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The Certified Paralegal Program FAQs



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



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Certified Paralegal (CP®) Exam FAQs

What are the eligibility requirements to apply for the Certified Paralegal (CP®) Exam?

- **Category 1:** Enrollment in or graduation from a paralegal or legal studies program that meets one of the criteria listed in sections (a) through (e) below.
 - (a) a paralegal program approved by the American Bar Association; or
 - (b) an associate degree program in paralegal studies; or
 - (c) a post-baccalaureate certificate program in paralegal studies; or
(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.)
 - (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) of which at least 15 semester hours (or equivalent quarter hours) are substantive legal courses.
(Candidates applying under Category 1(e) may combine college hours from more than one institution. The candidate must have graduated from a paralegal program consisting of a minimum of 15 semester hours [or 225 clock hours or equivalent quarter hours]. Evidence of the minimum hours required under Category 1(e) must be provided with the application form.)
- **Category 2:** A bachelor's degree in any field plus one year of experience as a paralegal or successful completion of at least 15 semester hours (or equivalent quarter hours) of substantive paralegal courses.
 - (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:** A high school diploma, or equivalent, plus five (5) years of experience as a paralegal plus a minimum of twenty (20) hours of substantive continuing legal education completed within the two-year period prior to application for the exam.
 - (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 completions for CLEs taken.)

When will the Certified Paralegal (CP®) Exam be administered?

- The Knowledge Exam is administered year-round, on-demand with the exception of holidays.
- The Skills Exam is administered during the months of: **February, April, July, and October**

How long is the application process?

- **72 hours** - If the application, fees, and supporting documentation are submitted and meet the eligibility requirement(s), the approval process - including both the approval acknowledgment and the authorization to test notification - takes approximately 72 hours.
- **TBD** - If any portion of the application is incomplete, a notification will be sent requesting the additional information. The deadline to submit additional information is 60 days from the notification date.
 - **If the additional information is not received by the 60-day** deadline, the application is voided, and a \$75 processing fee is required.

What is the application process?

- Submit the application, fee, testing center fee, and supporting documentation via online, email, fax, or mail. Depending on your application pathway, supporting documents are as follows:
 - Official transcript, letter of completion, or diploma showing proof of graduation for **Category 1** and **Category 2**. *Foreign degree transcripts must be evaluated to show U.S. equivalency.*
 - Employer attestation for **Category 2** ([page 5](#))
 - Employer attestation for **Category 3** ([page 6](#))
 - [ADA form](#) if accommodations are being requested
 - Personal statement describing your disability and its impact on your daily life
 - Documentation from a qualified medical professional certifying to your disability or qualifying medical condition, with specific identification of the requested accommodation and the medical basis for the request
- NALA staff reviews the application and supporting documentation.
 - If the eligibility requirement is met and fees are submitted, the application is approved.
 - An official application approval acknowledgment is sent via email.
 - An Authorization to Test is sent via email.
 - The Authorization to Test provides the link to schedule your exam using the testing center portal.
 - If the eligibility requirement is **not** met, or the fees not submitted, the application is in pending status and a notification requesting additional information is sent via email. A 60-day deadline is provided to submit the requested information.
 - If the additional information is not received by the deadline, the application is voided, and a \$75 processing fee is required.

What are the Exam application fees?

- First time candidates:
 - Standard (not military, not student)
 - \$325 member
 - \$375 non-member

- Paralegal Student (*The Paralegal student fee is for paralegal students currently in the last semester or quarter of the Paralegal program and who do **not** currently qualify under category 1, 2, or 3.*)
 - \$150 member
 - \$175 non-member
- Military (active-duty, veterans, guardsmen, reservists, and their spouses)
 - \$240 member
 - \$280 non-member
- Includes one attempt for the Knowledge Exam and one attempt for the Skills Exam.
- Candidates who do not pass the first attempt of the Knowledge or Skills Exam:
 - Candidates are not eligible to apply for a subsequent attempt until 90 days from the previous attempt
 - \$150 (per subsequent attempt for the Knowledge and Skills Exam)
 - A maximum of three attempts are available during the 365-day eligibility period

Do I have to pay a Testing Center fee?

Yes. The testing center fee will be required for examinees to be authorized to schedule their exam and are paid to NALA on behalf of the testing center.

