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The Certified Paralegal Program Handbook



This information appears on the NALA website (www.nala.org) under "Certification." Please check the website frequently for updated information.



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Certification

Description of Program

In the working environment, professional certification is a time-honored process respected by both employers and those within the career field. The following is a definition used by many to describe professional certification: "Professional certification is a voluntary process by which a nongovernmental entity grants a time-limited recognition to an individual after verifying that the individual has met predetermined, standardized criteria" (Rops, M., *Understanding the Language of Credentialing*, American Society of Association Executives, May 2002).

The definition hits the high points. Certification is voluntary, not imposed by government. It is time-limited, which means that those with the certification must fulfill ongoing educational requirements to keep the certification current, and the criteria for certification are recognized in the community.

Purpose of the Certified Paralegal Certification Program

Established in 1976, NALA's Certified Legal Assistant ("CLA") program allowed the paralegal profession to develop a strong and responsive self-regulatory program offering a nationwide credential for paralegals. The Certified Paralegal Program establishes and serves as a:

- National professional standard for paralegals.
- Means of identifying those who have reached this standard.
- Credentialing program responsive to paralegal needs and responsive to the necessity of self-regulation to strengthen and expand paralegal career development.
- Positive, ongoing voluntary program to encourage the growth of the paralegal profession, attesting to and encouraging a high level of achievement.

The Certified Paralegal credential has been developed to recognize paralegals who have demonstrated entry-level knowledge and skill to provide competent assistance in the delivery of legal services for lawyers, law offices, corporations, or governmental agencies in the United States. The CP® credential is a prestigious indicator to clients, potential clients, employers, and the public at large that the paralegal professional has proficiency in the legal services field.

When the CLA Program was developed, the preferred term was "legal assistant" to designate a nonlawyer employee with specialized education who does work of a legal nature that, absent the legal assistant, the attorney would perform. Legal assistant time is billed to clients at market rates in the same manner as other legal professional staff. By 2004, the preferred term changed to "paralegal" even though bar association rules and guidelines and some statutes still used the term "legal assistant." In 2004, NALA registered the certification mark CP® and in 2019 encouraged paralegals to use the CP®. Since 2011, the term "paralegal" is used almost exclusively, and the certification program is referred to as the Certified Paralegal Program which awards the Certified Paralegal credential.

There are nearly 21,000 (active and inactive) Certified Paralegals and more than 5,500 Advanced Certified Paralegals in the United States. More than 38,000 paralegals have participated in this program. A table of the numbers of Certified Paralegals is listed on the NALA website under the certification tab.

Administration

The NALA Certifying Board is responsible for the content, standards, and administration of the Certified Paralegal Program. It is composed of paralegals who have received the Certified Paralegal certification designation, attorneys, and paralegal educators.

Accreditation of Certified Paralegal Program



The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) has granted accreditation to the NALA Certified Paralegal Program since 2014 for demonstrating compliance with the NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs. NCCA is the accrediting body of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence. The NCCA Standards were created to ensure certification programs adhere to modern standards of practice for the certification industry. The NALA Certified Paralegal Program joins an elite group of more than 120 organizations representing over 270 certification programs that have received and maintained NCCA accreditation. More information on the NCCA is available online at

<https://www.credentialingexcellence.org/>. To maintain accreditation, NCCA requires annual reports of all certification programs. Re-accreditation is required every five years.

The Certified Paralegal Credential

Use of the Certified Paralegal credential signifies that a paralegal is capable of providing superior services to firms and corporations. National surveys consistently show Certified Paralegals are better utilized in a field where attorneys are looking for a credible, dependable way to measure ability. The credential has been recognized by the American Bar Association as a designation that marks a high level of professional achievement. The CP® credential has also been recognized by more than 47 paralegal organizations and numerous bar associations.

Is it Legal Assistant or Paralegal?

The terms "legal assistant" and "paralegal" are synonymous terms. The terms are defined as such throughout the United States in state supreme court rules, statutes, ethical opinions, bar association guidelines, and other similar documents. These are the same documents that provide recognition of the paralegal profession and encourage the use of paralegals in the delivery of legal services.

NALA has become increasingly aware that while the terms are interchangeable, such as "lawyer" and "attorney", a preference in terms is emerging. Different geographic areas use one term more than another. For this reason, NALA filed for a certification mark "CP" with the US Patent and Trademark Office. The certification mark was successfully registered on July 20, 2004.

Am I a Certified Paralegal?

Occasionally, paralegals call themselves "certified" by virtue of completing a paralegal training

course, or another type of preparatory education. Although a school may award a certificate of completion, this is not the same as earning professional certification by an entity such as NALA. In this instance, the school's certificate is the designation of completion of a training program.

The Certified Paralegal Exam Description

How the Certified Paralegal Exam is Developed

The Certifying Board provides oversight for the development and ongoing maintenance of the examination. The Certifying Board, NALA certification program staff, and trained subject matter experts work in partnership with a qualified psychometric consultant to ensure the examination is developed and maintained in a manner consistent with generally accepted psychometric, educational testing practices and national accreditation standards for certification programs.

The Certifying Board selects diverse groups of qualified subject matter experts (SMEs) to participate in exam development activities throughout the exam development and maintenance process. Activities that involve subject matter expert participation include creating job analysis surveys, creating test content outlines, writing and reviewing exam items, and establishing the passing point for exams. Ad hoc committees and/or working groups of subject matter experts composed of Certifying Board members, paralegals, attorneys, educators, and other outside experts may be assembled for these tasks.

Job analysis studies are conducted periodically to identify and validate the knowledge and skills which will be measured by the examination sections. The results of the job analysis studies serve as the basis for the exam specifications. These exam specifications, with weights for each content area, are approved by the Certifying Board.

Qualified subject matter experts write and review items for the exam. Subject matter expert item writers and reviewers complete mandatory training on item writing/review for certification examinations. Items are subject to multiple levels of review and analysis before being used as graded items on the exam.

The Certifying Board oversees a continual process of item writing, review, and evaluation to ensure that exam content remains up-to-date, accurate, and consistent with the content outline.

All NALA certification examinations are prepared and offered in English only. Special accommodations such as requesting translation dictionaries are not permitted; no language assistance will be authorized by the Certifying Board.

Exam Specifications and 2022 Job Analysis

Since 1986, NALA has conducted nationwide utilization and compensation surveys every two years. A portion of the survey looks at the duties and responsibilities of paralegals, and later surveys have included a section used by the Certifying Board which presents the major areas of the Certified Paralegal Examination and topics included within those areas. Respondents are asked to rate the importance of each skill/knowledge to their work and the frequency of use of the skill/knowledge in their day-to-day work environment.

In May 2022, the NALA Certifying Board, in consultation with PSI Services LLC psychometric consultant Thomas Trautman, PhD, conducted its 2022 Job Task Analysis Study ("Study"). The survey was sent electronically to more than 21,000 NALA members and non-members. There were 1,883 respondents, typical of surveys of this nature.

This Study examined the duties and responsibilities of paralegals in the workplace and the goals

were to:

- Validate and update the Certified Paralegal Examination content; and
- Ensure that NALA has current information about the roles and responsibilities of paralegals.

Based on analysis of the Study, improvements in technology, recent refinements by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), and the advice of NALA's psychometricians, the Certifying Board listened to member and non-member paralegals working in the field and approved a new structure for the Certified Paralegal Examination effective January 2024.

NALA also modified some policies and procedures based upon best practices in credentialing programs, and they are posted on the website under the Certification link and included in this Handbook.

The new examination format will open in January 2024 for one month of post-administration analysis, scoring, and standard-setting.

The modifications announced for the 2024 Examination are part of the continued effort to ensure the Certified Paralegal Exam remains an accurate and relevant reflection of today's paralegals. The full report may be found on the NALA [website](#).

Examination Format

The Certified Paralegal Exam consists of two required sections taken in the following order: the Knowledge Exam, then the Skills Exam.

Knowledge Exam

The Knowledge Exam consists of multiple-choice questions covering the topic areas listed in the table below. The Knowledge Exam is administered on-demand, year-round at testing centers, online (remote proctoring), or with an approved exam proctor, with preliminary result reporting upon completion. There are 120 questions (100 questions scored and 20 pre-test questions that are used for statistical analysis). Candidates must successfully complete the Knowledge Exam in order to be eligible to take the Skills Exam.

