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FOIA REQUESTS



FOIA, Public Records, & the Paralegal's Role in Government Transparency

by Martha Izquierdo

In the legal profession, access to public records is more than a technical step—it's a cornerstone of due process, government accountability, and effective advocacy. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), passed in 1966, empowers individuals to obtain records from federal agencies. Over the decades, FOIA has become a vital tool not only for lawyers but also for investigative journalists, watchdog organizations, and policy advocates. Organizations like ProPublica have demonstrated FOIA's power in exposing systemic failures. They've used it to reveal racial disparities in mortgage lending, expose the lack of a meaningful police disciplinary system, and how ICE treated detained migrant children. These revelations, often hidden in internal memos, inspection reports, or agency emails, showcase FOIA as an essential transparency mechanism.

But the impact of FOIA isn't limited to journalism. In immigration law, FOIA can be just as revelatory and life-altering. For paralegals and legal advocates, FOIA requests are critical to uncovering facts about a client's immigration history, detention conditions, or government decision-making that directly

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Summer Sunset

by Travis Chow – LAPA President

As summer winds down and we begin to transition into the final stretch of the year, it's a natural time for reflection—on our growth, our goals, and the value we bring to our profession and community.

The warmth of these past months has reminded us of the importance of connection—whether it's through our summer networking events, volunteer efforts, or simply showing up for one another in our workspaces and lives. I hope each of you found time to recharge, reset, and rediscover your purpose in this vital profession.

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Our theme this month centers on value—not just the value we deliver to our firms and clients, but the value we recognize in ourselves. Too often, paralegals operate behind the scenes, quietly carrying the weight of case preparation, research, and strategy. August is our moment to step into the spotlight.

August continues with exciting events, from continuing legal education workshops to networking events designed to give opportunities to invest in yourself. On July 31, we are hosting a MLCE on “Nonprofit Board: Duties and Responsibilities.” On August 16, we are volunteering at the Union Rescue Mission DTLA with our friends at the Orange County Paralegal Association. On August 19, we are holding a webinar with LAPA friend Chere Estrin on “Strategies to Get Paid What You’re Worth for Paralegals Ready to Level Up.” Also, stay tuned for our end of Summer Mixer! Please visit our website to sign up for all our events.

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LAPA REPORTER

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THE ADVERTISING AND EDITORIAL DEADLINE IS THE 5TH OF THE MONTH PRIOR TO PUBLICATION.

Articles and news items should be directed to LAPA at editor@lapa.org. Inquiries about making a submission should be directed to LAPA at info@lapa.org.

Inquiries about advertising placement, applications, membership materials and address changes should be directed to LAPA at admin@lapa.org.

Articles will be published as space permits. The Newsletter Committee reserves approval and edit rights on any article submitted.

The Los Angeles Paralegal Association is a non-profit, mutual benefit corporation and is tax exempt within the meaning of section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code. Membership dues and donations to LAPA are not tax deductible as charitable gifts, but may be deductible as related business expenses. LAPA suggests that you consult your tax advisor in this regard.

This is the time to reinvest in yourself. Take that course. Update that resume. Ask for what you deserve. Connect with your peers. LAPA is here to support you in every step of your journey.

Thank you to our dedicated Board, committee members, volunteers, sponsors, and YOU—our members—for your commitment and passion. Every one of you helps make LAPA a powerful force for education, service, and camaraderie. Each and everyone of you are responsible for us being able to deliver value, connection, and impact for paralegals across Los Angeles.

If you're interested in contributing to the LAPA Reporter, we'd love to hear from you! Also, if there's something specific, you'd like to hear from us, don't hesitate to reach out. Thank you for YOUR hard work, YOUR dedication, and YOUR commitment to excellence.

Travis Chow is currently the Paralegal Coordinator at Collins + Collins LLP. Prior to this role, he freelanced at several private practice firms in Southern California. He holds certifications as a Social Media Intelligence Expert and Cyber Intelligence Professional, and he is also a licensed California Realtor and Notary Public. With the support of the Walter T. Shatford and San Gabriel Valley Bar Association Legal Scholarship, he earned a Paralegal Certificate from Pasadena City College, along with an associate degree in Social Behavioral Science, Humanities, and Paralegal Studies. Additionally, he obtained a Paralegal Certificate and a bachelor's degree in Legal Studies from the University of La Verne. 

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

AUGUST

- 6 - **LAPA Executive Board Meeting** – Conf. Call; Contact Travis Chow at president@lapa.org.
- 13 - **LAPA Board Meeting** – Contact Travis Chow at president@lapa.org.
- 16 - **Union Rescue Mission - Volunteer With Us!** – Union Rescue Mission, Los Angeles; 10:00 AM -2:00 PM; Go to <https://www.lapa.org/event-6178368> for updates, & more information.
- 19- **LAPA Seminar - Show Me the Money: Strategies to Get Paid what You're Worth For Paralegals Ready to Level Up** – Online via Zoom; 12:00-1:00 PM; featuring *Chere Estrin, CEO of Estrin Legal Staffing*; Go to <https://www.lapa.org/event-6255280> for updates, more information & to register.

SEPTEMBER

- 3 - **LAPA Executive Board Meeting** – Conf. Call; Contact Travis Chow at president@lapa.org.
- 10 - **LAPA Board Meeting** – Contact Travis Chow at president@lapa.org.

OCTOBER

- 1 - **LAPA Executive Board Meeting** – Conf. Call; Contact Travis Chow at president@lapa.org.
- 8 - **LAPA Board Meeting** – Contact Travis Chow at president@lapa.org.
- 18- **LAPA 49th Annual October Conference: "Stand Together, Stand Strong"** – Sheraton Grand Los Angeles, DTLA; 8:30 AM-3:30 PM; Go to <https://www.lapa.org/event-6184990> for updates, more information & to register.

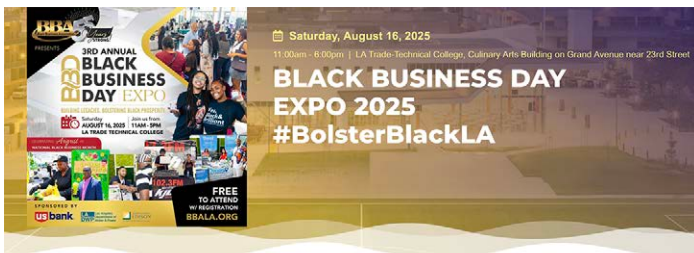
CULTURAL CURRENTS



On The Town

by Deena Bowman

Looking for an excuse to step away from the daily grind and immerse yourself in the vibrant spirit of our communities? Take a well-deserved break, gather your friends and/or family, and dive into the rich tapestry of cultural events that await right outside your door! August marks National Black Business Month, and the Will Geer's Theatricum Botanicum performance of *Strife*.



CELEBRATE BLACK ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In recognition of National Black Business Month, the Black Business Association (BBA) is hosting its 3rd Annual Black Business Day Expo, at the Los Angeles Trade-Technical College. In partnership with U.S. Bank, LADWP, and Radio Free 102.3 KJLH, the BBA will host a day of business resources, workshops, speakers, and presentations. The expo will take place on Saturday, August 16, from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The event is open to the public and admission is free with registration. <https://app.glueup.com/event/141156/register/>



ENJOY A NIGHT AT THE THEATRICUM

Will Geer's Theatricum Botanicum presents Nobel Prize-winning writer and activist John Galsworthy's play *Strife*. Galsworthy's play explores the complex dynamics of a labor strike at the Trenartha Tin Plate Works during a time when labor rights were beginning to gain recognition in early twentieth-century England. *Strife* remains relevant today due to its examination of deeply rooted social and economic issues. *Strife* runs at the Theatricum from August 1 through October 4. For more information and tickets, see <https://theatricum.com/strife/>

Deena Bowman is a Senior Legal Analyst at the State Compensation Insurance Fund in Glendale, California. Deena earned her paralegal certificate from the University of West Los Angeles, and she was a former Director at Large with LAPA.

influence whether a person can remain in the United States. FOIA's power in the legal field lies not just in transparency—but in its ability to build stronger, fairer, and more informed legal cases.

FOIA'S CRUCIAL ROLE IN IMMIGRATION LAW

FOIA requests can reveal key aspects of a client's procedural and legal history: border encounters, prior applications, agency determinations, and internal memos. These documents may affect whether someone qualifies for relief, faces deportation, or can naturalize—particularly for clients who are undocumented, were previously detained, or have interacted with multiple agencies. They are also essential for helping clients understand where their case stands or what information the government already has—allowing them to prepare more accurately and strategically before filing applications or appearing in court. When I was at Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project, FOIA requests were often used to help identify whether a client unknowingly had a permanent bar or any other potential obstacles to relief.

FOIA is also a powerful mechanism for uncovering policies that affect detained immigrants. For instance, the ACLU filed a FOIA lawsuit to compel the release of ICE's updated directives on solitary confinement after the agency implemented changes without public notice. The resulting disclosures revealed how ICE revised its internal rules for placing individuals in Special Management Units, a practice long criticized for abuse and lack of oversight. This kind of transparency allows legal teams to better advocate for detained clients and push back against unjust practices.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is the central target for many immigration-related FOIA requests. Within DHS, the key components include:

- **USCIS** (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services) for A-files and application records
- **ICE** (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) for detention, deportation, and enforcement records
- **CBP** (Customs and Border Protection) for border encounters, travel, and expedited removal documents
- **OBIM** (Office of Biometric Identity Management) for fingerprint and biometric encounter records

Each agency has different systems, addresses, and submission platforms. For example, USCIS uses the **FIRST** portal, while ICE, CBP, and OBIM now accept FOIA submissions via **Secure Release** portal. While online filing is faster, paper submissions using Form G-639 are still common and accepted. Submitting G-639 incorrectly is one of the top reasons for FOIA delays or denials.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOIA: VISA & CITIZENSHIP HISTORIES

For consular processing, derivative citizenship claims, or visa denials, paralegals may also file FOIA requests to the **Department of State (DOS)**. The DOS is responsible for maintaining various records related to visas and citizenship, according to the U.S. Department of State. Individuals can request access to records such as:

- **DS-160 and visa application records** – These include the visa applications themselves and supporting documents submitted by the applicant.
- **Passport files** – These relate to applications for U.S. passports by U.S. citizens. For specific or older passport records, requests may need to be directed to the **Passport Office** or the **National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)**.
- **Consular memos and refusal worksheets** – These documents detail the reasons and basis for a visa denial.
- **Identity documentation** – Documents provided for identification purposes during the application process.

Importantly, DOS now allows electronic submissions through its **Public Access Link (PAL)** portal. The portal enables users to:

- Submit FOIA and Privacy Act requests online
- Track the status of requests
- Retrieve past requests and responses

For certain documents like certified passport records, mailed submissions with a DS 4240 Certification of Identity or a notarized statement may still be required. A G 28 alone is not sufficient to authorize third-party access.

