written, printed, or recorded materials of my examination from the testing center. The examination questions remain the property of NALA and I shall maintain the confidentiality of the questions and answers.
- I will return all materials, including scratch paper, provided to me by the test proctor when I
- have completed my exam and before I leave the test center.
- Once I am approved to take the Knowledge Exam, I understand the Knowledge Exam, including a maximum of two additional attempts, must be taken and passed within 365 days of the approval date.
- I understand the Knowledge Exam must be successfully completed before I am eligible to sit for the Skills Exam. If I do not successfully complete the Knowledge Exam after three attempts within the 365-day period, I understand I will be ineligible to reapply for the Knowledge Exam for a 365-day period.
- Once I am approved to take the Skills Exam, I understand the Skills Exam, including a maximum of two additional attempts, must be taken and passed within 365 days of the approval date. If I do not successfully complete the Skills Exam after three attempts within the 365-day period, I understand I will start over by re-applying for the Knowledge Exam.
- If the examination is not completed within the above-listed time frames, credit for passed sections will be forfeited and a new application form will be required.
- Abuse of this site, or non-compliance of these terms and conditions will not be tolerated. Should information concerning abuse or non-compliance come to NALA's attention, the candidate's exam access will be terminated and NALA may take further disciplinary action.
- Confirm your intent to be bound by the terms and conditions of this Agreement by checking the box below. By not checking the box, you will decline the Agreement and your exam session will be terminated.