Skills Exam

The Skills Exam consists of a written assignment; specifications are listed below. The Skills Exam is administered during four testing windows each year: February, April, July, and October. Successful completion of both the Knowledge and Skills Exams is required to obtain the Certified Paralegal credential.

Examinees will be graded on their ability to do the following:

- 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.

Certified Paralegal Exam Specifications – Effective 2024

Knowledge Exam		100	Point
1	United States Legal System	15	

1.	Sources of Law	
1.	Judicial System	
1.	Remedies	
1.	Administrative Law	
2	Civil Litigation	15
2.	Jurisdiction	
2.	Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and Evidence	
2.	Alternative Dispute Resolution	
3	Contracts	10
3.	Formation, Rights, and Duties	
3.	Enforcement and Defenses	
4	Corporate/Commercial Law	10
4.	Business Organizations	
4.	Rights and Responsibilities	
5	Criminal Law and Procedure	7
6	Estate Planning and Probate	7
6.	Estates, Trusts, and Wills	
7	Real Estate and Property	8
7.	Property Rights, Ownership, and Transactions	
8	Torts	10
8.	Negligence and Strict Liability	
9	Professional and Ethical Responsibility	12
9.	American Bar Association (ABA) Model Rules of	
9.	Unauthorized Practice of Law	
10	Debtor/Creditor and Bankruptcy	6

Skills Exam		30	Point
1	Legal Writing	10	
1.	Composition	7	
1.	Mechanic	3	
2	Critical Thinking	20	
2.	Identification of Relevant Facts	4	
2.	Issue Spotting	7	
2.	Analysis of Facts and Rules	7	
2.	Drawing Conclusions	2	

Examination Points and Passing Scores

Once admitted to the Certified Paralegal Program, examinees must successfully complete a two-part examination. The two parts and their total points are:

<i>Examination Name</i>	<i>Total Points</i>
Knowledge Exam	100

Skills Exam	30
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Passing Score for Each Section of the Certified Paralegal Exam

The Certifying Board determines the passing score based on the *Angoff* method, a method that is widely used by certification programs to set passing standards. This process requires that a passing score is established by a panel of content experts based on their review of each examination question and the assignment of an expectation of the percentage of minimally-competent examinees that would answer each question correctly. Panel members include paralegals, attorneys, and paralegal educators, with each review facilitated by a qualified psychometric consultant.

The question-by-question review conducted by the content expert panel is also useful as a final quality review of the examination questions for other corrections that need to be made such as a misspelled word, an outdated process, or a question that may be culturally biased. If a question is not acceptable to the panel, it may be edited, deleted, or substituted by another question with a similar difficulty rating.

Examinee Application and Policies

Steps - Application Procedure and Testing Appointments

The application procedure is a two-step process. Examinees must first be admitted to the Certified Paralegal Program by filing an application form with NALA. Once admitted, examinees must schedule testing times through the Prometric Testing Center Network to take the examination.

Examinees may also apply to take the test at Partner Testing Centers or online (remote proctoring). More information about these options is found in the section titled “Testing Centers and Policies.”

Communications to examinees from NALA and Prometric are sent via email notifications. Please inform NALA of any changes in your email address. Be sure to check your spam filters to allow all email messages from NALA and Prometric. From application to testing appointments, the steps are:

Filing the Application Form

All candidates for the Certified Paralegal credential must meet the examination eligibility requirements and complete and submit an application form for the Certified Paralegal Exam. Application forms may be submitted **at any time**.

Application Acknowledgment

NALA will acknowledge receipt of the application form and payment. Examinees will also be advised if additional information is needed to complete the form, such as a school transcript or an additional employer attestation.

Examinee Authorization to Test Sent via Email

Approximately 72 hours after approval, all approved examinees will receive an Authorization to Test by email. The Authorization to Test advises where the login information is located in the examinee’s account on the NALA portal. The login information is required to access the computer-based examination before the application expiration date. If any information is incorrectly listed in the examinee’s account, examinees should contact NALA immediately.

The Authorization to Test also includes a link to the most current examinee information on

NALA's website. Examinees are expected to read and understand the rules and policies of the NALA Certifying Board. Rules and procedures of testing centers including Terms and Conditions of Testing and Policy Statement are discussed in the section titled "Testing Centers and Policies."

Email Notification Regarding Scheduling Appointments through Prometric

Examinees will receive an email notification from NALA advising that Prometric is ready to accept appointments from NALA examinees. The email message will provide a web address for examinees to use to schedule the appointment(s) and the Prometric Launch ID. This number should be identical to the information provided by NALA. If it is not, examinees should contact NALA immediately.

This mailing is sent to **all** examinees registered for the examination. Examinees taking the exam through Partner testing centers may disregard the Prometric scheduling emails.

Testing Center Appointments through Prometric's Website

Upon receipt of the Authorization to Test and notification from Prometric, all examinees who are attending a Prometric testing center or remote proctoring are urged to make their appointments as quickly as possible. Space is limited depending on the center location, and if there is a delay in making the appointment, the exact time or date requested may not be available.

Applying for the Exam

Candidates are required to pass both the Knowledge and Skills Examinations of the Certified Paralegal credential to demonstrate that their education, coursework, experience, and training have resulted in sufficient understanding of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to provide competent evidence-based paralegal services as determined by the job analysis studies and represented on the examination content outlines.

Rationale for Eligibility Requirements of New Candidates

Candidates are required to pass both the Knowledge and Skills Examinations of the Certified Paralegal credential to demonstrate that their education, coursework, experience, and training have resulted in sufficient understanding of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to provide competent evidence-based paralegal services as determined by the job analysis studies and represented on the examination content outlines.

Because there is no comparable means for assessing competence outside of the CP® Examination, the Certifying Board does not grandfather candidates and requires everyone earning a CP® credential to have successfully fulfilled all published eligibility criteria, including passing of the examination.

Qualifications for the Exam

Candidates for certification must meet **one** of the requirements in one of the following categories 1, 2, or 3:

Category 1 – Paralegal Studies¹

Graduation from or completion of a paralegal program that meets one of the criteria listed in sections (a) through (e) below.

- a) approved by the American Bar Association; or
- b) an associate degree program; or
- c) a post-baccalaureate certificate program in paralegal studies²; or

(In addition to the official school transcript, the candidate must submit an original course catalog or an original letter from the school registrar or program director attesting that the program is a post-baccalaureate certificate program requiring a bachelor's degree as a

prerequisite.)

- d) a bachelor's degree program in paralegal studies; or
- e) a paralegal program which consists of a minimum of 60 semester hours (or equivalent quarter hours)³ of which at least 15 semester hours (or equivalent quarter hours)⁴ are substantive legal courses.⁵

An official school transcript showing courses taken and date of graduation will also be required.

Category 2 – Bachelor's Degree Minimum Paralegal Studies⁶

A bachelor's degree in any field and one year of experience as a paralegal or successful completion of at least 15 semester hours (or equivalent quarter hours) of substantive paralegal courses.

All candidates under Category 2 must submit an official school transcript showing receipt of a bachelor's degree and date of completion. Those applying under the provision allowing for additional course work in lieu of the one-year work experience must submit an official school transcript showing completed course work.

Category 3 – On the Job Experience⁷

A high school diploma or equivalent plus five (5) years' experience⁸ as a paralegal, plus a minimum of twenty (20) hours of substantive continuing legal education completed within a two-year period prior to application for the examination.⁹ Evidence of continuing legal education credit is documented by the attorney/employer attestation that must be signed as part of the application form or by submitting certificates of completion of CLE taken. No further documentation is required.

¹Candidates applying under Category 1 may combine college hours from more than one institution, as applicable.

² In addition to the official school transcript, candidates must submit an original course catalog or an original letter from the school registrar or program director attesting that the program is a post-baccalaureate certificate program requiring a bachelor's degree as a prerequisite.

³ 900 clock hours of a paralegal program will be considered equivalent to 60 semester hours. 90 quarter hours of a paralegal program will be considered equivalent to 60 semester hours.

⁴ 225 clock hours of substantive legal courses will be considered equivalent to 15 semester hours. 22.5 quarter hours of legal courses will be considered equivalent to 15 semester hours.

