April 2022

Labor Market Analysis

Paralegals and Legal Assistants

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California Community Colleges

Prepared by the Central Valley/Mother Lode Center of Excellence

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COVID-19 Statement: This report includes employment projection data by Emsi. Emsi's projections are modeled on recorded (historical) employment figures and incorporate several underlying assumptions, including the assumption that the economy during the projection period will be at approximately full employment or potential output. To the extent that a recession or labor shock, such as the economic effects of COVID-19, can cause long-term structural change, they may impact the projections. At this time, it is not possible to quantify the impact of COVID-19 on projections of industry and occupational employment. Other measures such as unemployment rates and monthly industry employment estimates will reflect the most recent information on employment and jobs in the state and, in combination with input from local employers, may help validate current and future employment needs as depicted here.

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Summary

Please note the COVID-19 statement on page 2 when considering this report's findings.

This study conducted by the Central Valley/Mother Lode Center of Excellence examines labor market demand, wages, skills, and postsecondary supply for administration of justice (ADJ). However, only one occupation related to administration of justice was identified by Porterville College:

- 23-2011, Paralegals and Legal Assistants

The Center of Excellence for the Central Valley Mother Lode Region opted to focus this report on the single occupation provided with the most correct supporting TOP code. There are other more appropriate SOC codes/occupations that should be incorporated if ADJ is to be the focus of this report. A few of these other SOC codes do not require ADJ general (the given four-digit TOP code); however, they do require an academy. This option is also available at the six-digit sub-ADJ TOP code level.

Key findings:

- **Occupational demand —** Nearly 1,310 workers were employed in jobs related to paralegals and legal assistants in 2020 in the South Central Valley/Southern Mother Lode (SCV/SML) subregion. The largest occupation is paralegals and legal assistants with 1,309 workers, a projected growth rate of 6% over the next five years, and 157 annual openings.

- **Wages —** Paralegals and legal assistants earn the highest entry-level wage, $19.17/hour in the subregion.

- **Employers —** Employers with the most job postings in the subregion are San Joaquin College Law, Apc, and Borton Petrini.

- **Occupational titles —** The most common occupational title in job postings in the subregion is Paralegals and Legal Assistants. The most common job title is Paralegal.

- **Skills and certifications —** The top baseline skill is communication skills, the top specialized skill is legal documentation, and the top software skill is Microsoft Office. The most in-demand certification is a paralegal certification.

- **Education —** An associate degree is typically required for paralegals and legal assistants.

- **Supply —** Analysis of postsecondary completions shows that on average 6 awards were conferred in the Central Valley/Mother Lode region each year.

Based on a comparison of occupational demand and supply, there is an undersupply of 154 trained workers in the subregion and 222 workers in the region. The Center of Excellence recommends that Porterville College work with the regional directors, the college's advisory board, and local industry in the development of programs to address the shortage of paralegals and legal assistants workers in the region.

Introduction

The Central Valley/Mother Lode Center of Excellence was asked by Porterville College to provide labor market information for paralegals and legal assistants. The geographical focus for this report is the South Central Valley/Southern Mother Lode (SCV/SML) subregion, but regional demand and supply data has been included for broader applicability and use. The average living wage for a single adult in the SCV/SML subregion is $11.91/hour.[1] Analysis of the program and occupational data related to paralegals and legal assistants resulted in the identification of applicable occupations. The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System codes and titles used in this report are:

- 23-2011, Paralegals and Legal Assistants

The occupational titles, job descriptions, sample job titles, and knowledge and skills from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and O*NET OnLine are shown below.

Paralegals and Legal Assistants
Job Description: Assist lawyers by investigating facts, preparing legal documents, or researching legal precedent. Conduct research to support a legal proceeding, to formulate a defense, or to initiate legal action.
Knowledge: Administrative, English Language, Law and Government, Customer and Personal Service, Computers and Electronics
Skills: Reading Comprehension, Active Listening, Speaking, Writing, and Critical Thinking

Occupational Demand

The SCV/SML subregion employed 1,309 workers in paralegals and legal assistants occupations in 2020 (Exhibit 1). The largest occupation is paralegals and legal assistants with 1,309 workers. This occupation is projected to grow by 6% over the next five years and has the greatest number of projected annual openings, 157.

