

# Forum

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# NCPA

## A Stress Free Career???

## Are You Living in DREAMLAND?



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### IN THIS ISSUE...

- “The Curse of the Eternally Urgent”
- “2012 NALA Annual Meeting and Seminar Review”
- “NCPA Nominations and Elections”



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## President's Message

Stephanie B. Elliott, NCCP



*Today's decisions are tomorrow's realities. Remember you have three choices: Take it, leave it or change it. ~Marsha Petrie Sue*

Happy Fall, Ya'll!

I hope you had a fun and exciting summer. It's the time of year to get back into schedules and routines. I've had a busy couple of months myself. My practice has been involved in multiple trials and I've tried to vacation and travel for NCPA in between. It's made my life pretty interesting!

Kaye Summers and I attended the NALA Conference in Omaha, Nebraska during the month of July. What an exciting trip we had! It was a busy and fun-filled week. The NALA Conference is truly a first rate educational experience, and even more, it's a chance to meet and mingle with other paralegals from across the country. I encourage you to find a way to attend at least one because you will be blessed by the experience. Last year, Kaye and I left Dallas determined to return and show our NALA colleagues what NCPA and North Carolina have to offer. We worked for several months to prepare, and when the time came, we presented "Shaping the Future, NCPA's Mentoring Program" for the Affiliates Association Meeting. The response was extraordinary. We answered questions the rest of the afternoon and we have both heard from NALA members since we returned who are interested in starting a mentor program. We felt honored to present on behalf of NCPA, and even more so to be from North Carolina! We also worked the NCPA "booth" for the Affiliated Members Exchange and presented one lucky person with a North Carolina "basket" that featured all North Carolina products. It was an adventure getting all the products to Nebraska (just imagine trying to ship bottles of Sundrop, Cheerwine and BBQ sauce!). Poor Kaye got pulled out of the security line at the airport because she forgot she had jelly for the basket in her carry on! All that aside, we had a fabulous time

and appreciate the opportunity to represent NCPA.

NCPA was represented by several other members during the NALA Conference. In addition to our presentation, Martha Blackman Hughes, ACP, NCCP was in the 2012 NALA LEAP class, and her group was chosen to present during the Affiliated Members Meeting. Congratulations, Martha! Belinda Thomas, ACP and her attorney, Wiley Wooten, were the presenters for the Family Law Institute. It was truly a proud week for NCPA to have our members contribute and present during the week.

One of the themes from the week in Omaha was "Living a Life of Intention", and it really resonated with me. I believe I can do this in many ways both personally and professionally. I believe strongly in trying to better myself and the lives of those I love every day. I believe we can do this for NCPA as well. It takes a village, a strong village, to run an organization. We need each and every member's contribution to make it possible. We can do it with a few members, and be a mediocre organization OR, we can unite and all fill a role to make NCPA the strongest voice of paralegals in North Carolina. Ask yourself what type of member are you and more importantly, what type of member could you be? Are you sitting in the back of the room observing or are you in the front of the room working? I have seen the unbelievable talent and skills of many of you, and we need those talents and skills now. NCPA's Board and Executive Committee have embraced change in this last year because we believe that in order to make NCPA stronger, change is necessary. It's time to try some different things. Think outside the box. Go a little further. What can you contribute?

Let's make a commitment to guide NCPA with a newfound purpose and intention. I'm ready. Are you? Email me, Kaye Summers or Patti Clapper and let's get started. Find your purpose!

*Stephanie B. Elliott, NCCP*

President

## Chairman's Message

Patricia F. Clapper, ACP, NCCP



By the time you receive this issue, we will have had another successful CLA/NCCP Review Course. That can only mean one thing (besides NCPA is awesome!); our Annual Seminar is right around the corner. As we look outside at Fall approaching, close your eyes and think BEACH! Yes, NCPA is going back to the beach next Spring. Mark your calendars now for April 4 - 6, 2013.

This time of year also means NCPA is gearing up to hold nominations and elections. In the coming months, forms to nominate or declare will be sent out to you via email. This year, we nominate district directors for our even numbered districts

and officer positions will be elected. In my last Chairman's message, I explained the inner workings of NCPA. Since then, have you decided what position you would like to hold with NCPA? I would love to hear from you. I stand by my promise that our Board will find a position for you that fits your level of time commitment.

Remember, volunteers are unpaid; not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless.

*Patricia F. Clapper, ACP, NCCP*

Chairman of the Board

# Second Vice President's Report Membership

Beverly K. Moore, NCCP

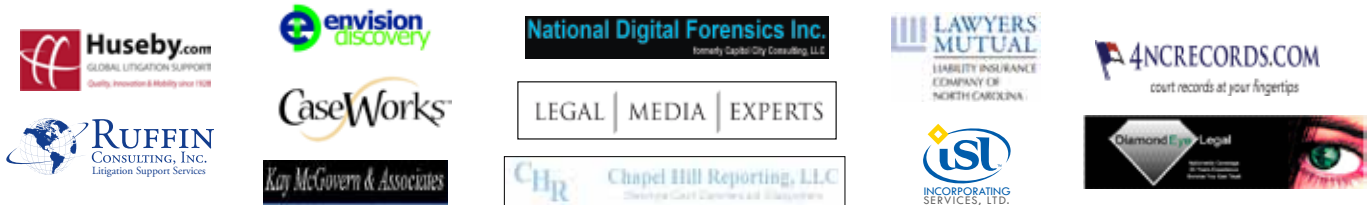
The current membership breakdown as of August 31, 2012 is as follows:

General members:	254
Associate members:	54
Student members:	91
Sustaining Members:	10
Affiliate members:	3
Educational Program members:	3
Total	415

We would like to acknowledge our newest (G)eneral, (A)ssociate, and (S)tudent members joining from May 31, 2012 - Aug. 31, 2012.