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LAPA Reporter Wins Prestigious National Award from NALA

by Bryan Corbett – LAPA Board Member & Newsletter Chair

We are thrilled to announce that the *LAPA Newsletter Committee* has been honored with the **2025 NALA Affiliated Associations Pinnacle Award**, presented this July at the NALA Conference & Expo in Atlantic City, New Jersey. This national recognition celebrates the LAPA Reporter and the committee's lasting contributions to the paralegal profession through excellence in education, advocacy, and professional development. Congratulations to all who made this achievement possible! 🏆



FOIA REQUESTS - cont. from page 4

THE PARALEGAL'S ROLE & BEST PRACTICES

Paralegals are typically responsible for drafting requests, managing online portals, assembling identity verifications, and tracking timelines. Their responsibilities include:

- Identifying which agency (or agencies) are most likely to have relevant records
- Deciding whether to file electronically or by mail
- Submitting Form G-639, Form G-28 (Notice of Representation), and ID documents
- Preparing clients for follow-up requests or consent verifications via email or text (especially when using online platforms)
- Clearly labeling requested documents (e.g., “entire A-file”)
- Providing full identifying info (A-number, DOB, aliases) without revealing unnecessary sensitive information
- Filing with multiple DHS components when in doubt
- Tracking deadlines and following up—FOIA responses often exceed 20 business days

Because DHS agencies do not share FOIA records internally, multiple submissions are often necessary.

For example, a USCIS A-file might not include a Form I-213 (Record of Deportable/Inadmissible Alien) maintained by CBP. Filing parallel requests ensures case completeness.

Whether through FOIA or other agency-specific record access processes, paralegals are essential to uncovering the documentation that drives effective legal representation. Their technical fluency, procedural diligence, and organizational skills make them indispensable to client advocacy. FOIA requests are especially important when helping clients build a case or clarify their legal status. By uncovering past records and agency actions, paralegals ensure legal teams can identify red flags, resolve contradictions, and develop accurate strategies. Just as importantly, this information empowers clients to better understand their history and legal standing—an essential part of making informed decisions about their future. As the record access landscape evolves, paralegals remain on the front lines—championing clients’ rights to transparency, truth, and due process.

Martha Izquierdo is currently a litigation paralegal at Susman Godfrey LLP. Before that, she worked at the Federal Public Defender's Office, the Los Angeles LGBT Center, and Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project. She earned her Bachelor's Degree in American Literature and Culture from UCLA and just recently received her Paralegal Certificate from Cerritos College. When she's not in the office she enjoys listening to 1970s Brazilian jazz funk or thrift shopping. 🏠

Carolyn Yellis, ACP: A Voice for Paralegals Across California

by Bobby T. Rimas, M.L.S., M.A.Ed. & Kimberly Bradley, ACP

Carolyn Yellis, ACP, LAPA's 2008 Lifetime Achievement Award winner and Past President of the California Alliance of Paralegal Association, passed away on May 13, 2025 at her home in Anaheim, California.

Carolyn was presented with Los Angeles Paralegal Association's Lifetime Achievement Award in October 2008 for her accomplishments and many contributions to the paralegal profession. **One of Carolyn's most impactful accomplishments for California paralegals was her work with the California state legislature in getting Assembly Bill 1083 codified as California Business & Professions Code Section 6450, which defines what a "paralegal" is in California as a person qualified by education, training, or work experience to perform substantive legal work under the supervision of an attorney. This legislation also defines the specific educational and experience requirements for people to be considered a paralegal in California.**

As an advocate for the paralegal profession, Carolyn gave numerous presentations highlighting the vital role paralegals play in the legal community. She demonstrated unwavering dedication through her service in several professional associations. Carolyn served as Region IX Director for the National Association of Legal Assistants ("NALA") from 2006 to 2008 and represented NALA at the 2007 LAPA October Conference.

She was a Board Member of the Orange County Paralegal Association ("OCPA") from 1993 to 1999 and again from 2002 to 2004. From 2000 to 2001, she held the position of President of the California Alliance of Paralegal Associations.



Carolyn was also active with the California State Bar, serving as a Voting Member of the Executive Committee of the Solo & Small Firm Section from 2002 to 2005. She continued her involvement as an Advisor from 2005 to 2007, during which she authored a chapter in the State Bar's publication *Opening a Law Office*.

"I will never forget how Carolyn connected with people, her beautiful laughter, and how she advocated so tirelessly for the paralegal profession," said Bobby Rimas, a former president of LAPA. "When we organized networking dinners for paralegals from across the United States during the NALA Conference in the French Quarter of New Orleans and another NALA Conference in Oklahoma City, I got a genuine firsthand look at her magnetism."

Carolyn also had extensive community involvement serving as an Anaheim City Commissioner from 2002 to 2007 and as a participant in the Susan G. Komen Run for the Fight Against Breast Cancer 2006. She also organized a Christmas Card drive for the troops in Iraq. Carolyn's tireless advocating for paralegals and her philanthropic activities will leave a legacy on the communities she championed. Rest in peace, Carolyn Yellis. 🏠



Cybersecurity & Data Privacy in Federal Practice: What Paralegals Must Understand in 2025

by Justin Kim – LAPA Student Member

In an era where someone could hack a fish tank and steal 10GB worth of data¹ or a bankrupt company can sell off your genetic data² for purposes unknown, cybersecurity and data privacy protection are crucial for preserving everyone's well-being. Coming from personal experience, there's nothing worse than discovering your information was stolen.

Thankfully, there are national data compliance standards ensuring organizations are properly securing sensitive information. Today we'll look at some of the most important rules for managing sensitive information in federal and multi-jurisdictional situations.

HIPAA

Let's start with HIPAA, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, enacted in 1996 to protect patients' privacy and facilitate the transfer of their healthcare data by using Administrative Simplification requirements to standardize how healthcare data is managed³. In other words, your primary care provider shouldn't be asking for your symptoms in the reception room where a nosy Nancy can overhear. The Department of Health & Human Services' Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is the agency responsible for enforcement.

Paralegals whose work deals with this act should see the Privacy, Security, Enforcement, and Omnibus Rules. First, the Privacy and Security Rules must be complied with and explain crucial standards. Second, the Enforcement Rule describes how the act's Administrative Simplification requirements are enforced, so knowing this can help paralegals become aware of any consequences for violating

HIPAA. Third, the Omnibus Rule executes parts of the HITECH Act, which pushed the healthcare industry to modernize in handling patient data. Don't skip out on this rule since it'll inform you about big details such as penalty amounts for violations⁴ and how covered entities should disclose data breaches⁵.

Remember when Anthem, Inc. had that big data breach in 2015 where millions of people had their data stolen⁶? After they reported the breach to the OCR, in 2018 they paid \$16 million, agreed to fulfill a corrective action plan, and reported to the office for the plan's duration. To be a paralegal is to practice diligence, which could have helped prevent the largest HIPAA settlement in history.

CCPA

Next is a recent development in data privacy law. The California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) of 2018⁷ empowered consumers by letting them know the personal information businesses collected from them and choose how that data's handled. You can thank CCPA and its enforcing agencies, the California Privacy Protection Agency (CPPA) and the state Department of Justice's Office of the Attorney General (OAG), for all these website banners letting you opt out of being tracked while using the site.

This act is important for paralegals involved with data privacy and cybersecurity on a multi-jurisdictional level because of its scope. Once California passed CCPA, other states followed suit⁸ with similar legislation. Understanding how CCPA works can only help with compliance in other states. For a great resource, see Attorney General Rob Bonta's opinion⁹ on the act. Pay particular attention to the California Privacy Rights Act of 2020 (CPRA). Also known as Proposition 24, this amendment⁷ strengthened CCPA by giving additional consumer protections such as the right to know if your personal data would be sold.

Here's an infamous example. In 2018 Facebook (now Meta), along with Cambridge Analytica, weaponized users' personal data to impact the 2016 presidential election. The Federal Trade Commission fined Facebook \$5 billion and Cambridge Analytica went bankrupt, two outcomes that aren't ideal for companies also handling user data. Paralegals who work with privacy of information on a national scale

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should remember that the CPPA and OAG aren't the only agencies to avoid running afoul of.

FERPA

A piece of legislation many students have encountered is FERPA, or the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, which secures the privacy of student information at any school funded by the U.S. Department of Education (DoE) and ensures students can access their information when requested. For example, your professor would be in trouble if they sent a warning email for failing students but accidentally revealed the entire send list¹⁰. When these violations occur, offending parties answer to the DoE's Student Privacy Policy Office, formerly the Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO).

If it's that easy to run afoul of FERPA, then how can paralegals help their workplaces or clients comply with it? Fortunately, the SPPO's Privacy Technical Assistance Center's (PTAC) website¹¹ explains maintaining confidentiality for student information, discusses FERPA regulations, and has data privacy training videos and webinars. But if that's not enough, there's also LeRoy Rooker, the national expert on FERPA who directed the FPCO for 21 years. Mr. Rooker currently works at The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) where he answers questions on the FERPA Professor blog¹² and on the AACRAO YouTube channel¹³. What's great is that AACRAO, a "... non-profit, voluntary, professional association..." has additional resources¹⁴ for studying up on FERPA compliance.

Let's see a scenario where an organization was entangled in a violation but cooperated with the DoE. PTAC's Case Study #3: Enforcement¹⁵ describes a situation where a state education agency (SEA) discovered a research organization it worked with violated FERPA by sharing confidential data with an unapproved researcher. The SEA took appropriate measures and quickly alerted FPCO about the incident, which helped prevent things from getting worse. Accidents, or incidents, happen and

paralegals whose organizations face such issues should ensure timely notifications are made to the appropriate authorities.

NIST Protocols

Finally, we'll examine a set of protocols that can help with information technology (IT) needs. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), under the U.S. Department of Commerce, started in 1901 by improving the country's measurement standards¹⁶. Today they offer guidance for all kinds of fields and organizational sizes. NIST protocols are mandatory¹⁷ if your workplace is a federal agency or signed an agreement.

These protocols can be overwhelming but don't fret. There's three starting points¹⁸ to help you: The Cybersecurity (CSF), Privacy (PF), and Risk Management (RMF) Frameworks. While they may share similar goals, CSF and RMF offer different approaches. CSF is a broader introduction to NIST's recommendations, points you towards different resources, and can be applied to any organization while RMF is a more detailed set of activity-based guidelines meant to help organizations with "... the U.S. federal government system authorization process."¹⁹ Unless paralegals' specific use-cases require the latter, they should consult the CSF or PF.

Paralegals who work for federal contractors should note that failing to comply with NIST protocols could result in a lawsuit by the U. S. Department of Justice (DoJ). Earlier this March, they announced that MORSECORP Inc. agreed to make a \$4.6 million settlement payment after whistleblowers revealed that the U.S. Department of Defense contractor "... submitted false or fraudulent claims..."²⁰ involving compliance with NIST Special Publication 800-171. The DoJ's lawsuit was based on the False Claims Act, which is used by the department's Civil Cyber-Fraud Initiative to hold organizations accountable for failing to abide by federal cybersecurity standards²¹. Paralegals would be wise to realize the severe impact a cybersecurity breach could have on national security.

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Conclusion

As we've seen, failing to comply with national cybersecurity and data standards can result in severe penalties. Don't let a lack of knowledge lead to a costly lesson!

