



PARALEGAL CERTIFICATIONS

National Professional Standard for Paralegals



OUR MISSION

NALA leads the paralegal profession by providing a voluntary certification program, continuing legal education, and professional development programs for all paralegals.

We provide continuing education programs (publications, courses and webinars), networking opportunities, professional certification programs, occupational survey reports, and publications to help paralegals excel in the workplace. NALA is a non-profit organization, 501(c)(6), representing more than 19,000 paralegals, who are individual members or members of NALA affiliated associations.

NALA is a membership organization. This means that the individual members of NALA are the leading force of NALA programs and policies. Through NALA, paralegals across the nation have come together to develop programs and standard setting codes to help them grow in the work place. The association is governed by a Board of Directors, and maintains an office and headquarters staff in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

CERTIFIED PARALEGAL

The Certified Paralegal (CP) credential is key to respect and opportunity throughout the legal profession. Whether the preferred term is “paralegal” or “legal assistant” the CP certifies that the person has passed a demanding examination of the knowledge and skills needed to provide paralegal services. Earning this credential is a proud achievement, and maintaining the right to use it is a career long commitment. Certification must be maintained through continuing education relevant to the demands of the paralegal career.

RECOGNITION

Firms, corporations, and agencies recognize the Certified Paralegal credential as a credible measure of paralegal competence. The credential has been acknowledged by the American Bar Association as a mark of high professional achievement, and more than 47 paralegal organizations and numerous bar associations also acknowledge the CP as the definitive paralegal certification.

More than 8,900 paralegals may use the Certified Paralegal (CP) designation. The CP credential has been awarded to more than 19,000 paralegals in its span of more than 40 years. The Certified Paralegal (CP) program is the first certification program accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA).

EXAM FEES

First time candidates:

- NALA members - nonrefundable examination fee of **\$250**.
- Nonmembers - nonrefundable examination fee of **\$275**.

Retake candidates:

- Nonrefundable attempt fee of **\$60** per subsequent attempt for the Knowledge Exam.
- Nonrefundable attempt fee of **\$60** per subsequent attempt for the Skills Exam.

For complete details on the examination and policies, please visit the NALA website at:
<https://www.nala.org/certification/certtest3>

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for the Certified Paralegal examination, a paralegal must meet one of the following requirements.

1. Graduation from a paralegal program that is:

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

Note: An applicant may combine college hours from more than one institution. The applicant must have graduated from a paralegal program consisting of a minimum of 15 semester hours (or 225 clock hours or 22.5 quarter hours). Evidence of the minimum hours required under Category 1(e) must be provided with the application form.

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

3. A high school diploma or equivalent and seven years of experience as a paralegal under the supervision of a member of the bar, plus evidence of a minimum of 20 hours of continuing legal education credit to have been completed within a two (2) year period prior to the examination date.

Supporting documentation (i.e. official, completed transcript or signed attestation from supervising attorney) must accompany the application.

THE EXAM

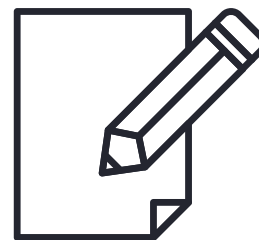
The Certified Paralegal examination is a comprehensive assessment based on federal law and procedure. Successful completion of both the **Knowledge** and **Skills** Exams are required to obtain the Certified Paralegal credential.

There are two sections of the examination as described below:



KNOWLEDGE EXAM:

- Multiple choice questions
- Administered on-demand, year round
- Must successfully complete in order to be eligible to take the Skills Exam



SKILLS EXAM:

- Written assignment (essay)
- Administered during four testing windows:
February, April, July, October

The NALA website provides more information describing the exam specifications.

www.nala.org/certification



MAINTAINING THE CP CREDENTIAL

The CP credential is renewed every five years. Renewal requires 50 hours of continuing legal education, including five hours of legal ethics. 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.

Credit for continuing legal education is awarded on the basis of hours of actual instruction. There are a variety of programs and ways in which the Certified Paralegal may maintain certification.

Credit is also granted for participation in most CLE programs offered by reputable organizations as long as the subject matter is related to work as a paralegal. Participation in the following types of programs may qualify:

- Conferences, seminars, webinars, etc. offered by NALA, affiliated associations, bar associations, or seminar providers.
- Teaching in a paralegal program, or teaching a session at a CLE seminar.
- Participation in online educational programs.
- Completion of a class at an accredited college or accredited community college.
- Achievement of an advanced paralegal certification credential such as that offered by NALA, or a NALA-recognized state credentialing program (offered in California, Florida, Louisiana, and Texas).

ADMINISTRATION

The NALA Certifying Board for Paralegals is responsible for content, standards, and administration of the Certified Paralegal program. This board is composed of attorneys, paralegal educators, and paralegals who have received the Certified Paralegal (CP) credential.

The Certifying Board is also responsible for admission requirements, disciplinary procedures, and maintaining and administering the continuing education requirements for renewal of the credential.

**NALA HAS AWARDED
THE CP CREDENTIAL
TO MORE THAN
19,000 PARALEGALS**

ADVANCED CERTIFIED PARALEGAL

The Advanced Certified Paralegal (ACP) credential includes the paralegal's certified status and attests to the paralegal's command of advanced knowledge in the specific practice area or areas.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS ARE:

- Completion of all Chapters and Chapter Exams.
- Submission of a Statement of Completion advising the board that the course work is completed.

BENEFITS OF ADVANCED CERTIFICATION

Advanced paralegal certification in specialty practice areas has a positive effect on both paralegals and employers.

- Surveys have consistently shown that firms bill at a higher rate for paralegals with specialty certification, and the paralegal receives higher compensation.
- Employers who hire Advanced Certified Paralegals are getting a professional who has already demonstrated expertise tested by the knowledge and skills areas of the Certified Paralegal examination.
- Advanced Certified Paralegals can have the opportunity to lead in other programs such as human resources and employee development.



**NALA HAS AWARDED
THE ACP CREDENTIAL
TO MORE THAN
4,000 PARALEGALS**

As of August 2017



WHY NALA?

- ✓ **Exceptional Continuing Education**
- ✓ **Professional Development Programs**
- ✓ **Connect with Paralegals Globally**
- ✓ **Leadership Opportunities**
- ✓ **Volunteer Opportunities**
- ✓ **Affinity Discounts**



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