Gail R. Alexander, Charlotte, NC (S)	Debra A. Fritz, Chapel Hill, NC (S)	Eric Steven Neal, Durham, NC (G)
Lakeysha Reid Anderson, Clover, SC (S)	Amy P. Gray, Charlotte, NC (S)	Amy M. Pasquale, Havelock, NC (S)
Christine B. Arnsberger, Carrboro, NC (G)	Dorleen Harrington, Fayetteville, NC (G)	Aparicio I. Rangel, Cary, NC (A)
Andrea M. Baldwin, Huntersville, NC (S)	Amy Barringer Hartz, Davidson, NC (G)	Robert Reinhold, Brevard, NC (A)
Alisha Marie Belk, Apex, NC (S)	Heather C. Heady, Charlotte, NC (S)	Marie Kelly Schmid, Huntersville, NC (S)
Jennifer M. Bell, Kernersville, NC (G)	Lydia M. James, Rock Hill, SC (A)	Kelse A. Sheehan, Carrboro, NC (S)
Melissa D. Blackburn Cansler, Wake Forest, NC (G)	Paul J. Ksieniewics, Greensboro, NC (S)	Christine Spencer, Garner, NC (G)
Jessica Del Rosario Brewer, Charlotte, NC (A)	Leslie Ann Lancaster, Charlotte, NC (S)	Marianita Stevans, Cary, NC (S)
Laura J. Dabney, Gastonia, NC (G)	Holly Kathryn Maguire, Kernersville, NC (S)	Kaitlyn Lewis Stilley, Enfield, NC (G)
Jeannette Marie Daum, Carrboro, NC (S)	Alicia Mitchell, Charlotte, NC (G)	Daniel Patrick Walker, Charlotte, NC (A)
Lisa Dowling, Charlotte, NC (S)	Helen L. Miller, Cary, NC (G)	Kimberly A. Walsh-Binkley, Mooresville, NC (S)
Robert B. Drennen, Greensboro, NC (A)	Meredith P. Moir, Cary, NC (S)	Manessa H. Wilson, Clayton, NC (A)
Kitty Morgan Duke, Raliegh, NC (S)	Marie A. Myatt, Raleigh, NC (S)	Crystal L. Jones, Broadway, NC (S)

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NCPA would also like to recognize our Affiliate and Educational Program members:  
Alamance County Paralegal Association, Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, Carteret Community College Paralegal Technology Program, Cumberland County Paralegal Association, Guilford Paralegal Association, Guilford Technical Community College

Feel free to contact me at any time if you have questions about membership in NCPA.

*Beverly K. Moore, NCCP*

Second Vice President, Membership Chair





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## Editor's Court

Brandon L. Ruth, NCSB/CP

Lately, the Fall edition of the FORUM has been the most stressful to put together, and I'll come right out and admit it is entirely my own fault. Last year, I was trying to put together the FORUM around starting my new job with the State and dealing with the passing of a wonderful co-worker. This year, I've been squeezing in working

on the FORUM around building a new house and welcoming my second child into the world. Add to it that this

has apparently been the Murphy's Law edition in that everything I can possibly think of that can go wrong in preparing this issue has gone wrong, sometimes twice. I'm already worrying about next year's Fall edition, and am considering bringing in a pinch-Editor to take my roster sport for 2013.

In my 11 issues as Senior Editor of the FORUM, I don't believe I have ever used my column to really editorialize about anything. I consider my piece to be mostly a sales pitch about the current issue, and maybe to wax poetic about a current event or upcoming issue. This time I'd like to take a moment to discuss two if the pieces in this issue - the Time Machine, and the statistical breakdown of the 2012 Survey. This issue's Time Machine takes us back to Fall 1993, when our own Sharon Robertson took a look at what makes a qualified Paralegal and shows how we can be invaluable to attorneys, and looks at some of the issues confronted by Paralegals in the infancy of the Certification process. Read this piece. If you're a lifetime Paralegal, think

about whether or not your situation has improved since 1993, and if you're a rookie Paralegal, ask yourself if the things outlined by Sharon are issues that you currently face. Do you think our overall situation has improved? Are we as a profession better off than we were in 1993? Now read the breakdown of the 2012 Survey. Consider what appears to be an overwhelming lack of response as compared to previous surveys. Why do you think that is? Do you think the questions regarding compensation and turnover Sharon asked 19 years ago been answered? Have we been given the respect by the legal field as a whole that we thought Certification would bring?

I've hyped my Bachelor's in Sociology before - these are the types of things I was taught to think about. I spend my days asking questions. In every issue I remind the readers that we look forward to hearing from them, and I think this would be an excellent opportunity for Paralegals - both veterans and rookies - to put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and send us your thoughts. Perhaps you want to give your views on the lack of response to the Survey? Or you might want to prepare a "response" to Sharon's article from 1993 and compare the past to the present. Here at the FORUM we would love to have a "Reader's Response" section where we could open up the issue to the readership and get some discussion going. Let's get that started!

As always, thanks for reading!

Regards,

*Brandon L. Ruth, NCSB/CP*

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## 2012

### SEPTEMBER

September 25, 2012  
NCCP Exam

### DECEMBER

December 1, 2012  
Deadline to register for  
January 2013 NALA CLA Exam

December 10, 2012  
Late Application Deadline to  
register for January 2013  
NALA CLA/CP Exam  
(\$25 late filing fee)

## 2013

### JANUARY

January 1-31, 2013  
Testing window for  
NALA CLA/CP Exam

January 31, 2013  
Student Scholarship Essays due

### FEBRUARY

February 1, 2013  
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February 1, 2013  
Registration deadline for  
September 2013 NCCP Exam  
(Tentative)

## MARCH

March 22-24, 2012  
NCPA's 28<sup>th</sup> Annual seminar in Atlantic Beach, NC

## APRIL

April 1, 2013  
Deadline to register for  
May 2013 NALA CLA Exam

### April 4-6, 2013

Annual Meeting - Holiday Inn  
at Wrightsville Beach

### April 24, 2013

NCCP Examination (Tentative)

## MAY

May 1-31, 2013  
Testing window for NALA CLA/CP Exam

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# HISTORIAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

By Karen F. England, NCCP - Historian

The 2011 Annual Meeting and Seminar was held in Cary, North Carolina at the Embassy Suites. Stephanie B. Elliott, NCCP, was elected as President, and Stephanie Ivans, NCCP, was appointed Chairman of the Board of Directors. The NCPA Student Scholarship winners were Tammy Pyles, Tania Rodriguez, Betty Harmon and Kathy Glasson. The winner of the Meredith R. Pollette Scholarship was Crystal L. Robinson, NCCP.

Stephanie B. Elliott, NCCP and Kaye H. Summers, ACP, NCCP, NALA Liaison, attended the NALA annual meeting in Dallas, Texas, July 27-30, 2011. Kaye H. Summers, ACP, NCCP, was awarded the 2011 Affiliates Award. Once again, NCPA was represented by several members who participated in the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure.

In September the Mid-Year Seminar was held in at the Embassy Suites in Charlotte on September 16 and 17. The weekend began with a meeting of the Long Range Planning Committee; the Board and Executive Committee meeting followed. Many

exciting things are in the works for 2012 because of plans made at these meetings. The CLA and NCCP Review Courses were held on Friday and Saturday, concurrent with the Mid-Year Seminar in Charlotte.