⁵ The candidate must have graduated from a paralegal program consisting of a minimum of 15 semester hours (or 225 clock hours or 22.5 quarter hours.) Evidence of the minimum hours required under Category 1(e) must be provided with the application form.

⁶ Candidates applying under Category 2 may combine college hours and paralegal course work from more than one institution, as applicable.

⁷ Candidates applying under Category 3 may combine on-the-job experience from more than one employer, as applicable.

⁸ See definition on American Bar Association (ABA) website.

⁹ Evidence of continuing legal education credit is documented by the attorney/employer attestation that must be signed as part of the application form or by submitting certificate of completions of CLE taken. No further documentation is required.

Ineligibility

Individuals currently incarcerated for any felony offense or on probation, parole, or other court-imposed supervision for a felony offense are ineligible to apply for the Certified Paralegal Exam.

Applications may be submitted:

- By mail, with documentation.

- By FAX (918-582-6772).
- Online using the form on NALA's website.
- By email to testing@nala.org.

Documentation Required to Complete the Application Form

- All pages of the application form must be complete. All documentation required to complete the Certified Paralegal application form must be submitted at the time of filing the application. Documentation includes official school transcripts, an official letter of completion, supervising attorney attestations, and payment. Incomplete applications are subject to rejection with a \$75 processing fee.
- Categories 1 and 2 require an official transcript submitted with the application. A transcript is considered "official" if it bears the official seal and authorizing signature of the issuing institution. It may be sent directly by the school or applicant to NALA by mail, email, or fax. The official transcript must indicate all courses taken and the date of graduation. (If an official transcript is not attainable, an official letter of completion may be submitted.)
- Category 3 requires a minimum of five (5) years' paralegal experience under the supervision of a member of the bar, along with a minimum of twenty (20) clock hours of substantive continuing legal education, as verified by one or more attorney attestations.
- Attorney Employer Attestations
 - For those qualifying under Category 1, an attorney/employer attestation is not required.
 - For those qualifying under Category 2, the attestation section is required only if applying with one year or more of paralegal experience in lieu of the 15 semester hours of paralegal courses.
 - The attestation section must be completed by all applicants for Category 3.
- All applications are reviewed by certification staff to ensure proper documentation of education or experience. Applications are deemed complete when they satisfy the eligibility requirements listed in this Handbook and pay the required fee. Once an application has been approved, the candidate will receive an acknowledgment and Authorization to Test by email.
- Candidates filing incomplete applications must complete the application within 60 days of initial filing or the application will be denied. Candidates with incomplete applications will be advised of any application deficiencies by email.

Examinee Attestation

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

"I hereby declare that the information [on the Certified Paralegal Examination Application Form] is complete and truthful. I further pledge to keep confidential the contents of any questions from the Knowledge Exam or the Skills Exam on NALA's Certified Paralegal Examination (the "Examination Questions") and agree to be bound by NALA's Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility. It is, and it will be, impracticable and extremely difficult to determine the actual damages resulting to NALA should I divulge the contents of any Examination Questions, I agree to pay NALA, 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 I may be prohibited from taking any further NALA exams and that the

Certified Paralegal designation may be suspended or revoked if I have:

- 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”;
- engaged in any other conduct determined by a majority vote of the Certifying Board to be unethical or unprofessional (including, but not limited to, any oral or written communication with NALA staff or volunteers that includes intimidating, abusive, threatening, or derogatory language);
- unfairly gained exam information by using unauthorized materials or websites during the examination; or
- divulged the contents of any questions from the Knowledge Exam or the Skills Exam on NALA’s Certified Paralegal Examination at any time.

With full knowledge of the requirements and agreement to be bound by any decisions of the Certifying Board for Paralegals of NALA, Inc., with respect to examinations or designations, I submit this application.”

Application Fees

Initial application fees:

- Standard (not military, not student)
 - \$325 NALA members
 - \$375 NALA Non-members
- Military
 - \$240 NALA members
 - \$280 NALA Non-members
- Paralegal Student (*The Paralegal student fee is for paralegal students in their last semester of a paralegal program and who do not currently qualify under category 1, 2, or 3.*)
 - \$150 NALA members
 - \$175 NALA Non-members

Retake candidates

- \$150 per subsequent attempt for each Knowledge and Skills Exam

The Certified Paralegal Program has been approved by the Veterans Administration under the licensing and certification benefit. The VA will pay the examination fee for qualified veterans. For further information, see www.gibill.va.gov/ and the **For Military** section on our website under the Certification link.

Withdrawal, Incomplete, or Rejected Applications

Candidates filing incomplete applications must provide the documentation and/or fees required to complete the application within 60 days of initial filing or the application is voided and a new application and fee will be required. If a candidate must withdraw the application, a \$75 cancelation fee is required. If the application is incomplete or rejected, the application is denied, a \$75 processing fee is required.

Testing Center Fees

Testing center fees are discussed on the Prometric Testing Center Information Details page. Partner testing centers may charge a fee. This is included with the information describing the Partner testing centers (Partner Testing Center Details).

General Policies

Knowledge Exam

- Candidates must first pass the Knowledge Exam
- Candidates are eligible to take the Knowledge Exam only after they have graduated from a paralegal educational program or are currently in the last semester or quarter of a 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 and 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 and fee to NALA to initiate each additional attempt and receive a new Testing Ticket.

Skills Exam

- Candidates who pass the Knowledge Exam will receive a Skills Exam authorization to test date to take the Skills Exam.
- Candidates have up to three attempts within 365 days from the Skills Exam 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 and 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 and 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 and fee to NALA to initiate each additional attempt and receive a new Testing Ticket.

Incomplete/Pending Applications

Candidates filing incomplete applications must provide the documentation and/or fees required to complete the application within 60 days, or the application will be denied with a \$75 processing fee.

Americans with Disabilities Act

The Certified Paralegal Examination is administered in compliance with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act as amended. Individuals with disabilities that require modification to the examination administration procedures may request specific accommodations in writing by submitting the Request for Accommodation form and a letter documenting the disability to certification staff at NALA. The request form must be accompanied by a current (within two years of the application date) letter from a healthcare specialist or other professional knowledgeable of the candidate's disability stating the specific disability and his or her specific prescription for accommodations. The Request for Accommodation form is available on the NALA website at the Certification Tab/Application & Forms link.

Accommodations are provided to a qualified candidate with disabilities to the extent that such an accommodation does not fundamentally alter the exam or cause an undue burden to the Certifying Board or any partner testing agent.

Reasonable requests for special accommodations will be provided when the documentation supports the need. Reasonable accommodations may include additional time, a private testing area, Braille format, or JAWS software for the visually impaired.

Requests will be reviewed based on the documentation provided. Either legal counsel or the recommending health professional may be contacted for additional information as needed.

The candidate will be notified by email of the outcome of the request for accommodation, and, if granted, will be required to sign an acknowledgment of the accommodation as part of the application file. Certification staff will coordinate with the Prometric accommodations division to provide the approved reasonable auxiliary aids and services.

As the CP® Examination is written in the English language, exams will not be translated into foreign languages, and interpreters are not permitted to translate the examination. English as a second language is not considered a disability requiring special testing accommodations.

A candidate who is denied his or her request for special accommodations may file an appeal with the Certifying Board. The appeal should include appropriate documentation supporting the case. The decision of the Certifying Board is final.

Confidentiality

An individual's application status, exam results, and personal identifying information is confidential and will not be released by NALA to any person without the consent of the individual or as required by law, except to exam proctors as required for administration of the Exam.

Nondiscrimination

The Certifying Board adheres to principles of fairness and due process and endorses the principles of equal opportunity. In administering the certification programs, the Certifying Board does not discriminate or deny opportunity to anyone on the basis of race, color, creed, age, gender, national origin, religion, disability, marital status, parental status, ancestry, sexual orientation, military discharge status, source of income, or any other status protected by applicable law. All candidates for certification will be judged solely on the published eligibility criteria determined by the Certifying Board.

Appeal Process for Applicants who Receive an Adverse Eligibility Decision

Applications accepted for the Certified Paralegal Examination are accepted on the basis of proof of meeting the eligibility requirements as enumerated on the application form and in this Handbook and submission of the required fee.