¹ Townsend, K. (2017, July 26). *Hacked Smart Fish Tank Exfiltrated Data to "Rare External Destination."* SecurityWeek. <https://www.securityweek.com/hacked-smart-fish-tank-exfiltrated-data-rare-external-destination/>

² Bhanvi Satija, & Siddhi Mahatole. (2025, March 25). Consumers urged to delete 23andMe data as bankruptcy sparks privacy fears. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/new-york-attorney-general-urges-23andme-users-delete-their-data-2025-03-25/>

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2025, March 14). *Summary of the HIPAA privacy rule.* HHS.gov; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/privacy/laws-regulations/index.html>

⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2017). *HITECH act enforcement interim final rule.* US Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/special-topics/hitech-act-enforcement-interim-final-rule/index.html>

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2013, July 26). *Breach Notification Rule.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/breach-notification/index.html>

⁶ Office for Civil Rights (OCR). (2018, October 15). *Anthem pays OCR \$16 Million in record HIPAA settlement.* US Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/compliance-enforcement/agreements/anthem/index.html>

⁷ State of California Department of Justice. (2024, March 13). *California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA).* State of California - Department of Justice - Office of the Attorney General. <https://oag.ca.gov/privacy/ccpa>

⁸ Kibby, C. (2024, July 22). *US State Comprehensive Privacy Law Comparison.* IAPP. <https://iapp.org/resources/article/us-state-privacy-legislation-tracker/>

⁹ Bonta, R., Lee, S. D. (2022, March 10). *Opinion No. 20-303.* State of California - Department of Justice - Office of the Attorney General. <https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/opinions/pdfs/20-303.pdf>

¹⁰ Jotform Editorial Team. *FERPA violation examples from a former FERPA administrator.* The Jotform Blog. <https://www.jotform.com/blog/ferpa-violation-examples/>

¹¹ U.S. Department of Education. (2018). *Protecting student privacy | U.S. department of education.* U.S. Department of Education - Privacy Technical Assistance Center. <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/>

¹² *FERPA Professor Archive.* (2024). AACRAO.org. <https://www.aacrao.org/resources/ferpa/ferpa-professor-archive>

¹³ AACRAO. (n.d.). YouTube. Retrieved July 16, 2025, from <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBSEwjd0SPt38PYnL5a71Q>

¹⁴ *FERPA.* (2024). AACRAO.org. <https://www.aacrao.org/resources/ferpa>

¹⁵ Privacy Technical Assistance Center. (2012, March). *Case Study #3: Enforcement.* U.S. Department of Education - Privacy Technical Assistance Center. https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/CaseStudy3_Enforcement_0.pdf

¹⁶ National Institute of Standards and Technology. (2022, January 11). *About NIST.* NIST. <https://www.nist.gov/about-nist>

¹⁷ National Institute of Standards and Technology. (2016, June 30). *Cybersecurity.* NIST. <https://www.nist.gov/cybersecurity>

¹⁸ National Institute of Standards and Technology. (2016, June 30). *Cybersecurity.* NIST. <https://www.nist.gov/cybersecurity>

¹⁹ Tracy, R. (2024, August). *A Tale of Two Frameworks: The NIST CSF and NIST RMF Are Not the Same - Telos Corporation.* Telos Corporation. <https://www.telos.com/blog/2024/08/01/a-tale-of-two-frameworks-the-nist-csf-and-nist-rmf-are-not-the-same/>

²⁰ *Defense Contractor MORSECORP Inc. Agrees to Pay \$4.6 Million to Settle Cybersecurity Fraud Allegations.* (2025, March 26). Justice.gov. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/defense-contractor-morsecorp-inc-agrees-pay-46-million-settle-cybersecurity-fraud>

²¹ *Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco Announces New Civil Cyber-Fraud Initiative.* (2021, October 6). Justice.gov. <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/deputy-attorney-general-lisa-o-monaco-announces-new-civil-cyber-fraud-initiative>

Justin Kim is a Paralegal Student currently attending Mt. San Antonio College's Paralegal/Legal Assistant program. He anticipates graduating with an Associate Degree in June 2026. With his technology background and current education track, he hopes to leverage his skillset in Intellectual Property law as well as legal technology. 🖨️



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The Gender Pay Gap Just Gave Me Whiplash – Turns Out Inequality Moves Fast

Women Paralegals Earn 14% Less Than Men. And You Thought the Legal Field Was All About Justice.

by Chere B. Estrin – CEO Estrin Legal Staffing

I was lightly skipping (OK, doom-scrolling) through some industry articles the other day, looking for a couple of solid stats for my blog: **The Estrin Report**. You know, the usual “safe and boring” data I like to sprinkle in to show that, yes, I do my homework:

- *Paralegal field projected to grow 1%*
- *82% of paralegals are female*
- *Top-paying cities are still the usual suspects: San Francisco, D.C., New York, Los Angeles, yada yada*

And then it hit me. **Hard.**

Not the data. The **disconnect**.

My throat closed, my stomach turned, and all the other clichés your favorite legal drama would trot out in a dramatic courtroom close.

Here it is, straight from a NALA 2024 Compensation Trends report:

“In 2024, male paralegals earned approximately 14% more than their female counterparts.”

“White paralegals earned 4% more than BIPOC paralegals.”

Excuse me, what???

Fourteen percent?

Let’s just sit with that for a moment.

Ten years ago, that number was 3%. Still unfair, still irritating but manageable in that “we’re-working-on-it” kind of way. Now? It’s practically a slap in the face with a leather-bound billable hour log.

This is **2025**, not **1925**.

We are not typing on Selectrics and delivering redwelds by courier. We are in an era of AI, DEI, ESG, VPNs, Zoom fatigue, and “Let’s circle back” being an actual thing people say. **And we still can’t pay paralegals equally? In the legal field??** The very industry that’s supposed to stand for *justice*?

Here’s What This Really Means:

- Women (who make up the overwhelming majority of the paralegal workforce) are getting the short end of the paycheck - again.
- BIPOC professionals are once again being told, in dollars and cents, that they’re not “equal enough.”
- And the profession, which already fights tooth and nail for recognition, just took a giant step backward.

But wait. There’s more. And it’s not pretty.

In my 25+ years in legal staffing, I’ve seen it all. I wish I could say this next part wasn’t true. But here we are. So, let’s call it out:

Overweight white women are generally rejected as candidates.

Overweight Black women? Often accepted.

Let me be clear: this is not an indictment of one group over another. It’s a glaring example of **unconscious bias**, body discrimination, and race-based stereotypes colliding into one toxic hiring pattern.

Why include this here? Because **equity is not just about gender or race or salary**. It’s about *all* of it. And pretending this subtle but very real—bias doesn’t exist only allows it to thrive behind closed doors and silent HR decisions.

The Consequences?

Let’s start with the obvious:

- **Retention tanks.**
- **Morale plummets.**
- **Top talent leaves the field.**
- And law firms are left wondering why they can’t find “qualified, committed” professionals.

Here’s a tip: *Qualified and committed professionals know when they’re being undervalued—or judged before they walk in the door.* *continued on page 11*



Celebrating 50 Years of NALA

by Don Adove

I had the opportunity to attend the annual NALA Conference & Expo held in Atlantic City, New Jersey, last month. It was a three-day event full of learning and networking for paralegals, legal assistants, and legal administrative professionals from all over the country. Even more exciting was that NALA was celebrating its 50th founding anniversary—five decades of service to the legal community. The conference was attended by more than 500 legal practitioners and vendors.

The first day of the conference kicked off with an opening session marking this milestone. NALA

honored its past, celebrated the present, and looked ahead to an exciting future. Each decade was highlighted through a presentation on the evolution of legal practice and the paralegal profession. Lucky attendees even got to play a game of Jeopardy during the session and win exciting prizes.

This was followed by the annual membership meeting and awards ceremony—an engaging event commemorating 50 years of support for paralegals. The meeting included the announcement of the 2025–2026 NALA election and the recognition of outstanding individuals with prestigious NALA awards. During this session, I had the utmost honor of representing LAPA and accepting the 2025 Affiliated Association Pinnacle Award on behalf of our Newsletter Committee. It was an emotional moment—a testament to our hardworking members' dedication to producing a top-tier newsletter.

continued on page 12

THE INSIDE BIZ I - cont. from page 11

So, What Can Be Done?

1. Start talking about it. Loudly. Publicly.

If firms can post about diversity during Pride Month, they can address wage equity every month.

2. Demand salary transparency.

No more cloak-and-dagger compensation. If firms can outline billable hour requirements down to the decimal, they can spell out pay ranges for support staff.

3. Conduct internal audits.

Seriously, it's not hard. HR has the data. Review it, compare it, fix it.

4. Confront appearance-based bias.

Train hiring managers. Call it out in interviews. Understand that professionalism is not a dress size.

5. Negotiate like your future depends on it. Because it does.

Women and BIPOC professionals: ask the questions. Push for parity. Get the receipts.

6. If you're in leadership—do better.

It's not a "nice to have." It's a legal and moral imperative.

I'm not writing this to stir the pot. The pot is already boiling over.

I'm writing this because **enough is enough**.

This isn't about charity or handouts. It's about **value**, **fairness**, and **respect** for a profession that has long been the backbone of the legal world—**without the glory or the paycheck** to match.

Let's fix this.

Now. Not in another ten years.

Because if you're not part of the solution, you're just another line item keeping the gap open.

Chere Estrin serves as the CEO of Estrin Legal Staffing, a prominent national staffing organization. She is President and co-founding member of the Organization of Legal Professionals (OLP), a legal technology training organization. Chere has held executive positions within AmLaw firms, litigation support companies, and as Senior Vice President of the legal staffing division within a \$5 billion publicly held corporation. She is a LAPA Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient.

She is acknowledged as One of the Top 50 Women Leaders in Los Angeles and the recipient of the Los Angeles/Century City Chamber of Commerce "Women of Achievement" award. She has authored eleven books and hundreds of articles centered around legal careers. Her latest book, "Power Plays for Legal Professionals: Strategies to Advance Your Career", will be out Fall 2025. She has another book coming out from the ABA in 2026 on Managing Legal Professionals in Small to Mid-Size Firms in 2026.

Chere's expertise has been sought after by The Wall Street Journal, Fortune Magazine, CBS News, Legal Management, ALM, Forbes.com, Law360, LA Times, Newsweek, and numerous other media. She has an award-winning blog, The Estrin Report and is a noted speaker at many seminars, conferences and webinars. 

Burnout Prevention for Paralegals

by Travis Chow – LAPA President

On June 12, 2025, LAPA was honored to host the talented Valerie Hwang Beck for an insightful session addressing burnout in the legal profession. She explored its root causes, key warning signs, and long-term strategies for achieving sustainable wellness.

During the fast-paced one-hour session, it became clear that burnout isn't a fleeting condition — it's a chronic state that can significantly undermine job performance, career longevity, and overall well-being. Paralegals know this all too well, facing challenges such as long billable hours, high expectations, emotional strain, repetitive administrative tasks, and the constant struggle to balance work with personal life.