In October, Beverly King Moore, NCCP, and Stephanie B. Elliott, NCCP attended the UNCC Government Job Fair and set up an NCPA booth. They distributed membership and mentor program materials, as well as some NCPA "goodie bags". 2011 saw more strides being made in developing a fantastic mentoring program with even greater things to come in 2012 relating to the hard work that has been put into developing this worthwhile project.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Karen F. England, NCCP*

Karen F. England, NCCP

Historian



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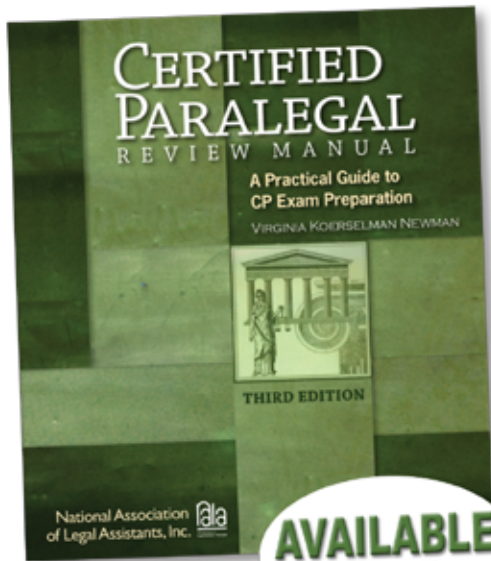
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# A Stress Free Career???

## Are You Living in DREAMLAND!

By Chere Estrin

Stress doesn't really scare me. It is part and parcel of our lives. Why, might you ask, would anyone say that? Probably because in the second half of my work life, I have found the secrets to a relatively stress free career.

Article after article has been written about stress. It's the same old, same old: manage your stress, have a plan, stay positive, visualize your last trip to Hawaii in the sun-soaked terrain, exercise daily and get regular hot rock massages. That, or have a glass of good merlot, get in the bathtub with lots of Evelyn & Crabtree and listen to old Doris Day songs. I don't know where some of these authors get this stuff, except to say that they must live in Dreamland, somewhere east of here. Have they ever worked in a law firm?

I used to be the most stressed-out person I knew. I averaged 90 hour weeks in the legal field as an executive in a \$5 billion corporation, traveled three weeks out of four, answered to some big shots who thought they owned the planet, and managed hundreds of people. It wasn't much different when I was a paralegal manager. There were critical deadlines to meet, difficult attorneys to juggle, anxious clients to handle and something called a "minimum billable hours" requirement, now referred to as "suggested" hours in a more politically correct and less actionable environment. I recently looked at a picture of myself during that era. I was holding my new-born niece, Cristina, a joy to behold and I looked like I just escaped from a train wreck and stopped by to say howdy.

Several years ago, *California Lawyer* magazine published an article by Richard Carlton, author of "Don't Sweat the Small Stuff" that cited: "Among members of the medical community, there is a growing acceptance that stress from long working hours, such as 70 hours a week or more, may contribute to the onset of clinical depression. A study of 10,000 adults by a team from Johns Hopkins University discovered that among all the occupational groups represented, attorneys had the highest prevalence of signs and symptoms of clinical depression. In fact, the rate of depression among the attorneys studied was 3.6 times the norm for all occupations." The article further stated that, "Psychologists observe that attorneys, who are trained to be impersonal and objective, often apply the same approach to their personal problems and are reluctant to focus on their inner emotional lives." Wow. Examining the state of mind of those around you in relation to why your atmosphere seems stressful is very revealing, indeed.

First, let's debunk some myths about workplace stress.

**Stress is not cured by working fewer hours.**

**Myth #1: Stress is normal for anyone working in the legal community.** The stakes are high and when the stakes are high, so is the stress. Anything can go wrong at any time. Stress is even good for you because it pushes you to perform.

Some people think that if you're not too busy, you're not really crucial to the organization, particularly when you are rewarded for high billable hours. But stress does not mean you matter. It either means that something is wrong at work or that you're not doing a good enough job of matching your tasks to your time. Worse, it also means that you get less work done, because stressed people are less efficient, worse communicators and worse at making good decisions. To accept stress as a normal condition of work is bad for people and bad for business.

There are also certain delusions we create for ourselves. Declaring that you thrive under stress is a justification for procrastination. Sure, there are people who can't figure out how to deliver anything until the last minute. But this is a crisis in confidence (fear of starting for fear of failing) as opposed to stunning brilliance unlocked by stress.

**Myth #2: Stress is caused by working too much.** But then, why do some people work 80 hours a week and feel great, while some people work 30 hours and get seriously stressed? Here's why: stress has nothing to do with the number of hours you work, and everything to do with how you feel during those hours. If you work 100 hours a week feeling great, having fun and taking pride in what you do, you won't be stressed. If you work 30 hours a week feeling inadequate, bullied or unappreciated you will be stressed. Stress at the workplace does not always cause unhappiness. Your workplace happiness hinges more on whether or not you like your work than on whether or not your work is stressful, according to Alan Krueger, professor at Princeton University.

**Myth #3: Stress is cured by working fewer hours.** Most workplaces react to stress by reducing employees' workloads, responsibilities or working hours and in serious cases by giving people long sick leaves. According to Danish medical researcher Bo Netterstrom who has studied workplace stress for 30 years, this is a mistake. Netterstrom claims people hit by stress need to increase their confidence at work. While time off can be necessary to treat the immediate symptoms of stress, a long absence from the workplace does exactly the opposite. When people return, they're even more vulnerable. Worse, some never return to work at all. Reducing work or leaving work temporarily doesn't fix any underlying problems. When employees return to work or to "normal" work conditions, nothing has changed and the stress returns quickly.

**Myth #4: Stress is cured by working more.** Falling behind at work from time-to-time is a given in this 24/7, Internet accessed, Blackburied work world. Believing that if you work really hard for a while you'll catch up and then stress will go away is a fairy tale. It won't "just go away" for two reasons:

1. Workplace stress does not come from falling behind at work. It comes from how you feel about falling behind.

*A Stress Free Career??? Are You Living in Dreamland - continued*

2. In most law firm environments, people will always be behind. There is simply too much work. Finishing all your assignments basically means getting more work along with the career enhancing opportunity to push your billable hours even higher.

A temporary push to reduce a pile of work or meet a deadline is fine. But all too often that temporary push becomes the new standard. So the solution to stress is not to work harder to catch up because in most law firms, this is impossible. The solution is to feel good about the work you finish and not to get stressed about the work you don't finish. It's not that you should stop caring or not look for a solution. It's that you should avoid a vicious circle: being stressed makes you less productive which means you get less work done and become more stressed.

**Myth #5: Stress is cured by focusing on stress.** There's a lot of the literature and training about workplace stress and the typical content is:

- What is stress
- Symptoms of stress
- Health implications of stress
- How to fight stress

This is often presented by stress consultants who privately garner their own list of stressors. At this point, I have one big hohum for all of that. Focusing on stress is not the way to remove it - it's a great way to create more stress. A better strategy is to focus on what gives you peace and energy.