- Onsite Testing
 - Knowledge Exam - \$63
 - Skills Exam - \$53
- Remote Proctoring (Knowledge Exam only)
 - Knowledge Exam - \$58
- Partner Testing (must be preapproved)
 - Knowledge Exam - \$25
 - Skills Exam - \$25

How do I know what to study?

The Exam Format and Specifications on the last page provides the breakdown of subjects tested on the exam and is based on federal rules and procedures. The exam tests general knowledge and concepts in each of the areas listed on the outline. Most areas are included in paralegal studies curricula or are areas commonly practiced by paralegals as evidenced by the responses to the [2022 Job Task Analysis Survey](#) conducted in the spring of 2022.

Suggested sources for study are listed on the NALA website. These sources are provided for information only; candidates are not required to purchase any of these materials. Successful completion of the Certified Paralegal Exam depends on many factors, including educational background and experience. It may be helpful to determine the most familiar areas and focus on areas that may require additional study.

The function of the NALA Certifying Board (“Certifying Board”) is to test knowledge, rather than teach the test. In accordance with the NCCA accreditation requirements, **the Certifying Board is not involved in the development or delivery of any CP® Exam study materials, preparation materials, or products; and the developers of those materials and products do not have access to any CP® Exam content. The Certifying Board does not require, approve, endorse, or recommend any specific study materials or**

methods to be used by examinees. The Certifying Board has no involvement with the NALA online study group nor does the Certifying Board provide any information, answers, or responses to questions posed by the online study group.

Where can I take the Exam?

- **Onsite Testing Centers** – The Knowledge and Skills Exams are administered at a brick-and-mortar testing center. When you receive the Authorization to Test from NALA, you may schedule your exam. [Click here](#) to watch an informative video about the test center experience.
- **Remote Proctoring (online testing)** – Only the Knowledge Exam is administered via remote proctoring. The Knowledge Exam may be taken at your home. [Click here](#) to watch an informative video about the online testing experience.
- **Partner Testing Center** – To review the current Partner Testing Center options, visit the Partner Testing section under the Certification/Examinees/Testing locations box.
 - If your employer, college, or military base is eligible to administer the Exam for you, the following forms below are required. They can be accessed from our website the Certification/Examinees/Testing locations box:
 - Partner Testing Center Handbook
 - [Partner Testing Center Application](#)
 - [Partner Testing Proctor Application](#)
 - [Partner Testing Schedule](#)

Will I receive my score at the testing center?

- **Yes.** The results for the **Knowledge Exam** will be available at the testing center. NALA will upload the official score to your NALA account and send you an email within 72 hours of your exam completion.
- **No.** The score for the **Skills Exam** is not available at the testing center. The score for the Skills Exam will be released after the post-administration analysis, scoring, and standard setting has been completed. Results are expected to be released within 15 weeks after the testing window closes.

I passed my Knowledge Exam. When may I take the Skills Exam?

- Candidates who pass the Knowledge Exam will receive official scores within 72 hours of completing the Exam.
- Within the next 72 hours, an Authorization to Test for the Skills Exam will be sent via email if the Skills Exam testing center fee has been submitted.
 - 365 days will be provided for completion after receiving notice of eligibility from NALA.
 - Candidates who do not pass the Skills Exam must wait 90 days before re-taking it and are provided a total of three attempts to successfully complete the Skills Exam in the 365-day period.
 - If the Skills Exam is not successfully completed in the 365-day period, candidates will

start over by submitting a new application, fee, and testing center fee and retake the Knowledge Exam.

I passed my Skills Exam. What happens next?

- Candidates who pass the Skills Exam will receive official scores within 6-8 weeks after the closing of the testing window.
- NALA will mail the new Certified Paralegal (CP®) a certificate along with important information on how to maintain your certification within three weeks of releasing scores.

I didn't pass my Exam. What happens next?

- Candidates who do not pass the Knowledge or Skills Exam must wait 90 days after the initial attempt before applying for the next attempt.
- Candidates must purchase another attempt for the Knowledge or Skills Exam by submitting a Retake Application and testing center fee.
- Candidates filing a Retake Application for the Knowledge or Skills Exam will receive a **Testing Ticket** from NALA after the application is processed and the testing center fee is submitted. The Testing Ticket provides the link to schedule your exam using the Prometric portal.
- Candidates who do not pass the Knowledge or Skills Exam on the **third attempt** are required to submit a new application, fee, and testing center fee.