Valerie walked us through the major warning signs of burnout: unrelenting fatigue that doesn't improve

with rest, a loss of motivation leading to emotional detachment, poor decision-making, frequent illness or chronic tension, and a general dissatisfaction that spills over into one's personal life.

One of the most important takeaways? Burnout isn't something a vacation can fix. You can't simply "push through" it — doing so only worsens the problem. And perhaps most critically: it's not your fault. Coping mechanisms like caffeine, emotional eating, procrastination, or doom-scrolling offer no real relief and often make things worse.

So, what can paralegals do? Start by setting boundaries, take breaks and delegate when possible. Prioritize proper nutrition and allow time to unwind at the end of the day. Be selective about commitments and invest in support systems, both personal and professional. Seek out people who can hold you accountable while offering compassion and help. Ultimately, small but consistent changes in boundaries, self-care, and workload management are the keys to building lasting resilience. 🏠

NALA CONFERENCE RECAP - cont. from page 11

The day ended on a high note with the Affiliated Association Showcase and Reception. All local associations affiliated with NALA were given a chance to shine. This networking event allowed each affiliate to showcase and promote their organization to attendees from across the country. I was proud to represent not only myself but also LAPA. I had a fantastic time chatting with attendees, exchanging contacts, and sharing ideas on how we can improve our organizations. We stepped up our game by giving away useful swag and raffling off Labubu dolls.

The second day focused heavily on CLE sessions. However, one session offered a welcome break when the newly elected board members and officers were introduced and took an oath, formally accepting their positions and affirming their dedication to NALA.

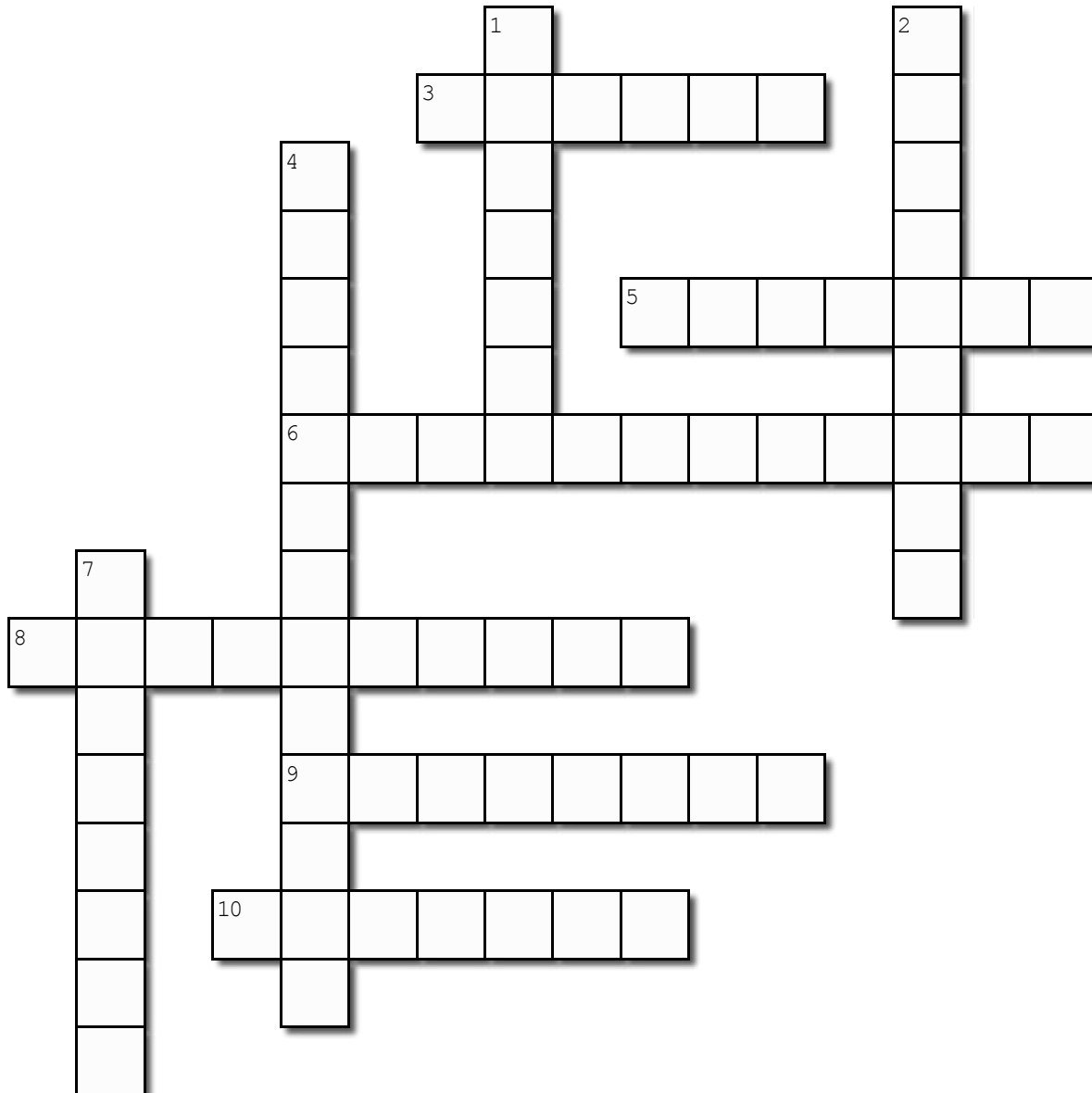
The day concluded with a gala dinner in celebration of NALA's 50th birthday—a memorable evening honoring five decades of history and looking toward the future.

As a new (official!) member and first-time conference attendee, I had a truly wonderful experience at the NALA Conference & Expo. Would I recommend attending to anyone on the fence? My answer is a resounding yes! I'll definitely see you next year in Denver, Colorado.

Don Adove is a Paralegal at Kennedys CMK LLP, Los Angeles office and is the Secretary of LAPA. He is the recipient of the 2025 NALA Rising Star Award, in recognition for his personal commitment, high ethical standard, hard work, dedication and service to the legal community. He graduated in 2021 earning his Certificate in Paralegal Studies from UCLA Extension. A recipient of Relativity Fest Scholarship in 2024 and earned his RelativityOne Review Pro certification as recent addition to his achievement. 🏠

August Crossword Puzzle

Complete the crossword puzzle below and learn some interesting facts about the August month!



ACROSS:

3. In the southern hemisphere, August is the last of the _____ months.
5. This ancient Roman city was destroyed in August when Mount Vesuvius erupted.
6. This famous Scottish actor was born in August.
8. There are 300 different varieties of this fruit that is popular in the summer.
9. The full moon of August is called the _____ Moon, named after the primitive fish species.
10. August birthstone that is a lesser-known gem.

DOWN:

1. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his well-known "I have a dream" address on the steps of the _____ Monument in Washington, D.C.
2. In a standard year, August is the only month that begins on a _____ day of the week than any other month.
4. This Rock music legend left the world behind in August.
7. On August 6, 1762, the first-ever _____ was created in the middle of a gambling game.

ANSWER KEY FOUND ON PAGE 24



Breaking the Stigma: Prioritizing Well-Being in the Legal Industry

by Kelli L. Radnothy – KLR Paralegal

Establishing and maintaining a well-being practice is a heavy task for most professionals, but the legal industry presents some unique challenges. With the general high-stress nature of the job, the long hours, high stakes, impossible deadlines, emotional clients, and never-ending to-do lists, things become overwhelming quickly. Factoring in time for oneself on any given day, much less on a regular basis, seems impossible.

Over the course of the pandemic, we witnessed a rise in awareness of mental health and well-being in the workplace. After all, many of us were working in our homes, so there was a major boundary break between personal and professional space, catapulting many of us into a work-life cycle that quickly drained us of energy and mental capacity. The combination of isolation and high-stress projects quickly incubated feelings of despair and was a fast track to burnout for many of us.

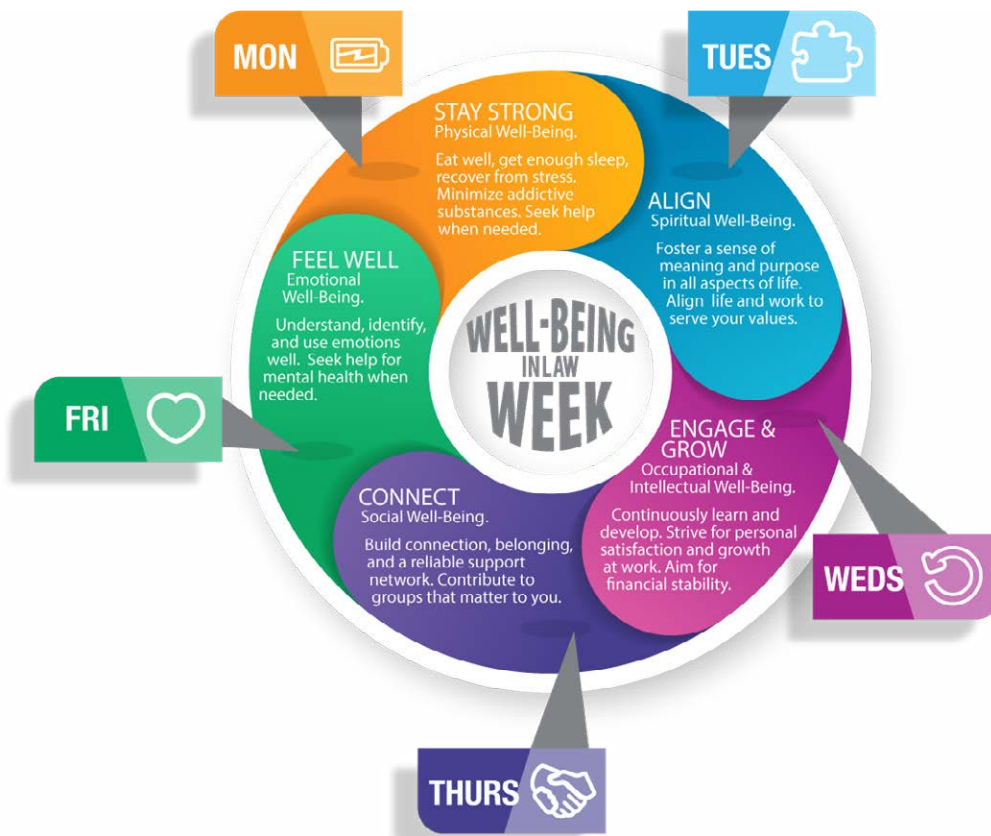
One great outcome of the pandemic is that we're seeing employers focus efforts on mental health resources and integrated workforce support. Both retention and recruitment considerations look quite different post-pandemic. Employers need to provide incentives for quality candidates to stay and must also offer attractive benefits for future quality candidates. We know the legal industry is here to stay. We also know the future of the legal industry looks vastly different from the legal industry of the past.

Fortunately, there are organizations creating impact in establishing sustainable well-being practices within the legal industry. These organizations are providing guidance for legal professionals in creating a more whole and intentional workplace. The Institute for Well-Being in Law is one of these organizations, formed in December 2020 to carry on the work of the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being. One of their campaigns aligns with the first week of May, which is Mental Health Awareness month, and is coined "Well-Being Week in Law." I encourage you to peruse their [website](#) and dive into the wealth of [resources](#) they provide.