#### **The Truth about Stress**

Work does not give you stress. Feeling bad about work gives you stress. This means that changing your work hours, responsibilities, priorities or work environment is meaningless, unless it also changes the way you feel at work. Those stress management courses will not do the trick either, unless they can achieve just that.

Most common sources of stress for legal professionals undefined deadlines, lack of control over time, difficult clients, escalating intensity, no margin for error - are outside of a paralegal's personal control. What truly determines how much stress these circumstances cause paralegals is the degree to which these "givens" are perceived or interpreted as threatening. Any perceived threat - real or not - triggers our body's "fight-or-flight response." Over time, it is possible to modify how your body reacts by paying attention to how you perceive situations as threatening. Ask yourself whether an issue really justifies your current reaction to it - or, whether or not it will matter at all a month later. Practiced regularly, you can keep matters in perspective so that stress is relative to the importance of the situation.

#### **What Do I Do Now?**

Given that I have knocked a number of standard stress articles, I do have a few suggestions that personally helped change my life around. Everyone can find a way out of stress and some may wish to seek professional counseling. Let me share a few things that I found helpful:

1. You can't change things if you don't acknowledge them. Ok, so I'm quoting a TV psychologist. But he hit it right on. When it

was first brought to my attention that I was stressed out, I was in total denial. Because I was fearful of being accused of failing and I wanted to do a great job, I denied I was stressed-out. To me, it was a sign that I couldn't deal with the job. What I really needed to change was my responses. Acknowledge what is. Without that acknowledgement, you cannot take action.

2. Learn to really laugh. How long has it been since you laughed out loud, long and hard? I mean a good belly-laugh. If you're stressed-out, it's probably been awhile. Laughter releases endorphins, natural pain-killers. It boosts immune function by raising levels of infection-fighting T-cells, disease-fighting proteins called Gamma-interferon and disease-destroying antibodies called B-cells. In short, it's great medicine.

3. Make a friend at work. When you have someone you can confide in, someone with whom you feel secure, trust, can share the ups-and-downs of the workplace, you feel better. The environment somehow doesn't seem all that bad.

4. Make a decision. The only way to transform your life is to make a decision to change and honor that decision. Decide how you want to live your life and then set about with complete certainty to create it. The most critical time in my career came when I decided that I wanted to create the environment that was right for me. I no longer wanted a fancy office in a Class A building in the middle of a prestigious district. I wanted to own my own business, work from home and call my own shots. I haven't looked back. I'm happier than a clam.

5. Love 'em or leave 'em. Recently, a good friend mistakenly thought I was encouraging paralegals to abandon their jobs without demonstrating any loyalty to employers. What I do emphasize to anyone who will listen is: you have to love what you're doing. You absolutely have to get up in the morning and be excited about the workday. There is no better career booster than a job that you love, thrive in and remains fun and stimulating. That's what actually changed me around.

I created a situation where I am passionate about what I do; feel appreciated, challenged and excited just about every day. (There is no 100% avoidance in the war against stress.) With that attitude, it doesn't matter if I work 30 or 90 hours a week. I am thrilled by what I do and the time I spend doing it.

The secrets to a (relatively) stress-free environment? Make a decision to craft your career so that it works for you. Decide what you will stress about and what you will not. By loving the job you're in, stressors become challenges and challenges become invigorating. Trust someone who spent the first half of her career as sergeant of the stress battalion: a work environment that is pretty much stress free is where it's all at.

Chere Estrin is the CEO of Paralegal Knowledge Institute and Managing Administrator and Co-Founding Member of the Organization of Legal Professionals. She is the Editor-in-Chief of KNOW, The Magazine for Paralegals and OLP eJournal. Ms. Estrin has written 10 books in the legal field including The Paralegal Career Guide 4th Edition. She has been interviewed by Newsweek, the Los Angeles Times, the Chicago Tribune and other publications. She can be reached at [chere.estrin@paralegalknowledge.com](mailto:chere.estrin@paralegalknowledge.com).

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*Learn  
to really  
laugh.*

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**THE CONTEST OFFICIALLY BEGINS ON  
OCTOBER 1, 2012,  
SO BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR SUBMISSION DEADLINES  
AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION  
ON THE NCPA WEBSITE.**

If you have any questions please contact:  
Charlotte Ward, CLA, NCCP  
Student/School Relations Chair  
ward\_charlotte@yahoo.com  
919-682-9691



# The Curse of the ETERNALLY URGENT

Vicki Voisin, ACP

Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, an evil person placed a curse on every lawyer and law firm in the land. The curse extended to all who worked for the lawyer, especially paralegals.

No one knows who did this dreadful deed. Perhaps it was Shakespeare when he reportedly said 'The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers'. Perhaps it happened when the first yellow legal pad was produced or maybe it was bred among stacks of red rope files.

Whatever its origin, this curse will forever plague attorneys and paralegals. It is called The Curse of the Eternally Urgent.

What is The Curse of the Eternally Urgent? It is a malicious jinx that gives everything in the law firm critical status – critical deadlines, critical documents, critical meetings, critical issues. Everything has to be done at once.

No one can escape The Curse of the Eternally Urgent! It infects everyone in the law office, especially paralegals who are not only cursed themselves but also have to deal with cursed attorneys. It causes stress, anxiety, tension, pressure and overwhelm. It renders everyone senseless, causing them to spin their wheels, getting nothing finished. Or if they do finish something, another even more time critical issue or deadline raises its ugly head. Add to that the feeling that everything must be done perfectly and you're doomed!

The Curse of the Eternally Urgent may also result in the failure to meet ethical responsibilities. The ABA's Model Rules of Professional Conduct (at Rule 1.1 and 1.3) state that attorneys owe their clients the duty of competence and diligence. This requires possession of the legal knowledge and skill necessary for representation, as well as acting with reasonable promptness and thoroughness while representing a client. This, of course, includes meeting deadlines.

There are dire consequences associated with The Curse of the Eternally Urgent! Missed deadlines may result in cases being dismissed, placing the client in an undesirable position, and a terrible reputation for the firm. There is also the possibility of disciplinary proceedings for the attorney, ranging from a reprimand to suspension to disbarment.

There may be civil law suits brought against the attorney, as well as the paralegal. Paralegals risk losing their hard-earned professional certifications.

Why does The Curse of the Eternally Urgent continue? Because of the lack of perspective and planning, and by procrastination and perfectionism.

Can the cycle of The Curse of the Eternally Urgent be broken? Yes! Just take the following steps:

Change your perspective. Instead of continuing the bad habit of always putting out fires, adopt the habit of looking at the deadline and what has to be done to meet it. Also, recognize when something is really time critical – when it absolutely has to be done right that minute – and when you can safely save it for another day.