If an applicant is unable to provide proof of qualification of any of the requirements, the applicant is encouraged to contact NALA. The procedures for approving applications allow the following:

- For those qualifying under the five (5) years of paralegal experience requirement, attestations of employers are required for the entire five-year period. If it is not possible to reach former employers whose attestation is required, the Certifying Board will accept an affidavit of the current employer attesting to the previous years of work as a paralegal.
- As stated in the application requirements, applicants may combine hours of course work from more than one institution.

If an application is not accepted, the candidate may, within 30 days of the date of denial of the application, appeal the decision of the Certifying Board under the following circumstances:

- It is not possible to provide a transcript of completed coursework because the school no longer exists.
- If qualifying under categories that require experience, the application may be considered if the experience requirement is not fully met, and the paralegal is able to submit proof of the need for certification for employment or advancement in employment.
- An application for the CP® Examination was submitted and previously accepted but has expired, provided the candidate meets the current eligibility requirements.
- Financial hardship.

In appealing a decision to deny an application based on the reasons listed above, the candidate must submit documentation to substantiate the claim, and a signed and notarized attestation that the information is true and correct.

The Certifying Board Chair, working with certification staff, within 30 days of receipt of the appeal, shall make a determination regarding the appeal and the candidate's eligibility to take the examination. In the case of financial hardship, the Chair may suggest a payment plan for the candidate, but the fee may not be waived. The decision of the Certifying Board Chair is final.

Cheating and Misconduct in the Certified Paralegal Examination Program

Cheating and misconduct are not tolerated in the Certified Paralegal Program. Candidates are always expected to conduct themselves with honesty and integrity during all phases of the certification process - including exam preparation, testing, and recertification.

Filing a Complaint

If a candidate is believed to have acted with dishonesty or with intent to misrepresent at any time during the certification process, the Certifying Board reserves the right to bar that individual from the program immediately while investigating the circumstances.

Evidence of misconduct includes, but is not limited to, violation of the terms and conditions of testing, unfairly gaining exam information by using unauthorized materials or websites during the examination, or by providing unfair assistance to another candidate at any time during the exam preparation or delivery period. This evidence may include visual observation during the test period or other tangible evidence.

Evidence may be filed in writing to NALA by examination proctors, fellow examinees, or others with knowledge of possible misconduct. Proctors and examinees may also contact NALA certification staff by telephone on the day of testing if it is believed cheating is observed.

Procedures for Investigating Complaint

The Certifying Board's Disciplinary Procedures are published in their entirety on the NALA website.

Discipline

If the Board concludes that there has been a violation of the terms and conditions of testing by a Certified Paralegal examinee during any testing session, it will determine which of the following disciplines is appropriate:

- All examination sections will be voided with no refund of fees and no scores reported; the candidate may be prohibited from taking the Certified Paralegal Exam indefinitely.
- The candidate will be prohibited from taking the Certified Paralegal Exam (or any section) for a period of not less than two years from the date of the violation.
- All sections must be taken or retaken if the examinee is permitted to retest and, as a condition for retesting, the Certifying Board shall require the candidate to complete a specific number of hours of legal ethics, approved for CLE credit, to be completed within a specific period of time prior to eligibility for retesting; documentation of completion of the legal ethics CLE hours is required. The program may be approved by a paralegal professional association, bar association, or offered for college credit or continuing education units.

Examination Results

Grade Reports

Results of the Knowledge Exam will be provided to each examinee at the conclusion of their exam. NALA will upload the same scores to each examinee's NALA online portal. The Skills Exam requires grading by the members of the Essay Grading panel and results will not be available at the testing center. The Skills Exam scores can take up to 15 weeks to be released after the closing of the testing window. Final results of the Exam are provided to all examinees via upload to each examinee's NALA online portal. Results are not available by email, telephone, or fax.

Examinees are provided with failing raw scores only. In addition, examinees who need to retest will receive domain-level reports regarding their performance on the Knowledge Exam and Skills Exam. This information is provided as guidance for examinees in preparation for retesting.

Passing scores are not provided. Successful completion of each exam is designated with "Pass." The Certifying Board has determined "Pass" is sufficient to designate successful completion of the exam sections and that if a paralegal has met the standard, the paralegal has earned the Certified Paralegal credential.

How a Passing Score is Established

The passing points, or raw cut scores, for the exams are established using a criterion-referenced technique. Qualified and trained SMEs participate in determining the passing points working with the psychometric consultant.

The final passing points resulting from this process are approved by the Standard Setting panel.

Appeal of Exam Results

An examinee may appeal, in writing, to the Certifying Board for review of the Board's actions

concerning examination results.

Such appeal must include the candidate's basis for the appeal and any and all relevant documentation to be considered and must be received at NALA within thirty (30) days after the release of the examination results. The Certifying Board Chair and NALA staff will promptly investigate to determine whether the documentation submitted meets the Certifying Board's requirements for review of examination results. If it is determined that the appeal does not meet the requirements, the examinee will be so advised. If the information meets the Certifying Board's requirements for an appeal, such appeal shall be reviewed by an Appeal Committee which shall be comprised of a minimum of three (3) members of the Certifying Board, to include a paralegal educator, an attorney, and an Advanced Certified Paralegal. Each member of the Appeal Committee shall have served a minimum of one (1) year on the Certifying Board.

The Appeal Committee of the Certifying Board will determine whether a decision made by the Certifying Board was inappropriate if: (1) the decision was based on material errors of fact or (2) the NALA Certifying Board failed to follow published criteria, policies, and procedures.

Only facts and conditions up to and including the time of the Certifying Board's decision are eligible for consideration during the appeal process.

After consideration of the matter under appeal, the Appeal Committee shall submit its recommendation for action to the Certifying Board. A majority vote of Certifying Board members shall be final and binding in the matter under appellate review.

NALA Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility

Each NALA member agrees to follow the canons of the NALA Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility. Violations of the Code may result in the cancelation of membership. First adopted by the NALA membership in May of 1975, the Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility is the foundation of ethical practices of paralegals in the legal community.

A paralegal must adhere strictly to the accepted standards of legal ethics and to the general principles of proper conduct. The performance of the duties of the paralegal shall be governed by specific canons as defined herein so that justice will be served, and goals of the profession attained. (See Model Standards and Guidelines for Utilization of Legal Assistants, Section II.)

The canons of ethics set forth hereafter are adopted by the National Association of Legal Assistants, Inc., as a general guide intended to aid paralegals and attorneys. The enumeration of these rules does not mean there are not others of equal importance although not specifically mentioned. Court rules, agency rules, and statutes must be taken into consideration when interpreting the canons.

Definition: Paralegals are a distinguishable group of persons who assist attorneys in the delivery of legal services. Through formal education, training, and experience, paralegals have knowledge and expertise regarding the legal system and substantive and procedural law which qualify them to do work of a legal nature under the supervision of an attorney.

In 2001, NALA members also adopted the ABA definition of a legal assistant/paralegal: A legal assistant or paralegal is a person qualified by education, training, or work experience who is employed or retained by a lawyer, law office, corporation, governmental agency or other entity who performs specifically delegated substantive legal work for which a lawyer is responsible. (Adopted by the ABA in 1997).

The ABA adopted a revised definition in 2020, removing the term "legal assistant." NALA realizes that the terms legal assistant and paralegal are used in the United States. NALA recognizes and supports paralegals, regardless of title; however, as an organization, we primarily use the term paralegal.

Canon 1 - A paralegal must not: (a) engage in, encourage, or contribute to any act which could constitute the unauthorized practice of law; (b) establish attorney-client relationships, set fees, give legal opinions or advice, or represent a client before a court or agency unless so authorized by that court or agency; and (c) engage in conduct or take any action which would assist or involve the attorney in a violation of professional ethics or give the appearance of professional impropriety.

Canon 2 – A paralegal must not perform any of the duties that attorneys only may perform or take any actions that attorneys may not take.

Canon 3 – A paralegal may perform any task which is properly delegated and supervised by an attorney, as long as the attorney is ultimately responsible to the client, maintains a direct relationship with the client, and assumes professional responsibility for the work product.

Canon 4 – A paralegal must use discretion and professional judgment commensurate with knowledge and experience but must not render independent legal judgment in place of an attorney. The services of an attorney are essential in the public interest whenever such legal judgment is required.