The fact this organization shifted to be inclusive of all legal professionals gets huge kudos from me. Acknowledging the value of all legal team members and equally celebrating the contributions made by all, attorney or not, enhances diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. These initiatives feed a healthy and whole workplace, enhancing the potential for well-being of all involved. Let's continue shifting the mindset to see well-being as a core component of professional development and, ultimately, success. We must acknowledge that mental health is a pillar of wellness and, without intentional focus and commitment, mental health will continue to be overlooked.

In light of the guidance from the Institute for Well-Being in Law for the Well-Being Week in Law, I thought it would be fun to use their framework. They have provided numerous practical approaches to integrating well-being into our busy lives, as well as a variety of accessible resources for organizations and individuals. For Well-Being Week in Law, they've broken down components into five different categories or themes, then aligned them each with a day of the week. Identify which theme(s) most resonate(s) for you in this season, and then align it with a day(s) of the week. This will help establish a routine to prioritize your whole well-being.

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Stay Strong – Physical Well-Being

Our physical health is often the first factor we think of when considering our own well-being. Ironically, it's also the one factor we tend to ignore when things don't seem right. It's important to have a baseline to work from, mainly to know when to seek help, but also to know what feels good for our body. Ways to support our physical well-being may include:

- Fueling the body and mind with nutritionally dense, whole foods
- Engaging in regular activity and functional movements
- Getting adequate amounts of sleep, rest, and recovery
- Becoming aware of and listening to our body
- Seeking professional care when necessary

Align – Spiritual Well-Being

Spiritual well-being often gets a bad rap. I think it's the word spiritual. It's as if spirit is a scary word or terrifying thought. Let's flip the script here and instead appreciate spirit for equating to purpose. When we know our purpose or have purposeful intention, action is natural. I think of it as flexing and

contracting my spirit muscle. When I'm fully in the zone, fully feeling my purpose to the core, my inner spirit is beaming with joy and gratitude. Participating in activities, both professionally and personally, that align with our interests and values helps bring meaning and purpose to life. Setting goals, assessing, re-assessing, and achieving goals all feed this spirit within. Don't be afraid to tend to the spirit. You may be surprised by the outcome! Ways to support our spiritual well-being may include:

- Meditation or journaling
- Time in nature or outdoors
- Practicing gratitude and reframing negative or critical internal dialogue
- Exploring a new activity

“

Don't ask what the world needs.
Ask what makes you come alive, and
go do it because what the world needs
is people who have come alive.

– Howard Thurman

Engage & Grow – Occupational & Intellectual Well-Being

We've all heard the phrase before, "Never stop learning." It is the truth, especially in the legal industry. In order to grow, we must seek knowledge and understanding. We must feel empowered to move out of the fixed mindset and into the growth mindset! Find activities that drive curiosity, provide satisfaction, create intellectual challenges, and foster creativity and intellect. Knowing ways to stimulate our intellect will create longevity in critical thinking and knowledge retention. Ways to support

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our intellectual well-being may include:

- Ask questions to generate interest and spark curiosity.
- Find a mentor or sponsor to help propel you along the path.
- Engage in creative and/or intellectually-stimulating activities.
- Identify your core values, ideal work setting, strengths, and weaknesses.
- Enhance strengths.
- Improve areas needing attention.

Connect – Social Well-Being

Connection is a basic human need that is both independent of and dependent on others for success. We look to connect with our community, to be needed within the group(s) we are in, but we also need to connect with other humans on an individual level. Research is showing that loneliness correlates with other mental health concerns, highlighting how integral friendships are to our well-being. Having a strong support network has been shown to improve not only mental health but also physical health! The mind to body connection is real and cannot be denied, friends.

It's important to cultivate strong connections inside and outside of work, no matter your experience level or age. Ways to improve connections and overall social well-being may include:

- Practice active listening.
- Get involved in your community.
- Engage in an activity you enjoy, AND engage with others participating in the activity.
- Make time regularly to listen to those who matter to you.
- Reach out and connect with friends when they come to mind. It's always nice to receive a hello from a good friend!

Feel Well – Emotional Well-Being

Garnering emotional intelligence is a lifelong practice. Learning to acknowledge and identify emotions, applying tools to process and manage emotions, and developing skills to express emotion in a healthy manner is work for all of us. No one is exempt from pain and suffering in the human experience, so practicing empathy and compassion, not only for others but for oneself, is essential to emotional well-being. Tapping into how we feel to make informed decisions ignites the mind to body connection, often making things you may have thought impossible possible. A few ways to support our emotional well-being may include:

- Seeking counseling or therapy
- Open communication with others about mental health to build trust, break stigma, and increase access to mental health resources
- Practice positive self-talk. Would you talk to your closest friend this way? No. Then why talk to yourself in this manner?
- Incorporate activities that bring you joy. Sometimes this is simply putting a smile on someone's face.

We must break the stigma around mental health, especially in high-pressure working environments. Acknowledging that mental health is a pillar of well-being will allow for more focus on the wellness of the whole person. Our well-being is not a luxury! Well-being must be made a critical priority to support the whole being each and every one of us uniquely represents.

Kelli Radnothy is a litigation paralegal with over 20 years of experience in the legal industry. She runs her own holistic legal solutions company, consulting with and coaching other legal professionals to enhance the delivery of legal services. Kelli is a Legal Researcher for the Nevada Attorney General's Office and a course developer/instructor for the University of Washington's Paralegal Program. Kelli serves as 2nd Vice President for the Sierra Nevada Association of Paralegals (SNAP) and Treasurer for the Paralegal Division of the State Bar of Nevada. She is passionate about advancing the profession and empowering others to impact their communities. Email: kelli@klrparalegal.com

From: <https://nala.org/well-being-legal-industry/>

Reprinted with permission of Kelli Radnothy and NALA – The Paralegal Association. This article was originally published in the May 2023 issue of FACTS & FINDINGS, NALA's quarterly journal. For inquiries, please contact NALA at 6450 S. Lewis Avenue, Suite 250, Tulsa, OK 74136, or email nalanet@nala.org. 

Meet October Conference Speaker Tracey Perkins: Guiding Paralegals Toward Ethical, Tech-Savvy Leadership



by Kevin Cazares, CP –
LAPA Newsletter Committee

Q: What are the titles of your October Conference presentations?

A: My first presentation is titled *The Ethical Edge: Staying Ethical in the Age of AI, Remote Work and Legal Tech*. My objective is to examine real-world scenarios and emerging risks in today's legal landscape—from confidentiality concerns in remote work settings to AI usage and the unauthorized practice of law. I aim to equip paralegals with practical strategies to maintain ethical integrity under pressure.

Q: Can you give our readers a preview of both presentations?

A: Absolutely. In the morning session, I'll cover résumé writing, interview skills, and the robust legal market for paralegals in California. I'll offer insights, tips, and actionable items for building your career strategy. In the afternoon, I'll focus on ethics—specifically, how to remain ethically sound amid AI, remote work, and the complexities of UPL (unauthorized practice of law). I'll use real case scenarios to help participants think like leaders. This ties into a new series I'm launching: *From Paralegal to Paraleader*, which is about helping paralegals become tech-savvy ethical guardians for their teams and firms.

CAREER PATH & INSPIRATION

Q: What inspired you to become a recruiter?

A: Great question. I was a paralegal looking for the next step in my career. I wanted more responsibility and was considering a supervisory or managerial role.

During a conversation with a recruiter from Round Hill Search, she noticed that I had experience training others and assisting in hiring decisions. I was also pursuing my MBA. She asked if I had ever considered becoming a recruiter myself. That question stuck with me. I realized I had always enjoyed working with recruiters and felt I could thrive in that role. So, I decided to give it a try.

Q: Any regrets?

A: None. I truly love what I do. I enjoy helping attorneys, paralegals, and staff with their career strategies. I believe I bring a unique perspective to recruitment because I've been in their shoes. I know what it takes to succeed in the role and in interviews. No regrets whatsoever.

Q: Was there a defining moment that pushed you in this direction?

A: It was less a single moment and more a realization that I wanted to do more in the legal profession. I loved being a paralegal, but I was also fascinated by law firm operations. I wanted to use my experience in a different way—to help others succeed.

DAILY WORK & TEAM DYNAMICS

Q: Can you describe a typical workday? What are your most common tasks, and how do you manage your time?

A: My days are full of meetings and outreach—to both candidates and clients. I'm constantly working to build relationships and find top-tier talent in California for different law firms and legal department clients. That involves Zoom calls, phone conversations, emails—whatever it takes to connect with people. Once I've connected, I learn what they're looking for, strategize with them, and aim to make a strong placement.

Q: What's the first thing you do when you arrive at the office?

A: I check my emails, most of which also come to my phone—so I'm usually up to speed by the time I arrive. At 9:00 AM, my team and I have a standing meeting to review open positions and our activity. It helps us plan and strategize for the day ahead.

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Q: *Can you tell me about your team?*

A: My team includes other recruiting managers as well as a group of recruiting associates that I directly manage. In total, we're about fifteen people, including assistants, marketing staff, and of course our founder and president, Erica. There's a larger group behind the scenes that people don't always see.

IMPACTFUL RECRUITING STORIES

Q: *Can you share a memorable placement experience?*

A: One that stands out is a paralegal I previously worked with. She had moved on to an Am Law 100 firm. Meanwhile, I had a client—also an Am Law 100 firm—with a paralegal role that had been open for nearly two years. I knew she was a bit of a long shot due to her limited trial experience and a background mostly in boutique firms, but I also knew her work ethic and potential. I convinced the client to give her a chance. After a long interview process and some persistence on my part, she was hired—at a higher salary than I submitted her for. It was rewarding to help a former colleague, especially as a diverse candidate, land a top position.

UNDERSTANDING AM LAW FIRMS

Q: *What does Am Law 100 mean?*

A: American Lawyer publishes a list every year ranking the top 100 and top 200 law firms in the world, primarily based on gross profits—essentially, how much money the law firm makes. Typically, firms like Latham & Watkins, Covington & Burling, and Sidley Austin are on the Am Law 100 list, as they generate substantial revenue.

Then there are firms that are nationally recognized but may not make quite as much profit, such as Carlton Fields or Musick, Peeler & Garrett, which might have multiple locations but are more regionally based. These firms generally fall on the Am Law 200 list.

The list helps indicate the scale and profitability of law firms and is widely regarded in the legal industry.

COMPENSATION & MARKET INSIGHTS

Q: *How much can a paralegal expect to make?*

A: Compensation depends on many factors—experience level, type of practice (plaintiff or

defense), firm size, and whether it's an Am Law firm or a boutique. Typically, entry-level or junior paralegals (up to four years of experience) earn between \$60K–\$75K. Mid-level (five years and up) can earn \$75K–\$90K. Senior paralegals approaching ten years often start at \$100K, with potential to earn more. I placed a real estate paralegal at an Am Law 200 firm for \$160K.