Meeting deadlines is only the end goal. Acting competently and diligently on the client's behalf doesn't mean meeting deadlines by flying by the seat of your pants at trial, dropping off a brief at the Clerk's office at 4:55 pm on the day it's due, or frantically completing an answer to a complaint at the very last minute to avoid being defaulted.

Instead, competence and diligence on the client's behalf means planning for the deadline by determining steps necessary to complete the work by the deadline...taking the time to do the job that is required instead of throwing something together willy nilly just to get by.

Break your work into chunks. Once you determine what has to be done to meet the deadline, you have broken your work down into chunks. Looking at the main deadline (such as 'complete discovery') can be overwhelming. This overwhelm may stop you from even starting the work.

Taken one step at a time, knowing when each one will be finished, will allow you to meet your goal of finishing the entire project by the due date. You must take further, though, and determine when each step should be taken. Each step is then put on your calendar as an appointment. Each time you have an 'appointment' to get something done, you focus on that step until completion. You will reach your deadline before it becomes time critical.

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*No one  
can escape  
The Curse  
of the  
Eternally  
Urgent!*

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*The Curse of the Eternally Urgent - continued*

Forget perfectionism. Quality work should always be your goal...just remember that done is good enough. You can make endless revisions but is that really a good use of your time? Do what is absolutely necessary and do it well (notice I didn't say 'do it perfectly') but stop when the product is good enough to get the job done. Never do work just to be doing work. That's a total waste of time. Instead, do only what really has to be done to finish the project.

Determine who will do the work. Never think you are absolutely the only one in the office who can do a job. Look at the individual steps that must be taken to reach a deadline and decide who is best suited to do it. This may be the attorney, the paralegal, the secretary...each person has specific skills so be sure to utilize those skills.

Your challenge: Don't let The Curse of the Eternally Urgent rule your life. Break the curse by getting your work in perspective. Ask yourself if it is really time critical. Then follow up with planning what has to be done and when, setting up 'appointments' with yourself to do the work, and delegating whenever possible. Last, do quality work but only

to the point where what you've done is good enough...avoid perfectionism.

Take these steps and The Curse of the Eternally Urgent will be gone forever!

===== © 2012 Vicki Voisin, Inc.

Do you want to use this article in your newsletter, ezine or Web site? You can, so long as you include this entire blurb with it: Vicki Voisin, "The Paralegal Mentor", delivers simple strategies for paralegals and other professionals to create success and satisfaction by setting goals and determining the direction they will take their careers. Vicki spotlights resources, organizational tips, ethics issues, and other areas of continuing education to help paralegals and others reach their full potential. She publishes Paralegal Strategies, a weekly e-newsletter for paralegals, and co-hosts The Paralegal Voice, a monthly podcast produced by [Legal Talk Network](http://LegalTalkNetwork.com). In addition, Vicki is the co-author of The Professional Paralegal: A Guide to Finding a Job and Career Success.

More information is available at [www.paralegalmentor.com](http://www.paralegalmentor.com) where subscribers receive Vicki's *151 Tips for Your Career Success*.



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The 2012 NALA Annual Meeting and Seminar was held in Omaha, Nebraska. Stephanie Elliott, NCCP, NCPA President and I attended on behalf of NCPA. We left Charlotte on Tuesday, July 24<sup>th</sup> and returned on Sunday, July 29<sup>th</sup>. Wow, what a week we had. From the early bird reception on Tuesday, to the final event on Saturday, it seemed as if we never stopped. Again this year, the seminar was in the format of 3-day institutes, which continues to be a very popular format. This year I attended the Personal Injury institute.

The most rewarding time of the week was Thursday afternoon, when Stephanie and I were honored to present, on behalf of NCPA, "Shaping the Future, NCPA's Mentoring Program", NCPA's Affiliate Exchange program which was selected by NALA as the Affiliates Association's presentation for the Affiliates Association Meeting on Thursday. Stephanie and I spoke to well over 100 paralegals and educators on NCPA's Mentoring Program and how the Association has been able to develop and administer a successful mentoring program throughout the state. The presentation was well received. We answered many questions from other affiliate members the remainder of the week, and I continue to get e-mails from associations throughout the country about our program. Once again, NCPA shined.

The mantra for the week was "live every day with purpose". I try every day to apply that to my work. I have always strived to be the best paralegal that I can be; hey if you have to work, you might as well do something you enjoy and be the best that you can be. My goal every day on a professional level is to help someone to be the best that they can be which is why our Mentor Program means so much to me.

Thank you to all NCPA members for your support and encouragement over the last two years as you trusted me to represent NCPA as its Liaison for NALA. I have truly enjoyed these two years, and it makes me proud to go to the national meeting every year and recognize how much NCPA is respected by other affiliates throughout the US.

Sincerely,  
 Kaye H. Summers  
 Kaye H. Summers, ACP, NCCP  
 NALA Liaison



Stephanie B. Elliott, NCCP and Kaye H. Summers, ACP, NCCP at the Affiliated Members Meeting



Martha L. Blackman-Hughes, NCCP - Member of the 2012 NALA LEAP class!





Stephanie B. Elliott, NCCP, Karen McGee (NALA President) and Kaye H. Summers, ACP, NCCP

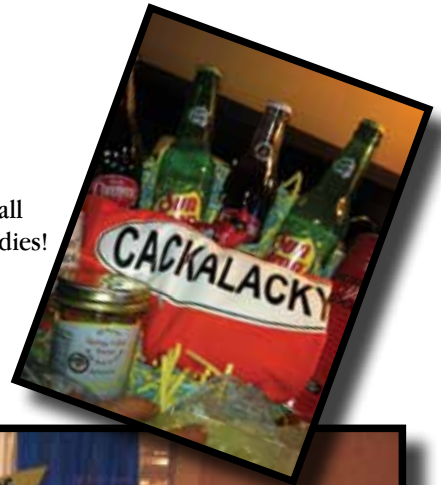


Belinda Thomas, ACP and her attorney, Wiley P. Wooten, Esq. (NCPA Attorney Advisor) were the presenters for the Family Law Institute



Stephanie B. Elliott, NCCP and Martha L. Blackman-Hughes, NCCP taking in the Omaha Zoo

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## NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

### **Now Is the Time to Offer Your Service**

Each of us is given certain talents and abilities that we can use for the good of others. Now is the time for each of us to consider using those abilities for the good of NCPA and its members. Please consider serving as an NCPA officer or director in the 2013-2014 membership year. As you contemplate this decision, think about the special abilities you may have to share and the leadership opportunities afforded each of us to further the paralegal profession in North Carolina and beyond.