Canon 5 – A paralegal must disclose his or her status as a paralegal at the outset of any professional relationship with a client, attorney, a court or administrative agency or personnel thereof, or a member of the general public. A paralegal must act prudently in determining the extent to which a client may be assisted without the presence of an attorney.

Canon 6 – A paralegal must strive to maintain integrity and a high degree of competency through education and training with respect to professional responsibility, local rules and practice, and through continuing education in substantive areas of law to better assist the legal profession in fulfilling its duty to provide legal service.

Canon 7 – A paralegal must protect the confidences of a client and must not violate any rule or statute now in effect or hereafter enacted controlling the doctrine of privileged communications between a client and an attorney.

Canon 8 – A paralegal must disclose to his or her employer or prospective employer any pre-existing client or personal relationship that may conflict with the interests of the employer or prospective employer and/or their clients.

Canon 9 – A paralegal must do all other things incidental, necessary, or expedient for the attainment of the ethics and responsibilities as defined by statute or rule of court.

Canon 10 – A paralegal's conduct is guided by bar associations' codes of professional responsibility and rules of professional conduct.

Testing Centers and Policies Options of Testing Centers

Prometric Testing Center Network

Most examinees in the Certified Paralegal Program will be utilizing the Prometric Test Centers. Combined, there are over 8,000 testing centers throughout the United States and abroad. After examinees are admitted to the Certified Paralegal Program, they will work directly with Prometric to confirm testing appointments. The website, <https://www.prometric.com/find-your-exam> has a list of testing centers. Be sure to choose National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) as the Sponsor name from the drop-down menu of certification programs for an accurate list.

Examinees participating in Partner testing centers

NALA has established procedures that allow an employer, military base, or school to

apply to become a NALA-approved testing center. This is designed for groups of employees, military persons, or paralegal students. A packet of forms and requirements to become an authorized testing center for the Certified Paralegal Exam is available from the NALA website and may also be obtained by contacting NALA.

Overview of testing centers options

If you are taking the exam at an onsite center or via remote proctoring:	If you are taking the exam at a Partner Testing center:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All centers through the Prometric testing center network are available for the Certified Paralegal Examination subject to the center's hours of operation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The center must be approved by NALA in advance of the testing window. An examinee's employer or superior ranking officer may qualify or most community colleges.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All NALA examinees will receive an email with instructions on how to make an appointment through Prometric. Do not contact Prometric until you have received your Authorization to Test or Testing Ticket from NALA. To schedule your appointment, you are required to use the Prometric Launch ID provided by NALA, located in your NALA account. Appointments will only be available to schedule using the Prometric Launch ID provided to you by NALA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All NALA examinees will receive an email with instructions on how to make an appointment through Prometric. Do not contact Prometric until you have received your Authorization to Test or Testing Ticket from NALA. To schedule your appointment, you are required to use the Prometric Launch ID provided by NALA, located in your NALA account. Appointments will only be available to schedule using the Prometric Launch ID provided to you by NALA.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be sure to review the rules posted on the Prometric website when making your appointment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be sure to review the rules posted on the Prometric website when making your appointment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Prometric testing center fee is payable to NALA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Prometric testing center fee is payable to NALA. Additional fees vary by testing center. Some schools and employers do not charge. Inquire about this in advance from the testing center.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prometric advises NALA of appointments that are made and confirmed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner testing centers advise NALA of appointment times and dates.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prometric has strict rules regarding cancelation or rescheduling. See the website for applicable fees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information for schools and employers about qualifying as a Partner Testing center may be found on the website under Certification.

Prometric Testing Center Network and Appointments

Examinees will receive an Authorization to Test email from NALA when Prometric is ready to accept appointments for the Certified Paralegal Exam.

Examinees may NOT contact Prometric until this notification is received.

The notification includes the web address and the Prometric Launch ID. This number should be identical to the information provided by NALA. If it is not, examinees should contact NALA immediately.

When you schedule your appointment, you should be prepared to provide any of the following information:

- The name used to schedule your appointment must match exactly the name shown in your NALA account and your identification. At a minimum, the identification must be a valid, government-issued ID that shows your name in the English alphabet, your signature, and your photograph.
- Your Prometric Launch ID
- Contact phone numbers - If there is an unexpected event, Prometric will use these numbers to contact you.
- Mailing address
- Exam title(s)
- Email address

Test appointments can be canceled and/or rescheduled through the Prometric website. Prometric has strict rules regarding cancellation or rescheduling appointments.

Rescheduling and cancellation fees apply as follows:

- 30 days or more in advance of the exam: no fee
- 5-29 days in advance of the exam: \$35
- Less than 5 days in advance of the exam: Candidate forfeits the full test fee

Appointments may be canceled or rescheduled online using these links:

- [Reschedule](https://proscheduler.prometric.com/?prg=nala&path=reschd) - <https://proscheduler.prometric.com/?prg=nala&path=reschd>
- [Cancel](https://proscheduler.prometric.com/?path=cancel) - <https://proscheduler.prometric.com/?path=cancel>

In rare cases, weather or an emergency forces a test center closure. If this happens, you will be contacted by the Prometric rescheduling department within 24-48 hours to reschedule your appointment. Examinees may also call 888-226-8001 for information. Real-time site information is posted at [Test Center Closures](https://www.prometric.com/closures) (<https://www.prometric.com/closures>).

Once examinees have made the appointment, Prometric will send a confirmation email with testing center rules. The confirmation will also include directions to the testing center location.

Prometric testing center policies and recommendations

Further details may be found on the web at Prometric [FAQ](https://www.prometric.com/frequently-asked-questions) (<https://www.prometric.com/frequently-asked-questions>).

Proctor & Testing Room Procedures (Before Your Exam)

- Prior to entering the proctoring room, the following processes will be enacted:
 - As a part of Prometric's security protocols, test-takers will be asked to show their arms and ankles, as well as empty their pockets. Candidates who wear eyeglasses will be asked to remove them for inspection. Test-takers will be

scanned with a handheld metal detection device prior to entering the testing room (with the exception of exempt individuals).

- Image capture (if applicable) will be completed from the same position. Any test-takers wearing masks will need to lower or remove momentarily for this process by clasping the sides or strap of the mask to remove briefly, and then reaffixing in same manner. As an additional safety measure, all test-takers may be required to use hand sanitizer before using any fingerprint scanners.
- Test center staff will provide candidates with note boards and markers or paper and pencils for those who use scratch paper, where applicable by program.

Proctor & Testing Room Procedures (During Your Exam)

- During the exam process, the following modified processes will be enacted:
 - Where local government guidelines dictate, test-takers will be seated in a manner that ensures applicable distancing requirements are satisfied during testing.
 - Monitoring of the test room will be done by using existing video surveillance as well as physical walkthroughs by Test Center Administrators. These will also be conducted at least every 10 minutes.
 - If an unscheduled break is needed, test-takers should raise their hands and wait for a test center employee to assist them.
 - For locker access during breaks, the same process applied during check-in will be followed. Test-takers will be instructed to only access lockers for food, drink, and medication, except for programs with full access. Please consult your test sponsor's client practice guide for your exam's specific locker access policies.
 - Test center staff will record the time in and out of the test room, removing the need for the test-taker to sign the roster during exit and return from breaks.

End of Test Procedures (Check-Out)

1. Test-takers will be asked to return to the reception/admin area to complete their sign out process.
2. Test center employees will then:
 - a) Have the test-taker sign out with the Prometric provided pen.
 - b) Instruct test-takers to provide all plain colored scratch paper and place them into a secure bin or return used erasable note boards for cleaning.
 - c) Allow test-takers to go to their locker to collect personal items.
 - d) Allow test-taker to sign out/return the locker key.

Prometric cost information

Examinees are required to pay testing center fees. Examinees are required to be present 30 minutes prior to the stated exam start time for check-in and sign-in into the exam session.

Examinees are cautioned that those who are termed "**No-Shows**" will forfeit the examination appointment and fee.

The scheduled testing windows for the Skills Exam are administered during the months of February, April, July, and October. No appointments are available outside of the testing windows.

NALA makes every effort to convey information about the Prometric testing center policies, but amendments to the schedule and policies may be made by Prometric that are not immediately communicated to NALA.