Q: *Does geography matter?*

A: Absolutely. Salaries are typically higher in San Francisco, followed by Los Angeles, then Orange County and San Diego. California generally offers some of the highest paralegal salaries due to cost of living. Markets like DC, New York, and Chicago also offer strong compensation. But in areas like Alabama or Atlanta, even a tenth-year paralegal may not earn close to \$100K.

NICHE ROLES & TRANSFERABLE EXPERIENCE

Q: *Are niche roles like real estate or IP paralegals in especially high demand?*

A: Yes. Real estate, IP, and corporate paralegals—especially those with experience in emerging companies and venture capital—are in high demand. There aren't many with deep expertise in those areas, so they can essentially write their own ticket.

Q: *Can a background as a real estate agent help someone transition to a real estate paralegal role?*

A: Possibly, depending on the area. Real estate paralegals can specialize in either transactional work or litigation. A former real estate agent may bring transferable skills to a transactional role—especially involving title and survey work. For litigation, foundational experience in legal processes is still necessary.

Q: *How important is mergers and acquisitions (M&A) experience?*

A: For corporate paralegals, M&A experience is critical. But if you're a litigation paralegal, M&A experience won't necessarily help. The challenge is that it's hard to enter corporate work without prior corporate experience. That's why I encourage candidates to be strategic early in their careers.

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ETHICS & LEADERSHIP

Q: *Should paralegals speak up about ethical concerns?*

A: That's exactly what *Paralegal to Paraleader* is about—stepping up when others remain quiet. I teach how to apply tools like SWOT analysis or situational leadership so paralegals can advocate effectively without being confrontational. Ultimately, your firm's integrity and your attorney's license may be at stake. Paralegals must be the ethical guardrails.

SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

Q: *What skills are essential for paralegals today?*

A: Soft skills are more critical than ever—effective communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, adaptability, and leadership. Of course, technical skills like document production remain important. But without work ethic or critical thinking, those skills lose value. Successful paralegals need to combine both hard and soft skills.

Q: *What are examples of technical and soft skills when it comes to AI?*

A: A soft skill in the AI context is knowing how to think critically about the results AI gives you. AI should serve you, not replace you. For example, when using ChatGPT, you must be strategic with prompts. That's where soft skills like judgment and communication come in. Technically, knowing how to operate tools like Relativity—which has AI-driven document review—can boost efficiency. But ethics must

remain central. You can't upload sensitive materials to public platforms. Many legal professionals are facing sanctions for that exact reason. A vigilant paralegal could prevent those mistakes.

Q: *So, in some ways, we've been using AI for years?*

A: Exactly. Many legal tools already had AI components—we just didn't call them that. The difference now is in how AI is integrated and how much autonomy it's given. That's why I emphasize: you manage the AI; don't let the AI manage you.

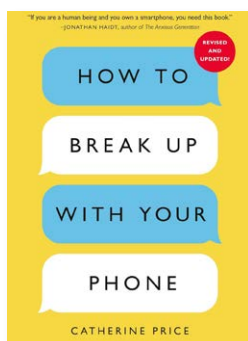
Tracey Perkins is a Recruiting Manager with Round Hill Search, a minority/female-owned legal search firm based in Los Angeles. With 20 years in the legal industry, Tracey transitioned to the realm of legal recruiting from the role of litigation paralegal with firms such as Steptoe & Johnson, Freeman Mathis & Gary, and Carlton Fields. Drawing on her extensive legal background and passion for helping others, Tracey joined Round Hill Search, where she collaborates with law firms and legal departments in California, focusing on client and candidate alignment for successful placements. At Round Hill Search, our commitment to DEI is reflected in our recruiting practices. As we proudly celebrate our 10th anniversary, we also celebrate our track record with DEI. Year over year, approximately 50% of our placements have been diverse, which we can attribute to our intentional efforts to ensure inclusivity. tracey@roundhillsearch.com.

Kevin Cazares graduated with a Certificate in Paralegal Studies from the UCLA Extension Paralegal Training Program, class of 2024. Kevin is a member of LAPA, the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) and became a Certified Paralegal through NALA in 2024. He is a Court Appointment Special Advocate (CASA) in Los Angeles County, and holds a certificate in E-Discovery from the National Society for Legal Technology (NST). He recently secured his first Paralegal position at Abramson Labor Group (ALG), a plaintiff's law firm in Burbank, California, specializing in employment law. 

LAPA READING CORNER

A recurring column that reviews books focusing on voices and subjects that reflect the diversity of the human experience

by Deena Bowman



How to Break Up with Your Phone (revised edition) by Catherine Price

Do you find yourself endlessly doom-scrolling away on your phone for hours on end, when you only meant to pick it up for a moment “just to check?” Author Catherine Price’s *“How to Break Up With Your Phone”* presents a hands-on 30-day digital detox guide to breaking

up — and then making up — with your smartphone, tablet, or other digital devices. The goal is to achieve better mental health, improve screen-life balance, and foster a long-term relationship with technology that feels beneficial. The revised edition provides new expert advice and research on the science of addiction, with expanded chapters explaining how social media and algorithms are designed to addict us, while impairing our abilities to focus, think deeply, and form new memories. Additionally, Price updated a section on the unique dangers that social media poses to children, along with new tips on how to protect them. 

2025, 227 Pages, Ten Speed Press, \$15.00, paperback. Also available for checkout from the Los Angeles Public Library in Book & eBook.



Second Career, First Class Skills: Advice for Midlife Career Changes in the Legal Field

by Brianna Vigil

Since my pivot from an unsustainable career in the entertainment industry, I've evolved into a legal professional. Although I felt like a fish-out-of-water in my earliest days, over time, I figured out how to create my own sense of belonging in this field. I gradually built up the confidence to know that while this path was not my first choice, it is exactly where I'm meant to be. I've learned so much along the way, and I hope that you can benefit from my advice.

1. KNOW YOURSELF

An understanding of my personality and what my values are is something that I gained with experience in this industry. Sometimes it takes seeing what you don't want to recognize what you do want. In my case, I came to terms with how much my integrity means to me. Reflecting upon the mistakes I made years ago always leads me back to the thought, "I wish I had been truer to myself."

To illustrate, my optimistic expectations of office life mirrored the optimism I possessed as an actress. I went into both worlds with high hopes, envisioning them as these vast landscapes of opportunity, only for my dreams to be thwarted by politics, social games, and at times, a loss of focus. At least, when I was acting, I could indulge in creativity and express my emotions in a way that was appreciated. Even with the pressure to fit an image conceived by agents and casting directors, I did not feel so punished for standing out. I was allowed to be different. However, in the corporate environment, I had to adapt to a more polished, refined version of myself. I had to consider what parts of myself I was going to have to relinquish to be successful.

When I first entered a corporate environment, I thought it would be the highest point of my developing career. It was not like any place I was used to, and I wasn't fully prepared to navigate it. What I thought

would be the highest point of my career was, in reality, a series of battles and psychological warfare. There came a point where I had to say enough. Like I had at other points in my career and my life, I had to decide that I was worth putting myself first. I will only change myself as I see fit, not for anyone else, no matter who they are. I was an actress, I've been rejected many times before, and I learned to not take it personally. Now I'm on this new path, and I'm a different person - and this is who I was always meant to become. I am a version of myself that is unwilling to sell my soul. If I am to keep moving forward, I have to take myself more seriously, and that means adhering to my values no matter what is thrown at me.

What I consider success in this industry doesn't require losing yourself, in fact, you must know who you are and when to walk away.

2. NETWORK

I believe networking is an art form. Art is personal and unique to an individual. This means I approach it in my own way, in the way that feels most true to me. Consequently, my desire to succeed grew alongside a sincere curiosity and interest in others. I will always recommend forming genuine relationships. If you can believe it, this is contradictory to some advice I've been given. While I have witnessed transactional relationships working for others, personally, I can't bear it.

I've learned from previous experiences in the entertainment industry that shallow, transactional relationships don't last. They can do more harm than good, but at the time, I just wanted to be like the other women in my circle that I admired. I grew up a very shy girl, but I knew that if I wanted to make it, I would have to learn to socialize. I'd beat myself up over my shyness and I strongly disliked myself for it, so I would compensate by transforming into who I needed to be to be accepted. It never felt right, but I thought this was a part of fitting in. I did mental gymnastics trying to rationalize my insincerity. I felt shame and embarrassment when others could see through me, but this pushed me into becoming a more honest version of myself. My newfound authenticity helped me lose my shyness and gain confidence even more than being a performer did. Unfortunately, this means many doors have been closed for me. I've lost

continued on page 21

Clear, Calm, & Supportive: Communication Tools with Krishna Desai

by Don Adove

Krishna Desai is a plaintiff-side employment law attorney who also advises workplaces seeking to foster healthy, diverse, and supportive environments—whether through mediation or skill-building. Based in Oakland, California, Mr. Desai delivered a virtual MCLE presentation to LAPA members and non-members on July 17th. His presentation was entitled *Moving from Defensive to Supportive Communication*.

Communication is defined as the process of expressing or conveying our thoughts, ideas, or emotions. As simple as that may sound, many of us find it difficult. There is more than one way to communicate, as demonstrated by Krishna Desai, Esq., in his highly interactive presentation on verbal communication in the workplace.

The discussion focused on how we can communicate more effectively—without fear of expressing our thoughts or emotions, and without becoming defensive. More importantly, Mr. Desai offered strategies for how we can respond supportively, even in moments of disagreement, and avoid escalating into conflict. Listening and understanding with empathy can lead to more positive responses, reducing the chances of defensiveness or retaliation.

Personally, I often find myself challenged when trying to communicate clearly, sometimes fearing I'll be misunderstood—among other concerns that can affect how I express myself. Clear and effective communication takes time to develop; it requires courage and consistent practice. Word choice and tone—tailored to the audience and situation—also play a key role in achieving clarity.

In our profession, where clear, concise, and accurate communication is essential, and even in our daily lives, this MCLE topic offered useful insights and practical tools to help us improve our communication skills. Be sure to watch for future announcements—the next topic may be one that speaks directly to you. 🏢

HELPFUL HINTS - cont. from page 20

opportunities and bridges have been burned. Yet, it is the easiest thing in the world for me to seek only relationships that align with my values, now that I have the maturity to know what my values are.

I've accepted that I can't be liked by everyone, and the *right people* and the right opportunities for me exist, and they are perfect for someone like me. I think that if more people took this approach, they may not have as many options, but the ones they do have are the best fit.

3. ASSESS SKILLS

I used to think I came into this industry with no skills that could help me with my new career. I even tried to keep my previous career a secret, but this was a huge disservice to myself. The truth is, my unique path to this profession gave me an edge. I came into this industry resilient, personable, and eager to learn. I learn quickly, but I knew I needed more knowledge and experience to truly compete in this field.

When I was in a competitive environment, it frustrated me that there was so little I understood, and I didn't like feeling vulnerable in that way. I wanted to know

as much as possible, and I learned that gaining experience on the job was going to be harder and take longer than I had hoped. After some professional setbacks, I eventually went back to school to earn my Certificate in Paralegal Studies at UCLA Extension. I recommend to anyone that wants to be a paralegal to please look into furthering your education as soon as possible. My only regret is not enrolling in school earlier.