Following this article, you will find a "Declaration of Candidacy for Office" form and a "Recommendation for District Director" form for some districts. If you are interested in becoming more involved in NCPA, or if you know of someone you believe would be good for the organization, please complete the appropriate form and return it to the address listed on the form. The deadline for returning the "Declaration of Candidacy for Office" form is **December 19, 2012**, and the deadline for returning the "Recommendation for District Director" form is **January 7, 2013**.

For your convenience, listed below is a short description of the duties for each office. Please refer to the NCPA website, under "About NCPA", if you wish to further explore the duties of an officer or director.

President:	Represents needs and concerns of the membership before the Board of Directors; supervises the work of other Officers and Committee Chairs; and keeps the membership advised. [See Bylaws Article VIII.1. and Standing Rule VIII.A.1.]
First Vice President:	Responsible for the planning of seminars, workshops, and other educational events; serves as Education Committee Chair. [See Bylaws Article VIII.2. and Standing Rule VIII.A.2.]
Second Vice President:	Serves as Membership Committee Chair; responsible for compilation of the Membership Directory. [See Bylaws Article VIII.3. and Standing Rule VIII.A.3.]
Secretary:	Responsible for keeping a permanent record of all meetings of the membership. [See Bylaws Article VIII.4. and Standing Rule VIII.A.4.]
Treasurer:	Serves as Finance Committee Chair; prepares budget for the ensuing fiscal year to be approved by the Board of Directors; responsible for the deposit of funds as well as all disbursements as provided for in the budget. [See Bylaws Article VIII.5. and Standing Rule VIII.A.5.]
NALA Liaison:	A NALA member who is familiar with NALA Bylaws and Standing Rules, this officer represents NCPA at the NALA Annual Meeting of Affiliated Associations and makes quarterly reports to NALA concerning NCPA's activities; coordinates with the CLA Review Course Subcommittee Chair on planning and presentation of CLA Review Course. [See Bylaws Article VIII.6. and Standing Rule VIII.A.7.]
Parliamentarian:	Serves as Bylaws and Standing Rules Committee Chair; attends all membership meetings to give opinions on parliamentary procedure and interpret NCPA's Bylaws and Standing Rules. [See Bylaws Article VIII.7. and Standing Rule VIII.A.6.]

For those district members who are electing new District Directors, a "Recommendation for District Director" form follows this article. Each District Director, as a member of the NCPA Board of Directors, is responsible for the promotion of NCPA within his or her own district, including recruitment of new members and assisting with development of educational events within each district. [See Standing Rule IX.C.5.] This position gives the District Director a great chance to network with other paralegals in a specific geographic district and it affords the opportunity to find out how other areas in North Carolina are educating and promoting paralegals in their districts. The completed "Recommendation for District Director" form must be returned by **January 7, 2013**.

If you have any questions about any officer or director position, please contact Nominations & Elections Committee Chair Anita Watts Wing, NCCP at [anitawattswing@gmail.com](mailto:anitawattswing@gmail.com), or [info@ncparalegal.org](mailto:info@ncparalegal.org), or contact one of the current NCPA officers or directors. Names and email addresses of officers and directors can be found on the NCPA website at [www.ncparalegal.org](http://www.ncparalegal.org). Rest your pointer on "About NCPA" on the left to see a drop-down menu for "Board of Directors" or "Officers and Executive Committee."

DECLARATION OF CANDIDACY FOR THE OFFICE OF

\_\_\_\_\_  
OF  
NORTH CAROLINA PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION, INC.  
2013-2014

The undersigned hereby declares that he/she is actively employed as a Paralegal or Legal Assistant; is legally competent to enter into contracts; and is currently a General Member in good standing of North Carolina Paralegal Association, Inc., and has been so for at least one (1) year.

Qualifications for Office:

Having read and understood Articles VII and VIII of the Bylaws of the North Carolina Paralegal Association, Inc. pertaining to officers, I hereby declare myself a candidate for the office of \_\_\_\_\_, subject to election at the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Corporation.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ (Print/Type Your Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Sign Your Name)

Candidate's Address and Telephone Number:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

---

Send to: Anita Watts Wing, NCCP  
NCPA Nominations and Elections Chair  
North Carolina Paralegal Association, Inc.  
Post Office Box 36264  
Charlotte, NC 28236-6264  
[info@ncparalegal.org](mailto:info@ncparalegal.org)

RECOMMENDATION FOR DISTRICT DIRECTOR  
FOR DISTRICT \_\_\_\_ OF  
NORTH CAROLINA PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

Pursuant to the provisions of ARTICLE IX.3 and .5 of the Bylaws of North Carolina Paralegal Association, Inc. and Section IX.C of the Standing Rules, the position of District Directors for District II, IV, VI, and VIII (two-year term position), will be elected by the members of their respective regions and announced at the 2013 Annual Meeting.

If you are a member of District II, IV, VI, or VIII and wish to nominate a candidate for the Directorship of your District, please complete the following form and mail it, together with a letter from your nominee expressing his/her interest in the position and a copy of the nominee's resume, in accordance with the following instructions.

**DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT BY ELECTIONS CHAIR IS JANUARY 7, 2013**

Send to: Anita Watts Wing, NCCP  
NCPA Nominations and Elections Chair  
North Carolina Paralegal Association, Inc.  
Post Office Box 36264  
Charlotte, NC 28236-6264  
[info@ncparalegal.org](mailto:info@ncparalegal.org)

FROM: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Print/Type Your Name)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

With his/her permission, I hereby recommend for election to the Board of Directors of North Carolina Paralegal Association, Inc. as Director of District \_\_\_\_\_, subject to the provisions of Article IX of the Bylaws:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print/Type Name of NOMINEE)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Employment: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No.: \_\_\_\_\_

This will certify that I am a member in good standing and that my nominee is a General Member in good standing of North Carolina Paralegal Association, Inc., and has been so for at least one year as of this day, is employed as a paralegal, and is a permanent resident of the State of North Carolina.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Nominator)

**STANDING RULES OF  
NORTH CAROLINA PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION, INC.**

XIII. ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

- A. Qualifications and method of election are set forth in detail in Article VII of the Bylaws.
- B. Each candidate shall have the opportunity to campaign for his/her position as follows:
  1. Each candidate shall have the opportunity to make a speech at the annual meeting for no more than two minutes and three minutes for questions and answers from the floor.
  2. That by way of *NCPA FORUM* all candidates shall have the opportunity to notify all members of the Association that they are currently seeking an office. This shall be done by publishing the slate of candidates in the appropriate issue of *NCPA FORUM*. Each candidate may submit for publication in *NCPA FORUM* a photo and a statement not to exceed 750 words. No candidate shall be allowed to place an advertisement in *NCPA FORUM*, whether paid for individually or paid for by another individual, privately or publicly donated. Candidates shall be allowed to receive the current mailing labels for the membership (at the current cost to NCPA) so that they may send a separate mailing to the membership regarding their qualifications and other personal information. **[amended 1/10/1998]**
  3. A copy of all of the above mentioned rules shall be attached to the call for candidates that is to be issued to the membership by December 5.