Exhibit 1. Paralegals and legal assistants employment and occupational projections in the SCV/SML subregion

| Occupation	2020 Jobs	2025 Jobs	5-Year Change	5-Year % Change	Annual Openings
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	1,309	1,386	77	6%	157
TOTAL	**1,309**	**1,386**	**77**	**6%**	**157**

Wages

Exhibit 2 shows the entry-level hourly wages of the paralegals and legal assistants occupations. Paralegals and legal assistants earn the highest entry-level wage, $19.17/hour in the subregion[2].

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[1] The term "living wage" in Center of Excellence reports is calculated by averaging the self-sufficiency wages from the Insight Center's California Family Needs Calculator for each county in the subregion: https://insightcced.org/tools-metrics/self-sufficiency-standard-tool-for-california/.

[2] Entry-level wages are derived from the 25th percentile.

Exhibit 2. Paralegals and legal assistants entry-level wages in the SCV/SML subregion

Dotted line denotes $12.65/hour living wage in the SCV/SML subregion
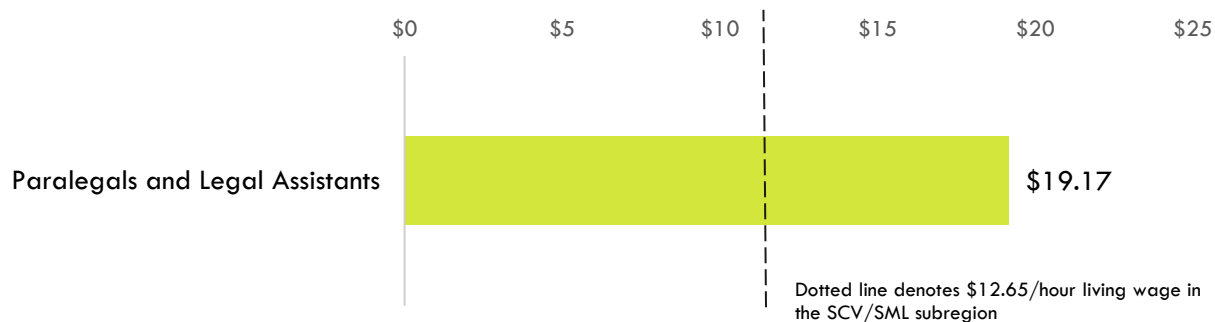
Job Postings

There were 247 job postings for the five occupations in the SCV/SML subregion from October 2021 to March 2022.[3] The employers with the most job postings are listed in Exhibit 3.

Exhibit 3. Top employers of paralegals and legal assistants by number of job postings

Employer	Job Postings	% Job Postings
Apc	9	5%
Borton Petrini	8	4%
County Of Fresno	5	3%
Fresno County	5	3%
Kahn Company	4	2%
Law Office Of Zeppy Attashian	4	2%
Kahn Soares Conway	3	2%
Yarra Law Group	3	2%
Zurich Insurance	3	2%
Apc	9	5%

Exhibit 4 shows how job postings for the targeted occupations in the SCV/SML subregion are distributed across one O*NET OnLine occupations. The occupational title Paralegals and legal assistants is listed in 247 job postings. Note how this occupational title dominates the job posting results. Common job titles in postings include Paralegal in 43 job postings, Legal Assistant in 34 job postings, and Litigation Paralegal in 14 job postings.

Exhibit 4. Top occupational titles in job postings for paralegals and legal assistants

Occupational Title	Job Postings	% of Job Postings
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	247	100%

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[3] Other than occupation titles and job titles, the categories below can be counted one or multiple times per job posting, and across several areas in a single posting. For example, a skill can be counted in two different skill types, and an employer can indicate more than one education level.

Salaries

Exhibit 5 shows the "Market Salaries" for paralegals and legal assistants occupations. These are calculated by Burning Glass using a machine learning model built off of millions of job postings every year. This accounts for adjustments based on locations, industry, skills, experience, education requirements, among other variables.