I also recommend researching the market and see what is expected out of the role and to evaluate whether you have transferable skills. In my case, it shocked me to see how much I had to learn, and I am still learning and gaining experience so I can one day call myself a seasoned paralegal.

I encourage anyone considering a career change to really look at themselves and what they bring to the table, both in terms of experience and personality. I think anyone would feel a surge in motivation upon recognizing there are qualities of themselves that are extremely valuable to employers across industries.

Brianna is a paralegal living and working in downtown Los Angeles. She received her paralegal certificate from UCLA Extension in 2025. She is also a notary public since 2023. 🏢



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NALA THE PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION CERTIFICATION NEWS



CAREER CORNER

Leveraging Your Credential: Join a Paralegal Association

Since earning your CP® credential was a tremendous accomplishment, have you been utilizing it to its full potential? If you are wondering how, you are in the right place! One key to your success is getting involved with your local paralegal associations.

Advocate and Advance - Your CP® credential qualifies you to advocate for and advance the paralegal profession. Join associations to contribute to your field's growth and longevity.

Active Participation - Attend association events and conferences for networking and staying informed about industry trends.

Support and Volunteer - Volunteer your time and expertise to bolster association initiatives, fostering a strong and supportive paralegal community.

Leadership Opportunities - With your CP® credential, consider leadership roles within associations to influence positive change.

Continue Learning - Utilize association resources for ongoing professional development, ensuring you stay ahead in the field.

Network for Success - Build professional connections by engaging with paralegals and other legal practitioners, opening doors for collaboration and career growth.



Your association involvement benefits your career and contributes to the collective success of your profession. Explore opportunities and actively contribute to your community's growth.

Search for a local or state NALA Affiliated Association [here](#).

For guidance on getting started, feel free to reach out to cle@nala.org.

NALA has gone green! As of April 22, 2025, NALA no longer automatically mails certificates for recertification. This eco-friendly initiative reflects our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint. If you would still like to receive a printed certificate when you recertify, you may request one on our [website](#).

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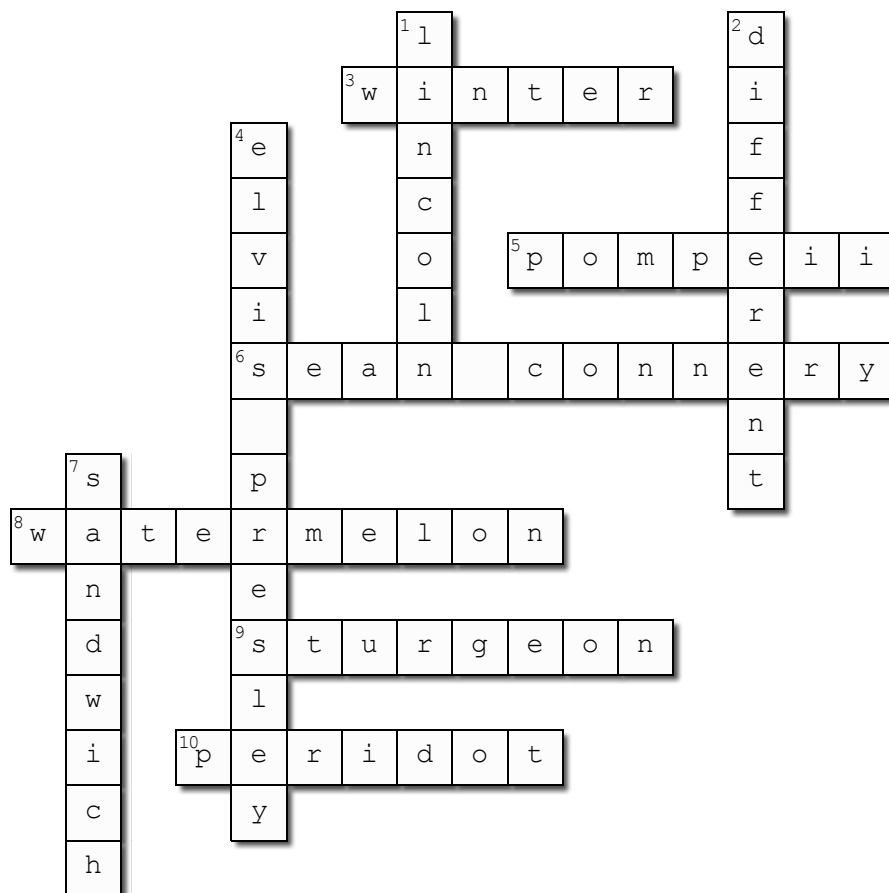


www.lapa.org



ASSOCIATION
CAREER NETWORK

LAPA'S CROSSWORD PUZZLE - cont. from page 13



ANSWER KEY

ACROSS

3. Winter
5. Pompeii
6. Sean Connery
8. Watermelon
9. Sturgeon
10. Peridot

DOWN

1. Lincoln
2. Different
4. Elvis Presley
7. Sandwich



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Child Welfare in Los Angeles County



As of January 2021, there are 38,243 children/youth in the Los Angeles Child Welfare System.



Most children are in the child welfare system for about 2+ years.

Black & Hispanic children encompass

 **81.5%**

of children/youth in care.

High turnover rates in child welfare professions create gaps in knowledge and care, and limit youths' access to consistent and appropriate supports.



In an overwhelmed system, L.A. County professionals face the daunting task of making complex, life-changing decisions about a child/youth's overall well-being.

The Solution? The Essential History Program!

The Essential History Program aims to help social workers, attorneys and judges make trauma-informed decisions about the young people they serve. Through this program, a CASA volunteer reviews the entirety of a child/youth's case file and produces an objective and comprehensive report that highlights key historical events for the young person while in the system.



Program Goals

- Reduce time youth is in the child welfare system
- Improve outcomes for youth in the areas such as: permanency, mental health, education and social supports
- Ease changes/transitions for service providers
- Reduce burnout and compassion fatigue for child welfare professionals
- Consolidate information to observe data trends in the child welfare system
- Create systematic change towards healthier and equitable systems

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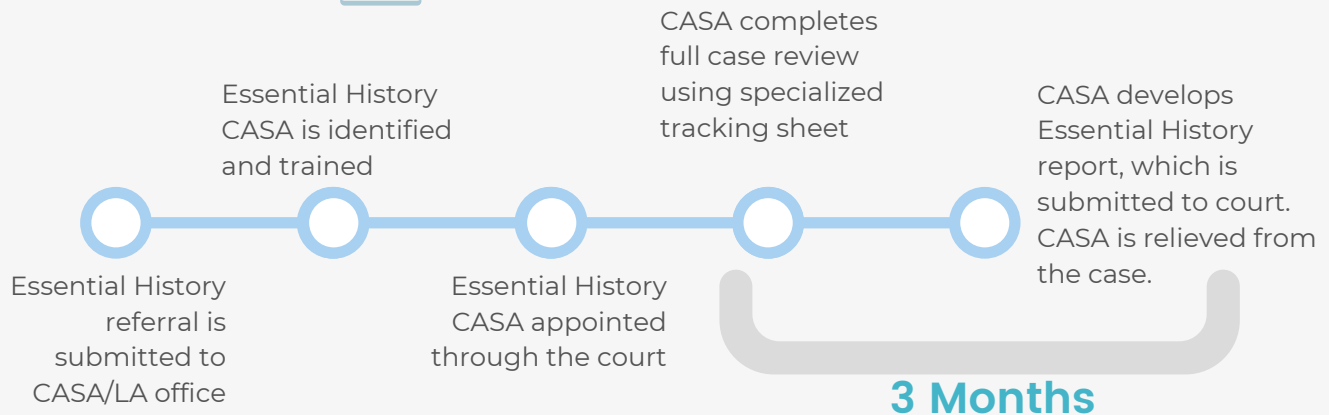
Essential History Program



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Process & Timeline



The Report

Objective & Neutral Language

Information is retrieved from case documents with no additional bias/interpretation.

Strengths-Based

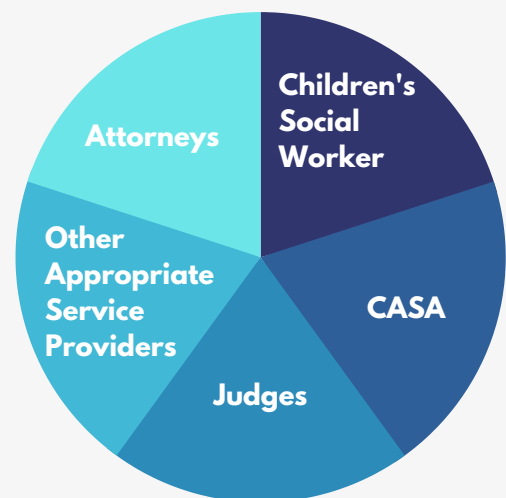
Focus is kept on not creating a negative perception of the youth

Report Content

Report Covers Risk & Protective Factors in the areas of:

- Permanency
- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Education
- Family & Social Supports

Who Can Access the Report?



Questions?

essentialhistory@casala.org
Visit Us! www.casala.org



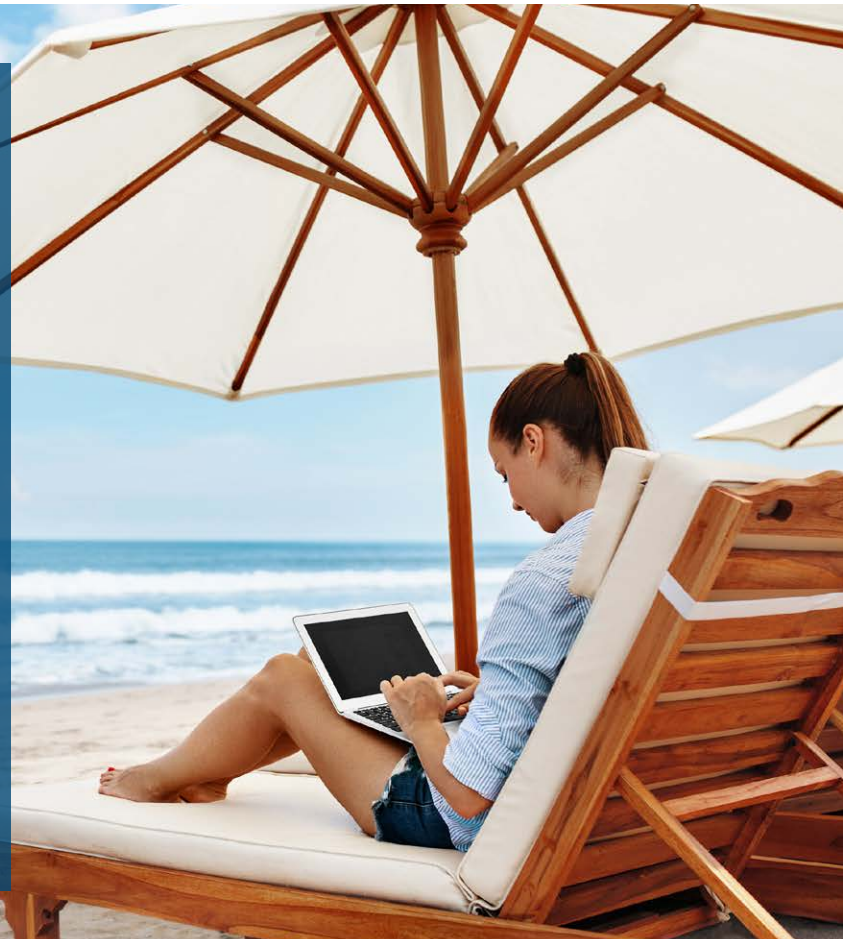
The Los Angeles Paralegal Association (LAPA) reflects the diverse nature of Southern California, and we strive to be as inclusive as possible. As an organization of legal professionals, we hold the ideals of equality and justice in the highest regard. The injustices experienced by the communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are a stark reminder that equality and justice are ideas that have yet to reach fruition in this country. We, as a nation, must do better. LAPA stands in solidarity with the families and friends of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. It is our sincerest desire to see justice is done as the law requires for their tragic deaths.