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# NCPA 2008 / 2010 / 2012 SURVEY COMPARISON

By Judy F Reins, CLA, NCCP - Survey Chair

Thanks to everyone who participated in the NCPA 2012 Paralegal Utilization and Compensation Survey. The survey took place from July 1, 2012 through August 26, 2012. **The full survey results from 2012 will be posted soon on the NCPA website.** I will send an email apprising everyone when the final results are available for viewing.

For this article, I have chosen to do a brief comparison of just a few areas of the past three surveys from 2008, 2010, and 2012, which I thought would be interesting as well as insightful. I have also included some information on new questions regarding technology that have not been included on past surveys. *Numbers and/or percentages will be used.*

## Respondents

TOTAL SURVEY RESPONDENTS		
2008	2010	2012
441	223	155
<i>Note: It is discouraging to see participation going down for each subsequent survey. If you stay informed, it may help you negotiate better job opportunities and work resources.</i>		

## NCCP Certification

NUMBER OF NC CERTIFIED PARALEGALS		
2008	2010	2012
375 out of 440 responses (85%)	183 out of 220 responses (83%)	112 out of 154 responses (72.73 %)
<i>Note: Please encourage new and non-certified paralegals to get certified!</i>		

## Employment

Work Environment	2008	2010	2012
Private Firm	65 %	58.4 %	55.41 %
Government	12.9 %	11.4 %	16.22 %
Corporation	12.7 %	19.6 %	16.22 %
Health/Medical	1.1 %	1.4 %	4.05 %
Bank	3.7 %	3.7 %	2.02 %
<i>Note: All categories are not included here due to space limitations.</i>			

## Travel

<b>Do you Travel?</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2012</b>
Yes, frequently	5 %	5 %	3.42 %
Yes, occasionally	22 %	24.5 %	41.78 %
Seldom	45 %	40 %	<i>Not Surveyed</i>
No	28 %	30.5 %	54.8 %

<b>Days Traveled Per Year</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2012</b>
1 – 5	56 %	72.2 %	46.15 %
6 – 10	20 %	12.5 %	27.7 %
Over 10	24 %	15.3 %	26.15 %

## Compensation

<b>Gross Salary</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2012</b>
Less than \$20,000	0.9%	3.8%	1.38 %
\$20,000 - \$24,999	3.2%	1.4%	6.85 %
\$25,000 - \$29,999	5.5%	7.8%	6.16 %
\$30,000 - \$34,999	7.1%	11.1%	11.65 %
\$35,000 - \$39,999	13.5%	10.7%	12.33 %
\$40,000 - \$44,999	18.5%	11.1%	10.96 %
\$45,000 - \$49,999	15.3%	13.05%	12.33 %
\$50,000 - \$54,999	11.7%	13.05%	7.53 %
\$55,000 - \$59,999	9.2%	7.8%	7.53 %
\$60,000 - \$64,999	7.1%	6.2%	6.16 %
\$65,000 - \$69,999	2.7%	6.2%	3.42 %
\$70,000 and above	5.3%	7.8%	13.7 %



**Technology** (*This category was not surveyed in 2008 or 2010*)

<b>IS/IT Department</b>	<b>2012</b>
Yes	62.59 %
No	37.41 %

<b>Use Metadata Software</b>	<b>2012</b>
Yes	34.03 %
No	29.86 %
No; considering it	4.17 %
Don't know	31.94 %

**Association Memberships**

<b>North Carolina Paralegal Assoc.</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2012</b>
Yes	63 %	77.7 %	80.52 %
No	37 %	22.3 %	19.48 %

<b>Other Associations</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2012</b>
National Assoc. of Legal Assistants (NALA)	12.2 %	25.28 %	28.15 %
North Carolina Bar Association's Paralegal Division	28.9 %	37.64 %	50.48 %
<i>Note: Only the top two "Other Associations" are included here due to space limitations.</i>			

If you are not already a member of the North Carolina Paralegal Association, please consider joining NCPA. Please also consider volunteering. Membership and networking will help you stay educated and employed!

Finally, many thanks to Brenda Mareski, who helped with the technical computer end of the survey as well as creating several charts.

If you have any comments or feedback, please contact: [info@ncparalegal.org](mailto:info@ncparalegal.org).

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## Mentoring Program

The purpose of the NCPA Mentoring Program is to develop and promote the career development and professionalism of future paralegals. The Program invites senior paralegals to share their knowledge of the profession and their area(s) of expertise with junior paralegals and students enrolled in a Paralegal Program in the State of North Carolina. NCPA strongly believes that it is vitally important that seasoned paralegals help foster the growth of its newer members as a means to meet the needs of our ever growing profession and to set the standard for the future.

If you are interested in either being a Mentor or Mentee, please contact one of our Mentoring Program Chairs:

Kaye Summers, ACP, NCCP  
at [kaye@pwkl.com](mailto:kaye@pwkl.com) or 919-682-9691.

Diane Tally, NCCP  
at [dtally@wehwlaw.com](mailto:dtally@wehwlaw.com)  
or 336-819-6002.

Your mentor/mentee relationship will contribute to the success and retention of new paralegals and the learning of the profession!

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## NCPA Wishes the Following Members a Very Happy Birthday!

*If your birthday is not listed correctly, please edit your profile on our website ([www.ncparalegal.org](http://www.ncparalegal.org)) to make sure we have the correct month!*

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 Amy P Gray  
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# NCPA TIME MACHINE

*Qualifications, Hiring, Compensation and Retention*

By Sharon G. Robertson, CLA

## Paralegals

### *AN ATTORNEY'S RIGHT HAND*

What qualifications, hiring, compensation and retention practices are most beneficial to the attorney/employer of paralegals? The 80's saw the rise of a new professional field in the legal profession -- the paralegal or legal assistant. Slowly, but surely, law firms have recognized the value and services performed by paralegals in increasing the bottom line and being cost-efficient. But who are these individuals? Are they called paralegals, legal assistants or legal technicians?

A paralegal is a non-lawyer with specialized knowledge earned through education and/or experience working under the direct supervision of an attorney performing legal services that would otherwise be performed by the attorney.<sup>1</sup>

Today, the terms "paralegal" and "legal assistant" are now used interchangeably. In contrast, the term "legal technician" generally has been used to identify non-lawyers who deliver legal services directly to the public without any supervision or intervention of an attorney.