Partner Testing Centers

In addition to the testing centers used by NALA through the Prometric testing network, NALA may approve testing centers at schools, corporations, and law firms that meet standard facility and equipment requirements for computer-based testing. Schools and employers participate to provide an added service to students and employees, and, in some instances, to lower the cost of testing for examinees.

Partner testing centers and contact details may be found on the NALA website at www.nala.org under the Certification tab.

Testing Center Rules – All Centers Terms and Conditions of Testing

Upon login to the testing website, the Terms and Conditions appear on the computer screen with the login information. These are detailed rules relating to the delivery of the computer-based examination. Each examinee must enter their unique Prometric Launch ID and click “I accept these terms and conditions” before signing into the Exam.

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 Prometric 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 that 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 unless instructed by the proctor.
- 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. 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 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 examination and before I leave the test center.
- Once I begin taking sections of the Certified Paralegal Examination, I understand the examination, including retakes, must be completed within two years, (a maximum of five additional testing sessions).
- If the examination is not completed within this time frame, credit for all 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 ID number will be terminated and NALA may take further disciplinary action.

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® Examination via computer-based testing. The information contained in the terms and conditions is also provided to examinees with the Prometric Launch ID and other instructions. Each examinee will be required to check "I accept these terms and conditions" prior to starting an examination.

Policy Statement

One of the terms requires that the examinee is aware of the Policy Statement. This consists of a review of the attestation each examinee signed on the application form and other policies related to the Exam Program.

The statement is as follows: 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 Exam. This statement serves as 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 [on the Certified Paralegal Exam application form] is complete and truthful. I further pledge not to divulge the contents of any examination question for certification as a paralegal by NALA (the "Examination Questions") and agree to be bound by the Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility of NALA. Inasmuch as it is and ever will be impracticable and extremely difficult to determine the actual damages resulting to NALA should I divulge the contents of any Examination Questions, I agree to pay NALA 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 (including, but not limited to, any oral or written communication with NALA staff or volunteers that includes intimidating, abusive, threatening, or derogatory language).

Terms and Conditions – Exam Delivery

Prior to allowing examinees to sign into 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 is also provided to examinees with the Prometric Launch ID and other instructions. Each examinee will be required to check “I accept these terms and conditions” prior to starting an examination.

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.

Exam Administration Policies and Procedures

Knowledge Exam

- Candidates must first pass the Knowledge Exam.
- Candidates are eligible to take the Knowledge Exam only after they have graduated from a paralegal educational program or are currently in the last semester or quarter of the 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 email 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 and 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 and fee to NALA to initiate each additional attempt and receive a new Testing Ticket notification.

Skills Exam

- Candidates who pass the Knowledge Exam will receive a Skills Exam authorization to test date to take the Skills Exam.
- Candidates have up to three attempts within 365 days from the Skills Exam 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 and 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 and 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 and fee to NALA to initiate each additional attempt and receive a new Testing Ticket notification.

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 the express approval of the examinee.

Other Certified Paralegal Program Requirements

This policy statement refers strictly to the delivery of the Certified Paralegal Examination. 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 Certified Paralegal credential as well as examination and testing center fees.

Timing of Exam Sections

The following are the required sections of the Certified Paralegal Exam with the time allowed as established by the NALA Certifying Board:

- Knowledge Exam – 3 hours
- Skills Exam – 2 hours

The computer-based testing allows the timing of each exam section to be enforced automatically. Timing begins when the test is released by the examination proctor. When the time has expired, the exam will close automatically, and the examinee will not have access to it again. If an examinee has not completed the test, and the time allowed expires, the work completed will be scored. Questions that are not completed will be scored as incorrect answers.

Timing begins once the proctor has released the Exam. There are no scheduled breaks during the Exam. If a break must be taken during testing, the clock will continue to run.

Instructions from Proctors

Testing center proctors are responsible for the delivery of the Certified Paralegal Exam, including providing scratch paper for the essay question. Questions regarding facilities or

equipment should be directed to the testing center proctor.

The NALA Certifying Board is responsible for the Certified Paralegal Examination. Questions regarding the examination content or format should be directed to NALA at 6450 S Lewis, Suite 250, Tulsa, OK 74136, 918-587-6828, FAX 918-582-6772, or testing@nala.org.

Presentation of Computer-Based Exam Questions

Timing begins once a candidate has selected the appropriate test section from the examinee dashboard, and the proctor has entered the appropriate credentials to release the examination. There are no scheduled breaks during the Exam. If an unscheduled break is required, the clock will continue to run.

Objective Questions

- Each objective question will be provided one at a time. Once the answer is selected, examinees are instructed to click “Next” for the next question.
- Each question may be flagged by placing a checkmark in the box entitled “Mark for Review” which appears below the answer options. The selected answer may be changed on review.
- When all questions are completed, the entire list of questions appears. Examinees may review this list before submitting the test for scoring, provided time remains on the examination clock. Questions marked for review by the examinee will be easily identified. Examinees may also scroll over the text of any question on the list and open it to review the question and selected answer.
- When the time has expired, access to the exam will be terminated, and the test will be submitted for scoring. Questions that are not completed will be scored as incorrect answers.

Essay Questions

The Skills Exam consists of an essay question only. Examinees are allowed 120 minutes (2 hours) to complete the essay.

The essay question requires reading and will be presented on the computer screen. To assist in answering the essay question, candidates will be provided with scratch paper. Timing for the examination begins when the proctor has released the examination to the examinee.

The answer **must** be typed on the computer in order to be graded. The examinee may use cut and paste; however, spellcheck and other word processing functions are disabled for the Certified Paralegal Exam.

The Essay Grader panel may only consider answers typewritten on the computer window. Examinees will be required to return the scratch paper to the proctor prior to leaving the testing center.

Candidates must be sure they have completed the essay answer **before** clicking the “Finish and Exit” button. Once clicked, access to the examination will terminate.

The Skills Exam is graded by the Essay Grader panel. Examinees are instructed **not** to put their name in the response window.

Recertification Process Policies and Procedures for Certified Paralegals

The Certifying Board supports the ongoing professional development of its certificants. The mandatory recertification process provides certificants with the opportunity to demonstrate the retention, reinforcement, and expansion of their knowledge and skills pertaining to new advances and information over the full spectrum of law and procedures in the legal field.

Recertification also provides encouragement to, and acknowledgment for, participation in ongoing professional development activities and continued learning. To support this purpose, the recertification requirements require continuing education and professional activities that enhance ongoing professional development, recognize learning opportunities, and provide a process for both attaining and recording professional development achievements.

To ensure the proficiency of Certified Paralegals (CPs), the Certifying Board requires that each CP® certificant participate periodically in continuing education to refresh existing knowledge and skills, and to acquire knowledge and skills pertaining to law and procedures in the legal field.

The five-year time period established for recertification is based on both the scope of issues that face paralegal professionals and the Certifying Board's belief that new practices, research, and information are introduced in the field with enough frequency that professional development activities should be conducted routinely so that certificants remain current with best practices and emerging knowledge.

The CP® credential is valid for a period of five years. CPs may renew their certification after complying with the ethical and continuing legal education (CLE) requirements set forth below. The five-year period is enforced as a reasonable timeframe for staying abreast of the rapid changes in law and procedures in the legal field.

To maintain use of the CP® credential, certification must be renewed every five (5) years. CPs are responsible for recording their continuing education through their online NALA portal accounts. CPs are also responsible to update their contact information in order to receive communications related to their certification status.

A CP® in good standing is prohibited from retaking the CP® Exam.

Limitations to the Definition of Continuing Competence

The competency-based recertification process is intended to assist certificants with increasing their skills, knowledge, and competence while also ensuring compliance with the Code of Ethics. The recertification process does not, however, warrant or guarantee competency, accuracy, or any particular service result, but, rather, participation in the process helps demonstrate the certificant's commitment to providing the highest quality paralegal services through continuous education and professional development.

The Certifying Board acknowledges that not all sources or types of continuing education contribute equally to professional development.

Ethical Standards

Certified Paralegals may lose the CP® credential if they have a felony conviction or if they violate the NALA Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility.

If NALA is aware that a CP® has been accused of a violation of the NALA Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility, NALA will submit the information to the Certifying Board as soon as practicable.

All CPs must submit, with their renewal application, a signed affidavit that they have not been convicted of a felony during the prior five-year period.