Note: Please allow additional processing hours for weekends and holidays.

CP[®] Exam Specifications

Knowledge Exam		100 Points
1 United States Legal System		15
1.A Sources of Law		
1.B Judicial System		
1.C Remedies		
1.D Administrative Law		
2 Civil Litigation		15
2.A Jurisdiction		
2.B Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and Evidence		
2.C Alternative Dispute Resolution		
3 Contracts		10
3.A Formation, Rights, and Duties		
3.B Enforcement and Defenses		
4 Corporate/Commercial Law		10
4.A Business Organizations		
4.B Rights and Responsibilities		
5 Criminal Law and Procedure		7
6 Estate Planning and Probate		7
6.A Estates, Trusts, and Wills		
7 Real Estate and Property		8
7.A Property Rights, Ownership, and Transactions		
8 Torts		10
8.A Negligence and Strict Liability		
9 Professional and Ethical Responsibility		12
9.A American Bar Association (ABA) Model Rules of Conduct		
9.B Unauthorized Practice of Law		
10 Debtor/Creditor and Bankruptcy		6
Skills Exam		30 Points
1 Legal Writing		10
1.A Composition		7
1.B Mechanics		3
2 Critical Thinking		20
2.A Identification of Relevant Facts		4
2.B Issue Spotting		7
2.C Analysis of Facts and Rules		7
2.D Drawing Conclusions		2

Certified Paralegal (CP®) Recertification FAQs

Now that I have passed the CP® Exam, what happens next?

- Read the information in your packet! Hang your certificate, post your digital badge on social media, update your resume, and add your designation to your business card and email signature!
- Certified Paralegals (CPs) are required to meet certain continuing legal education (CLE) requirements to maintain the certification. To maintain a successful career as a paralegal, and a credential relevant to employers and consumers of paralegal services, participation in CLE programs is required.

How many CLE credits am I required to obtain per five-year certification period?

- 50 hours of CLE, including five hours of legal ethics, and not more than 10 hours of non-substantive credits.

Does CLE have to be earned in specific categories?

- Yes. There are three main categories of CLE. Click [CLE Categories](#) for additional details.
 - Legal Ethics
 - Substantive
 - Non-substantive

How long is my certification valid?

- Five years and it must be renewed. Lifetime certification is not available due to the continual change in laws and procedures. These directly impact the work performed by paralegals which makes continuing legal education an essential part of the certification process.

How do I use the CP® credential?

- Use this reference sheet as a guide: <https://nala.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/NALA-Credentials-Guidelines-2022.pdf>

Where can I locate my certification dates?

- In your NALA account (see the screenshots)

Option 1 – Overview screen

Certification Information

Completed Certifications

Pending Certifications

Inactive Certifications

Applications

1

[1 to 1 out of 1 records]

Certification Name	Start Date	End Date
CP Certified Paralegal	12/1/2021	11/30/2026

1

Option 2 – Certification screen

Overview

Account

Organizations

Purchases

Requests

Documents

Recent Orders

Recent Invoices

Recent Payments

Memberships

Subscriptions

Advertising

Events

Merchandise

Publications

Courses

Certifications

Completed Certifications

Pending Certifications

Inactive Certifications

Applications

1

[1 to 1 out of 1 records]

Y

Certification Name	Start Date	End Date	Manage	View
CP Certified Paralegal	12/1/2021	11/30/2026	Manage	View

1

How do I enter my CLE?

- For step-by-step instructions, click [How-To-Enter-Your-CLE.pdf \(nala.org\)](https://nala.org/How-To-Enter-Your-CLE.pdf).

Once I've entered my CLE, how do I see my total?

- Click the blue **View Your Total CLE Hours** on the same screen as entering your CLE. Once the transcript opens your CLE is calculated per category (legal ethics, non-substantive, and substantive).

If I make a mistake after entering CLE, how do I correct it?

- Send an email to cle@nala.org to request the correction(s) be made. Be sure to advise the title of the course, entry date, and supporting documentation to confirm the correct amount of hours.

Do I need to manually enter my CLE?