Now that we know what a paralegal is, what are the qualifications for a person to become a paralegal? Due to a lack of a national

or statewide standard, paralegal qualifications vary from location to location. Educational requirements range from a high school diploma to a four year certificate and education programs vary in lengths from a few months to years. The ABA has an approval program in place which can assist students and potential employers in identifying programs. In North Carolina, one can obtain a paralegal certificate from a community college program (associate degree) in two years or through a post graduate degree program in three months.

With this variety available, employers should look to the educational background and training an individual has received when looking for a qualified, experienced paralegal. A consensus has been forming among paralegal professionals that educational requirements should include one of the following:

- 1** *graduation from an ABA approved program of study for paralegals and a baccalaureate degree; or*
- 2** *a baccalaureate degree in any field, plus not less than two years of in-house training as a paralegal; or*

## NCPA TIME MACHINE continued

- 3** *an associate degree in the paralegal field, plus not less than two years of in-house training as a paralegal; or*
- 4** *one who has a minimum of four years of in-house training as a paralegal; or*
- 5** *Certified Legal Assistant (CLA)<sup>2</sup> in good standing.*

More and more employers are looking for individuals with a two or four year degree with a paralegal certificate, experience, and multiple specialties in order to get their money's worth. In the early and mid 80's, paralegals were hired and trained on the job without much thought to their qualifications and experience. With the advent of the paralegal schools and programs, employers are now able to choose and pick more carefully. The recent downsizing of law firms has also resulted in the rise and popularity of hiring temporary paralegals for a specific length of time or to assist on specific cases. Temporary paralegals are also an excellent avenue for those attorneys of law firms who are not sure if they need or want a paralegal in their offices and want to experiment without the problem or hassle of having a permanent hire.

Now that you have a paralegal in your employment, what are you going to do to effectively utilize this person and insure their loyalty and devotion? Paralegals can and do perform a variety of tasks delegated by the attorney, allowing the attorney to handle more cases and realize more income for the firm in the long run. Paralegals can be found working with attorneys in all the substantive fields of law. Paralegals should be included in case review meetings and in-house trainings for attorneys. More and more firms are realizing that a qualified, trained paralegal is more cost-efficient.

One major obstacle facing paralegals has been convincing attorneys that they are trained professionals and capable of providing competent assistance. This assistance can range from document numbering and summarizing to legal research to trial assistance. Working in tandem with the attorney, the paralegal can provide invaluable assistance from the beginning with interviewing and investigation continuing through the trial and appeal process. Delegation of tasks by the attorney at the outset of the case, including familiarizing the paralegal with the facts and legal issues at hand, leads to an effective and efficient means of delivery of legal services to the client with minimum overlapping of job duties.

The next question for law firms and employers should be, "How do I keep this skilled, qualified paralegal and not lose him or her to job burnout or stress?" Turnover of qualified and experienced paralegals in a firm lowers the quality of work product for the client resulting in the attorney performing the tasks the paralegal would or should have done. More and more law firms are recognizing the need to retain their paralegals in an effort to minimize the high turnover rate and resulting training expense of a new paralegal employee.

The solutions to retaining and motivating paralegals to remain with the law firm can vary depending upon the size of the firm. Duties assigned according to the level of expertise of the paralegal avoids burnout and career change. Paralegals should be trained and challenged in their work to a higher level of responsibilities and duties. Gradually increased responsibility and challenging assignments should increase loyalty and professionalism in the paralegal. Without proper

## NCPA TIME MACHINE continued

training and utilization, attorneys end up performing duties and tasks that should properly be performed by paralegals, thus costing the client and the firm.

One of the major complaints voiced by paralegals has been the lack of mobility and promotion in their employment. More and more law firms have instituted a tier system for paralegals, recognizing senior paralegals over entry level paralegals. Tasks senior paralegals perform include supervision and training of entry level paralegals, case management, directing special projects, and orienting new employees. Senior paralegals are then acknowledged for their expertise, knowledge, ability, and professionalism thus heightening their professional self-image and increasing their skills. Employers should encourage paralegals to set out long-term and short-term goals and discuss the progress of these goals during the yearly evaluation process.

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**Qualified paralegals are dedicated to providing skilled, competent legal assistance to attorneys. They have proved to be competent and cost-efficient.**

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Paralegals should be adequately compensated for their experience and skills. Compensation can include many forms ranging from monetary to other benefits, such as retirement and pension/profit sharing to payment for overtime through a combination of time off or money. Recognizing the importance of keeping up with current events and changes in the legal profession, paralegals should be encouraged to attend educational and training seminars each year and reimbursed by the employer for their expenses incurred. Employers should also encourage their paralegals to join and be involved in a

professional organization, such as the North Carolina Paralegal Association or the Legal Assistants Division of the North Carolina Academy of Trial Lawyers.

Qualified paralegals are dedicated to providing skilled, competent legal assistance to attorneys. They have proved to be competent and cost-efficient. With the proper hiring criteria, continuing legal education, and respectable compensation levels, the effective and efficient delivery of legal services by paralegals will gain momentum and respect.

*Sharon G. Robertson, CLA is District IX Director of the North Carolina Paralegal Association, Inc. and past First Vice President. Ms. Robertson is a paralegal with North Carolina Prisoner Legal Services, Inc.*

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<sup>1</sup>The American Bar Association has defined a legal assistant as a person, qualified through education, training or work experience, who is employed or retained by a lawyer, law office, governmental agency or other entity, in a capacity or function which involves the performance, under the ultimate direction and supervision of an attorney, of specifically-delegated substantive legal work, which work, for the most part, requires a sufficient knowledge of legal concepts that, absent such assistant, the attorney would perform the task.

The National Association of Legal Assistants has adopted a similar definition stating legal assistants are a distinguishable group of persons who assist attorneys in the delivery of legal services. Through formal education, training, and experience, legal assistants have knowledge and expertise regarding the legal system and substantive and procedural law which qualify them to do work of a legal nature under the supervision of an attorney.

<sup>2</sup>The Certified Legal Assistant Exam is provided by the National Association of Legal Assistants, Inc. and is a national certification program. The CLA is a certification mark duly registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

## Calling All Members!

**“People who ask our advice almost never take it. Yet we should never refuse to give it, upon request, for it often helps us to see our own way more clearly.” --Brendan Francis**

Please consider contributing to the next edition of the *NCPA Forum*. Not only do we want our association's publication to be informative and innovative for each and every member, we also want it to include helpful hints and sound advice from our main resources, our members. We are looking for all types of articles that relate to the paralegal community. Anything of interest to you will most likely be of interest to other paralegals across the state. Let your voice be heard in the *NCPA Forum*. Please submit all articles in Word format to [mel\\_clayton79@yahoo.com](mailto:mel_clayton79@yahoo.com). You may also e-mail your comments, suggestions and possible article contributors to us as well.

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