Exhibit 5. Salaries for paralegals and legal assistants occupations

Market Salary Percentile	Salary Amount
10th Percentile	$29,024
25th Percentile	$32,272
50th Percentile	$37,109
75th Percentile	$46,087
90th Percentile	$51,141

Education

Of the 247 job postings, 120 listed an education level preferred for the positions being filled. Among those, 50% requested a bachelor's degree, 40% requested high school or vocational training, and 29% requested a bachelor's degree (Exhibit 6). A job posting can indicate more than one education level. Hence, the percentages shown in the chart below may total more than 100%.
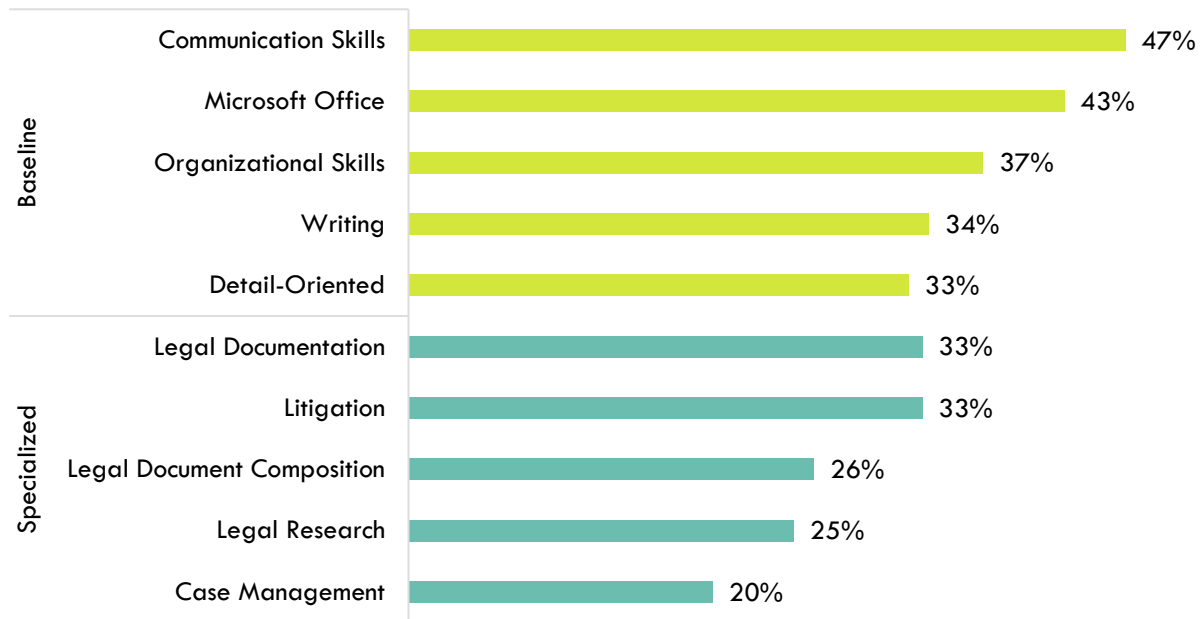
Exhibit 6. Education levels requested in job postings for paralegals and legal assistants

Education Level	Job Postings	% of Job Postings
Bachelor's degree	60	50%
High school or vocational training	48	40%
Associate's degree	35	29%
Master's degree	4	3%
Doctoral degree	3	3%

Baseline and Specialized Skills

Exhibit 7 depicts the top baseline and specialized skills for the targeted occupations. The three most important baseline skills are communications skills, 47% of job postings, Microsoft Office, 43%, and organizational skills, 37%. The top three specialized skills are legal documentation, 33% of job postings, litigation, 33%, and legal document composition, 26%.

Exhibit 7. In-demand paralegals and legal assistants baseline and specialized skills

Baseline
- Communication Skills — 47%
- Microsoft Office — 43%
- Organizational Skills — 37%
- Writing — 34%
- Detail-Oriented — 33%

Specialized
- Legal Documentation — 33%
- Litigation — 33%
- Legal Document Composition — 26%
- Legal Research — 25%
- Case Management — 20%

Software Skills

Analysis also included the software skills most in demand by employers. Microsoft Office and Excel were the top two software skills identified in job postings (Exhibit 8).
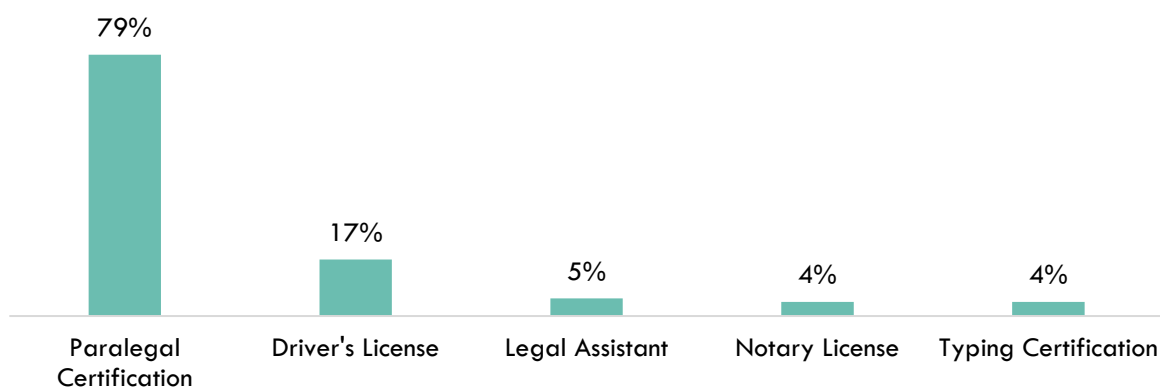
Exhibit 8. In-demand paralegals and legal assistants software skills