CLE Hours Required

Certified Paralegals (CPs) must complete a total of 50 hours of continuing legal education during each five-year recertification period. Certifications will only be eligible for renewal after the timely submission of proof of CLE compliance in accordance with these rules.

Five of the 50 CLE hours completed must address the topic of legal ethics. For purposes of CLE, legal ethics is defined as the code of professional responsibility detailing the moral and professional duties required in the delivery of legal services. To have reported hours satisfy the legal ethics CLE requirement, the sponsor's program must state the seminar or workshop included a legal ethics component and state the specific number of hours of instruction in the area of legal ethics.

Of the 45 remaining CLE hours, a maximum of 10 hours may address non-substantive areas (including, but not limited to, law office management, computer programs or applications, communications, and office technology). Of these 10 non-substantive hours, up to two hours may address the areas of mental health or prevention of substance abuse.

If more than 50 hours are recorded during a five-year period, excess hours may not be applied to a subsequent period for active CPs.

Acceptable CLE

The Certifying Board will only award CLE hours for education that is relevant to the work of paralegals. Reported CLE hours that are not pre-approved are subject to verification by the Certifying Board.

CLE hours are not awarded for work-required activities (paid or unpaid) such as trial preparation, witness interviewing, or research of a case-related subject.

All CLE for the recertification period must be entered into the NALA system prior to the certification expiration date.

Types of CLE Programs and Calculation of Hours

Seminars, workshops, and conferences

Speakers: To qualify for CLE hours, programs are required to feature a qualified presenter who has relevant education, experience, certification, or license(s).

Minimum Length: There is no minimum length requirement for CLE.

CLE Hours Calculation: Certified Paralegals will be awarded CLE for each minute completed at a seminar, workshop, or course (live, online, or self-study). Hours are not awarded for session breaks or lunch breaks. If a lunch includes an educational component, time is awarded only for the actual presentation.

Delivery Methods:

- Live - Hours may be awarded for participation in live CLE programs, including in-house employer programs, training, or online live webinars.
- Self-Study - Web-based self-study programs may qualify. In addition, hours may also be

awarded for self-study audio or video recordings of relevant CLE events. CLE hours are available for reading *Facts & Findings* articles as described below. CLE hours are not available for reading any other articles or books.

Facts & Findings Articles: NALA members are eligible to earn one hour of CLE credit by reading five designated articles in each issue of *Facts & Findings*. CLE credit must be submitted within one year of the publication date. No other publications will be considered. Up to two hours of CLE will be available per year with a maximum of five hours of CLE available per each five-year recertification period.

Retention of Course Information (Proof of Attendance): Certificants need to retain the following information regarding their CLE attendance during the recertification period and must present the requested information to NALA if audited:

- Delivery method
- Date of course
- Name of course
- Location of course (if applicable)
- Course sponsor
- Course program or agenda
- Certificate of attendance/completion (if available)

College courses

CLE Hours: Hours may be awarded for completion of a college course offered by a college or university that is regionally accredited so long as a grade of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale, or a grade C or above, is achieved.

Types of Courses: Hours may be awarded for completing legal ethics courses or courses in specific practice areas as part of a paralegal or law school curriculum. Some non-substantive hours may qualify, such as business courses. All courses must be relevant to the work of paralegals.

CLE Hours Calculation: CPs will be awarded 10 CLE hours for each academic quarter unit completed and 15 CLE hours for each academic semester unit completed.

Retention of Course Information (Proof of Attendance):

- Delivery method
- Date of course
- Name of course
- Location of course (if applicable)
- Course sponsor
- Course program or agenda that includes course description
- Unit value – specifying quarter or semester credit
- Transcript – unofficial is acceptable

Advanced Certified Paralegal Program and State Specialty Certifications

Sponsors: The Certifying Board will award CLE hours to CPs upon successful completion of an advanced certified paralegal program.

Types of Programs: Hours may be awarded for the completion of programs administered by a national organization for paralegals, a state paralegal organization working alone or together with a state bar association, and which include completion of a written examination. Product or software certifications qualify as non-substantive seminars, workshops, or conferences.

CLE Hours Calculation: CPs will be awarded CLE hours for each Advanced Certified Paralegal (ACP) certification obtained through NALA. CPs who pass a state or other eligible national certification exam will be awarded the CLE determined by the state agency for CLE or the amount of time it took to take the exam.

Filing Requests for CLE Hours: Requests for participation in Advanced Paralegal Certification programs or state specialty paralegal certification programs must be supported by the following:

- Course description
- Hours completed in the course or in taking exam
- Sponsor of certification program
- Copy of certificate or certification issued

Presenting or Teaching

Types of Teaching: Hours may be awarded for presenting a seminar or workshop, or for teaching a course in a college-level paralegal program on a subject of substantive law or procedure related to the work of paralegals, including mock trials.

CLE Hours Calculation: CPs will be awarded two hours for every one hour of instruction. Hours for seminars or courses with more than one instructor will be awarded pro-rata based upon the number of instructors.

Retention of Course Information (Proof of Attendance):

- Course or seminar description or syllabus
- Number of teaching hours
- Proof of teaching activity from organization or sponsor

Published Articles

Types of Writings: Hours may be awarded for publishing an article of at least 1,000 words in a legal periodical or book on a subject of substantive law or procedure related to the work of paralegals.

CLE Hours Calculation: CPs will be awarded three CLE hours for an individually authored article of at least 1,000 words published in a legal publication in accordance with NALA *Facts & Findings* Editorial Guidelines or similar published guidelines. Hours for articles with more than one author will be awarded pro-rata based upon the number of authors and words.

Retention of Course Information (Proof of Attendance):

- Copy of article in publication
- Word count

Training for Volunteer Activities

Types of Training: Hours may be awarded for time spent in substantive legal training to volunteer paralegal services. Volunteering in the delivery of pro bono legal services in conjunction with your local or state bar association.

CLE Hours Calculation: CPs will be awarded one hour for each hour spent in a classroom, small group, or one-on-one training to learn how to provide volunteer paralegal services.

Retention of Course Information (Proof of Attendance):

- Name of sponsor and training
- Date(s) and time(s) of completed trainings
- Total number of hours of training and instruction

- Training agenda or syllabus
- Sponsor contact information
- Verification of completion from sponsor

Reporting Hours in the Area of Legal Ethics

To have reported hours satisfy the legal ethics CLE requirement, the sponsor's program must state the seminar or workshop included a legal ethics component and state the specific number of hours of instruction in the area of legal ethics.

Filing Procedures for All Types of CLE

CPs are required to enter their CLE hours using the NALA online portal throughout their five-year certification period. Online submissions do not require supporting documentation listed above unless further information is requested or is required through the Certifying Board's CLE audit procedure.

Reported CLE hours are entered as Approved in the NALA online portal and are subject to audit.

All CLE submitted are subject to random monthly audits. CPs receiving notification of an audit must submit the requested supporting documentation to NALA within 30 days to verify CLE hours earned during the current five-year term. The supporting documents required for each type of CLE are listed in the above policies and in this Handbook. Reported hours will be declined if the required supporting documents are not provided within the timeframe given in the request.

CPs who file fraudulent CLE claims or forms, falsely represent a course or program, or misrepresent hours of instruction may be subject to discipline as set forth in the Rules for Disciplinary Proceedings.

Special requests for CLE credit such as teaching courses or seminar presentations should be submitted to NALA with documentation supporting the credit request.

Recertification Affidavit and Fee

CPs who have met the CLE hourly requirements to renew their credential are required to submit a Recertification Affidavit and recertification fee within thirty days of the expiration of their certification. The Recertification Affidavit verifies the Certified Paralegal:

- has met the CLE hours required to renew the credential;
- the hours reported are true and accurate;
- has not falsified information on any document submitted to the Certifying Board;
- has not been disciplined for the unauthorized practice of law since applying for the Certified Paralegal credential;
- has not failed to meet continuing legal education requirements;
- has not divulged the contents of any examination question;
- has not been convicted of a felony since applying for the Certified Paralegal credential;
- has not failed to notify NALA of updates to their application for the Certified Paralegal credential;
- has not violated the NALA Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility;

- has not violated the Certified Paralegal Program Handbook;
- has not violated the “Terms and Conditions of Testing”; or
- has not engaged in any other conduct determined by a majority vote of the Certifying Board to be unethical or unprofessional (including, but not limited to, any oral or written communication with NALA staff or volunteers that includes intimidating, abusive, threatening, or derogatory language).