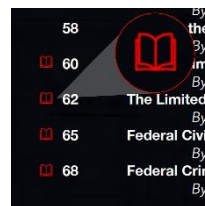
- Yes, if it is not sponsored by NALA.
- If it is sponsored by NALA, no.
 - NALA's online education (live webinars, on-demand webinars, self-study courses, and Conference CLE) is automatically imported to your CLE account daily. If you manually enter it, it creates a duplicate, generates a false total, and NALA staff must remove it.

Will NALA remind me to recertify?

- Yes, NALA sends various courtesy reminders to all Certified Paralegals prior to the certification expiration date via email and mail.

What qualifies for CLE?

- The Certifying Board will only award CLE hours for education that is relevant to the work of paralegals. CLE hours are subject to random verification (CLE Audit) 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.
 - Seminars, workshops, and conferences
 - NALA's [online education courses](#) (live webinars, on-demand webinars, self-study courses, and our annual conference)
 - **Your local NALA Affiliate** – Contact them to find out when their next CLE session is ([click here](#) and scroll down to the List of Current Affiliated Associations for a list or check out the [Affiliate Sponsored events](#)).
 - **Your local bar association** – May have audio or video tapes of various legal education programs.
 - **YouTube** - Enter “continuing legal education” into the search bar and earn your CLE by watching videos. (The presenter(s) must have relevant education, experience, certification, or license(s)).
 - NALA's *Facts & Findings* articles (designated with a red book icon)
 - College courses
 - CLE credit 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.
 - Advanced Paralegal Certifications and State Specialty Certifications
 - NALA's [Advanced Certified Paralegal](#) courses (up to 20 hours of CLE)
 - Earn the ACP® designation



- Presenting or 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.
 - 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 prorata based upon the number of instructors.
- Published articles
 - 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.
- Training for volunteer activities
 - Hours may be awarded for time spent in substantive legal training to volunteer paralegal services.

How will I know if my CLE entries are audited and what am I required to do?

- NALA will send you an email advising you that a specific entry is being audited. The CLE entry will be updated with “Audit” in front of the title of the entry in your CLE account.
- Send your documentation to cle@nala.org within the 30-day deadline.

What happens if I do not respond to the audit?

- You are sent a 15-day reminder.
- Your entry is declined if the supporting documentation is not received by the 30-day deadline.

Do I need to upload my certificate of attendance forms?

- No. However, keep your documentation for the duration of your certification period as your CLE entries are subject to audit.

If the session that I attend does not provide a certificate, how do I prove my attendance?

- You may utilize a NALA [certificate of attendance](#) form and your employer may validate it; or
- You may complete a notarized affidavit.

When may I recertify?

- If the CLE requirements have been met, then you may recertify on the first of the month of your certification expiration date.
 - If your certification expiration date is 12/31/2025, the earliest date you may recertify is 12/1/2025.

How do I recertify?

- If the CLE requirements have been met, then you may recertify on the first of the month of your certification expiration date either online or submit the PDF Recertification Affidavit via email, fax, or mail.

Why did I receive an error message when I clicked the online recertification form?

- It's not time for you to recertify; or
- It's after your certification expiration date; or
- You have not met the required CLE credits
 - Did you enter at least five hours of legal ethics?
 - Do you have at least 45 hours of substantive CLE?
 - Do you have more than the 10-hour maximum of non-substantive CLE?

I do not understand how to read my CLE transcript. Who can help me?

- NALA staff. We are happy to walk you through it by phone 918-587-6828 or email cle@nala.org.

Why did my certification get revoked?

- The CLE requirements were not met by the deadline; or
- The Recertification Affidavit and fee were not returned by the deadline

Can my certification be reinstated?

- Perhaps. You may submit an [Appeal form](#) to cle@nala.org and the Certifying Board will review it.

I am retiring soon but I do not want to lose my certification. What can I do?

- Congratulations on approaching the next phase of your life! If you meet the requirements on the form, you may submit the online [CP® Retired form](#).
- If approved, your certification status will be changed to CP or ACP Retired.

I am permanently disabled.

- If you meet the requirements on the form, you may submit the online [CP® Retired Disability form](#).
- If approved, your certification status will be changed to CP® or ACP® Retired.

I am returning to work but I retired three years ago. I want to reactivate my certification.

- You may submit the online [CP® Retired Re-Activation form](#).