Diversity and inclusion are LAPA's initiative. We hold firm in striving to be more inclusive and diverse to reflect the community that we serve and represent. Moreover, LAPA will continue to steadfastly advocate and create initiatives to prepare and support our paralegals.

Attention
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Los Angeles Paralegal Association



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Los Angeles Paralegal Association



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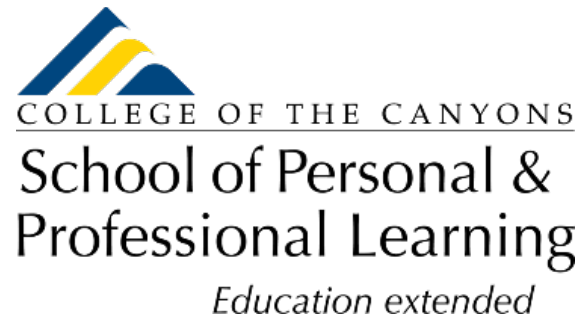
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Fall 2025

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NC.PLGL-001-92544 – Knowledge	9/15/25 – 11/22/25	10	Online	Online
NC.PLGL-002-92545 – Skills	9/06/24 – 10/18/25	7	S 9:00 – 11:30 am	OnlineLIVE (Zoom)
NC.PLGL-002-92546 – Skills	10/25/25 – 12/13/25	7	S 9:00 – 11:30 am	OnlineLIVE (Zoom)

Location: Virtual/LIVE/via Zoom or Online (Guided Self-study)

Registration: Free to California residents

To Register: www.canyons.edu/freeclasses and click on “Applicants”

Assistance with registration: Call (661) 362-3304 or email freeclasses@canyons.edu.

For more information, reach out to Lori Young at lori.young@canyons.edu.



These study courses are noncredit, and are not affiliated with the ABA-approved Paralegal Studies program. The ABA stresses that paralegals may not provide legal services directly to the public except as permitted by law. The NALA CP® Exam creators do not develop or deliver any CP® Exam study materials. Producers of study materials do not have access to actual CP® Exam content. Use of any suggested study materials does not guarantee success on the CP® Exam.



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Resignation is open at lapa.org/newevents

Members Only Benefits

Regional and Networking Sections

LAPA has many opportunities for meeting and connecting with your paralegal colleagues and other legal industry professionals. Such opportunities include seminar and networking events based on geographical locations such as Downtown (Los Angeles), South Bay, West L.A., the San Fernando Valley, Santa Clarita, and more. LAPA also provides educational seminars in various legal specialties, including, but not limited to, Litigation, Probate Law, Intellectual Property Law, Corporate Law, Immigration Law, and Ethics. Additionally, with the support of our legal industry partners, LAPA also hosts other networking and charitable events and mixers. Your participation in LAPA is encouraged, so be sure to reach out to a LAPA Section or Committee Chair, develop your leadership and networking skills, and make LAPA an even better association.

Vital Savings

This benefit provides LAPA members a discount program for dental and vision services, long term care, as well as many pharmaceuticals. LAPA has been able to obtain special pricing of Vital Savings discount cards through Aetna. By using the discount cards and Aetna approved providers, LAPA members can save dramatically on the services provided by these professionals. For more information, please visit LAPA's website, www.lapa.org.

Working Advantage

LAPA members may join a program that offers discounts up to 60% on tickets, travel, shopping, and more. LAPA helps you save money on items from clothing to theater tickets to flowers. This benefit is available by logging onto the LAPA website "Members Only" section.

United Insurance Partners

LAPA has teamed with UIP - United Insurance Partners - to bring LAPA members the opportunity to purchase health, dental, and/or vision insurance. When you access UIP through the link provided on the Benefits webpage, you will find an array of insurance products available for you to purchase with companies such as Blue Cross, Aetna, and many other top insurance companies. Please visit LAPA's website, www.lapa.org, for more information.

NALA Affiliation

LAPA is an affiliated member of the National Association of Legal Assistants. NALA is the nation's leading professional association for paralegals. As a member of an affiliated association, the initiation fee for individual membership in NALA is waived for LAPA members. NALA boasts some of its own benefits. Access its NALA Campus Live for online continuing legal education, self-study courses, and preparation for the CLA/CP Exam. Its annual educational convention in July allows you to expand your network beyond your state's borders as you network with other paralegals from around the country, attend educational institutes and member related activities.

Freelance/Contract Paralegal Listing

LAPA provides a "Freelance Paralegals" section on its website to assist LAPA members who are freelance, contract, or independent paralegals, as defined by California Business and Professions Code Section 6450. For a nominal fee of \$60, you can post your contact information on LAPA's website for six months. You can sign up online through the Members Only section of the website.

Membership Database

Available only to LAPA members, the Membership Database is a valuable tool in locating other paralegals or legal professionals with whom you have worked or networked. The Membership Database also provides up-to-date contact information as well as members' legal specialties and geographical areas.

Credit Union

LAPA members are eligible to join Southland Credit Union. Southland Credit Union, with over \$435 million in assets, offers an online presence, a new full-service branch in downtown Los Angeles, an upgraded ATM network and five new proprietary ATMs. Southland Credit Union has expanded its product line by introducing a new high-yielding certificate of deposit, a Rewards Plus program and a market-leading high interest yielding checking account. Southland Credit Union prides itself on outstanding service to its members and has recently earned a 95 percent Member Service satisfaction rating.

Lorman Education

LAPA is dedicated to providing efficient and readily-available continuing education opportunities that meet the needs of our members and enhance their skills, knowledge, and competencies. LAPA has partnered with Lorman Education to provide continuing education in a variety of topic areas. LAPA members receive a 20% discount on all orders.





Bet Tzedek Needs YOUR Help!

Intake Services Volunteers Sought

Bet Tzedek's Intake Services volunteers conduct pre-screening assessments in order to determine the appropriate course of action for individuals who call seeking legal assistance. Our volunteers are often the first contact our community has with our organization, and we rely on our volunteers to handle a high volume of calls from a diverse population of individuals with a broad range of needs.

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Under attorney supervision, volunteers develop foundational legal skills, including learning to spot legal issues; to conduct telephone interviews with potential clients dealing with challenging, stressful situations; determining what information provided by the caller is relevant; and to begin to develop judgment of potential cases in a wide array of legal areas. Volunteering with Intake Services also provides first-hand knowledge of the landscape of legal services available in Los Angeles County and exposure to and understanding of the issues faced by the communities we serve.

Commitment: 40+ hours. During the school year, we ask that volunteers commit to working in the Intake Center for 8-10 hours/week for 8-10 weeks. During certain periods, such as winter break, we may be able to accommodate schedules that include a higher number of hours per week for fewer weeks. Work must be completed during normal business hours (M-F, 9am-5pm).

To Apply: Email volunteer@bettzedek.org or call (323) 549-5839 with any questions. Spanish language skills are highly preferred, but not required.

WELCOME NEW & RENEWING LAPA MEMBERS

The following is a listing of legal professionals and paralegal students who joined or renewed their membership in Los Angeles Paralegal Association within the last 30 days. The employer and work telephone number also are included when available. If any information is incorrect, please fax corrections to 866-460-0506, call LAPA at 866-626-LAPA or e-mail updates to info@lapa.org.

VOTING

Kendall Allen	Connon Wood LLP	kallen@connonwood.com
Kevin Cazares, CP	Abramson Labor Group	otterkev@gmail.com
Christina Cyrulik, ACP	Salisian Lee LLP	christinacyrulik@gmail.com
Dane K Gambill	Parallution	dane@parallution.com
Natalie Ghahreman		natalieghpro@gmail.com
Karen Green	Chora Young & Manasserian LLP	kgreen237@gmail.com
Kenneth L Harold, ACP, CAS	Oldman, Sallus & Gold, LLP	kennethharold@gmail.com
Alma Beatrice Hilke	The Spivak Firm	beatricehilke79@gmail.com
Doug Kuhn	Shernoff, Bidart, Echeverria	douguhn@att.net
Cindy McCune	Mt. San Antonio College	cmccune05@gmail.com
Gabriela Reed-Olea	Aimee Doherty, APLC	gabi_olea@yahoo.com
Dusty Shaller	Clean Power Alliance of Southern California	dshaller@cleanpoweralliance.org

Karen Sloane	King, Holmes, Paterno & Soriano, LLC	ksloane@msn.com
Juanita Treshinsky	BG Law LLP	jtreshinsky@bg.law
Katherine Urbanczyk	University of Southern California	katurbancz@gmail.com

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Jeffrey Watson	Children's Hospital Los Angeles	watsonjeff2019@gmail.com

STUDENT

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Melissa De Grazzio	UCLA Extension	Melissadegrazzio@gmail.com
Ebony DuBois	Lakewood University	ebonydubois@gmail.com
Daniel Gonzalez	UCLA Extension	danielgonzalez0011@gmail.com
Alondra Granados	UCLA Extension	alondragranados2@gmail.com

STUDENT cont.

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Chinyarai Hamilton	UCLA Extension	cmmodest@syr.edu
Christine Hernandez	HBO	christine.ann.hernandez14@gmail.com
Regina Jordan	UCLA Extension	ginanbk@gmail.com
Sarah Klein	UCLA Extension	sg91482@gmail.com
Leann Lopez	UCLA Extension	leannlopez67@gmail.com
Samantha Marenji	UCLA Extension	smarenji@gmail.com
Nicole Mauzey	Santa Ana College	nmauzey@yahoo.com
Miranda Miranda	UCLA Extension	mirandairanmiranda@gmail.com
Hannah Pinelo	UCLA Extension	pinelohannah@gmail.com
Gina Ramirez		ginaramirez310@outlook.com
Jaime Rockafellow	UCLA Extension	jaimenrockafellow@gmail.com
Margot Schweichler	Neighborhood Legal Services	margotschweichler@gmail.com
Patrick Wheeler, Jr.	Nastec	patwheelerjr@gmail.com
Christie Yamahiro		christieyamahiro@yahoo.com



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