Because of the importance of the Recertification Affidavit, all Recertification Affidavits are verified for accuracy and eligibility to renew the credential. Receipt of the affidavit and fee is required to complete the recertification requirements and a new certificate will be issued for the next five-year certification period upon receipt and verification.

Failure to return the complete affidavit with the recertification fee will result in revocation of the certification.

If your certification is revoked and you are in the appeals process, you are prohibited from using the CP® credential.

Pre-Approval

Programs for CLE hours can be pre-approved on a per-program basis. Pre-approval of all programs offered by a particular sponsor is not available. Sponsors for CLE events may include paralegal education providers, bar associations, attorney organizations, law firms, and paralegal associations.

Pre-Qualification of Requests by Certified Paralegals: CPs may contact NALA in advance of a program to seek information about these requirements and to determine whether participation in a CLE program would meet the Certifying Board’s requirements.

Pre-Qualification of Programs by Seminar Providers: Seminar providers may complete a “Seminar Approval” form which is on the NALA website. Upon receipt of the form, and the approval fee, the sponsor will be notified if the program is approved and the maximum number of CLE hours that may be awarded. Any sponsor-approved program must publish course information and approval according to procedures received after approval.

Return of Documentation: Documentation submitted to substantiate requests for CLE hours will not be returned.

Retired Status of Certified Paralegals

Retired status may be requested by any CP® who is:

- currently and have been certified for more than five years; and
- is 55 years of age or older; and
- no longer employed in the legal field.

The Certified Paralegal must provide an affidavit verifying age and employment status. Upon receipt of the completed affidavit and verification of all requirements the Certified Paralegal will be permitted Retired status. Such Retired status will commence upon the expiration of the current recertification period. Retired Certified Paralegals are relieved from meeting further requirements for continuing legal education.

Any Certified Paralegal who becomes permanently disabled and is no longer employed in the legal field may submit an affidavit with medical proof of disability and, upon receipt of the required documentation, be permitted Retired status.

Certified Paralegals in Retired status must show their credential as CP Retired and will appear in the directory of all Certified Paralegals available to employers and the general public. Certified Paralegals incorrectly using the Retired designation may be subject to disciplinary proceedings, including loss of the credential.

Any Certified Paralegal who returns to employment in the legal field and desires to use the Certified Paralegal credential must relinquish their Retired status and meet the same requirements as all other Certified Paralegals. A fee will be required to reactivate the credential. The five-year recertification period will restart as of the first day of the immediately following month.

The Retired status request forms are included in this Handbook below and on the website under the Certification tab.

Procedure for Notice of Revocation of Certified Paralegal Credential for Failure to Meet CLE Requirements

Notwithstanding anything in these rules to the contrary, the procedure for revocation of certification and use of the CP® designation for failure to meet continuing education requirements shall be:

- Notice of expiration of the CP® designation. Certificants receive a four- year reminder notice of expiration. In addition, reminder notices will be sent three months prior to the expiration date, two months prior to the expiration date, and a final reminder one month prior to the expiration date.
- If the required continuing legal education hours and the completed recertification affidavit and payment of the recertification fee have not been received, a notice of revocation is mailed to the individual's last known address advising that the certification has been revoked and further use of the CP® designation is prohibited.

Appeal of Revocation of Certified Paralegal Credential for Failure to Meet CLE Requirements

A CP® may appeal the revocation of the CP® credential for failure to meet CLE requirements in writing to the Appeals Committee and include the following:

- CLE documents were lost in transit (via mail or electronically); or
- the CLE programs were attended but evidence of attendance was destroyed, lost, or misplaced; or
- CLE hours were rejected but are believed to be within the published guidelines.

An appeal must include all relevant documentation and must be received by NALA within 30 days after revocation. The appeal shall be reviewed by the Appeals Committee. Decisions by the Appeals Committee are final and shall be communicated by NALA to the paralegal within 10 days of the decision.

Hardship or Extreme Circumstances as Basis of Appeal

An appeal of the revocation of the CP® credential based on hardship or extreme circumstances will be considered under the following conditions:

- The five-year certification period has expired; and
 - The CP® is on active military or active military reserve duty; or
 - The CP® has extenuating personal challenges, which could include long-term

unemployment or severe medical issues hampering one's ability to work or engage in activities outside of work for a period of one year or more.

An appeal must be filed with the Appeals Committee within 30 days after the revocation of the certification. If the committee members are unanimous in their decision, the paralegal will be advised within 10 days of the Appeals Committee decision. If the committee members are unable to come to a unanimous agreement, the appeal will be forwarded to the full Certifying Board for review and decision. The paralegal will be advised within 10 days of the Certifying Board decision.

During the appeal, the CP® credential is revoked and may not be used or claimed by a paralegal.

The following options will be available to the paralegal, based upon the hardship:

Option 1

The Certifying Board, or a committee thereof, may allow the paralegal to retake the Certified Paralegal Exam as a new candidate for certification.

The Board or committee may waive the examination application fee if they deem it appropriate. However, the application fee waiver will be valid for a limited period of time to be determined by the committee or Certifying Board, and the paralegal must retake the Certified Paralegal Exam within that time.

Option 2

The Certifying Board, or a committee thereof, may grant the paralegal up to an additional one year from the date of the decision to complete the CLE requirements needed.

With this option, the paralegal must comply with all recertification requirements as any other CP®. The extension of up to one year will apply against the ensuing five-year renewal period. The expiration date of the CP® credential will not be adjusted forward to accommodate the extended time.

The CP® must enter CLE hours through their NALA online portal account and advise NALA when the hours have been entered. Certification staff will review the hours for accuracy.

The recertification fee may be waived only one time for a CP®.

If the requirements are not met within the extended time period, certification will be revoked consistent with Certifying Board policies.

Use of the Certification Marks

The certification marks are a distinctive visual symbol that indicates an individual is qualified to provide paralegal services by virtue of having 1) completed the education and examination requirements for certification by the National Association of Legal Assistants; 2) agreed to adhere to the Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility of the National Association of Legal Assistants; 3) agreed to continuing education requirements to maintain the national certification; and 4) completed an ACP® course*. The certification marks cannot be used by individuals who have not met these requirements, and their use may be revoked for failure to comply with ethical standards and recertification requirements. **Applies only for the ACP*

The marks may not be altered, modified, hand-drawn, or typeset. The marks may not be reproduced electronically or scanned in such poor quality as to distort or significantly alter their appearance. All reproduction of the certification marks must be made from original reproduction artwork provided by NALA and with these guidelines.

Always specify in a tag line at the end of an article, at the bottom of an advertisement, or at the bottom of the first page of a brochure or promotional literature that these certification marks belong to the National Association of Legal Assistants. Example: "CP® is a certification mark of

the National Association of Legal Assistants.”

With the CP® or ACP® mark, it is permissible to add “Certified Paralegal” or “Advanced Certified Paralegal” after the mark itself so that your nonlawyer status is clearly indicated on firm promotional literature and other documents that may carry the marks. However, your nonlawyer status must be clearly stated at the outset of any communications.

The certification marks may not be used as part of, or incorporated in, the name of a firm or firm logo or imply that the firm is entitled to use the marks. This rule applies even in those cases where one or more firm members are authorized to use the marks in association with their own names. (This rule is most applicable to offices and businesses owned by paralegals that offer paralegal services to law firms.)

The marks must not be used on promotional items such as coffee mugs, t-shirts, jewelry, etc.

The marks cannot be used in a way that they appear to be part of an individual’s title or degree. They must always be used in connection with services provided by the individual who is entitled to use the mark.

Specific instructions and examples will be provided to new certificants upon passing the examination and are available on the NALA website. The instructions are listed on the website under the Certification/Recertification Process/Quick Links tab.

Certified Paralegal Program Forms

All Certified Paralegal program forms are listed on the website under the Certification section:

- [Appeal – CP® Exam](#)
- [Appeal – CP® Certification](#)
- [Certificate of Attendance](#)
- [CP® Reactivation Affidavit](#)
- [CP® Recertification Affidavit](#)
- [CP® Retired Status](#)
- [CP® Retired Status Disability](#)
- [Request for Accommodation](#)