- Microsoft Office — 43%
- Microsoft Excel — 26%
- Microsoft Word — 19%
- Microsoft Outlook — 12%
- Microsoft Powerpoint — 7%
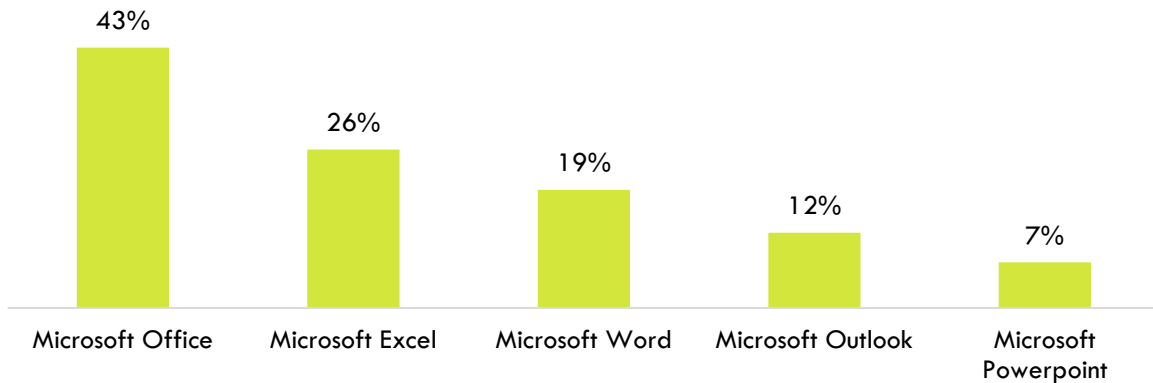
Certifications

Of the 247 job postings, 94 contained certification data. Among those, 79% indicated a need for a paralegal certification. The next top certifications are a driver's license and legal assistant (Exhibit 9).

Exhibit 9. Top paralegals and legal assistants certifications requested in job postings

Bar chart showing:
- Paralegal Certification: 79%
- Driver's License: 17%
- Legal Assistant: 5%
- Notary License: 4%
- Typing Certification: 4%

Education, Work Experience & Training

An associate degree is typically required for paralegals and legal assistants (Exhibit 10).

Exhibit 10. Education, work experience, training, and Current Population Survey results for paralegals and legal assistants occupations[4]

Occupation	Typical Entry-level Education	Work Experience Required	Typical On-The-Job Training	CPS
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	Associate's degree	None	None	42.4%

Supply

Analysis of program data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) included the TOP and CIP codes and titles: 051410 - Legal Office Technology and 22.0301 - Legal Administrative Assistant/Secretary. Analysis of the last three years of data shows that, on average, 6 awards were conferred in the Central Valley/Mother Lode region each year (Exhibit 11).

Exhibit 11. Postsecondary supply for paralegals and legal assistants occupations in the region

TOP/CIP Code- Title	College	Associate Degree	Award 1 < 2 Academic Years	Certificate 16 < 30 Semester Units	Certificate 30 < 60 Semester Units	Certificate 6 < 18 Semester Units	Subtotal
051410 - Legal Office Technology	Fresno City	1		1	1		2
	Sequoias					1	1
22.0301 - Legal Administrative Assistant/Secretary	MTI Business College Inc		2				2
TOTAL		1	2	1	1	1	6

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[4] "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey," Bureau of Labor Statistics, https://www.bls.gov/cps/.

There is an undersupply of 154 paralegals and legal assistants workers in the SCV/SML subregion and 222 workers in the region (Exhibit 12).

Exhibit 12. Paralegals and legal assistants workforce demand (annual job openings), postsecondary supply of students (awards), and additional students needed to fill gap in the SCV/SML subregion and region
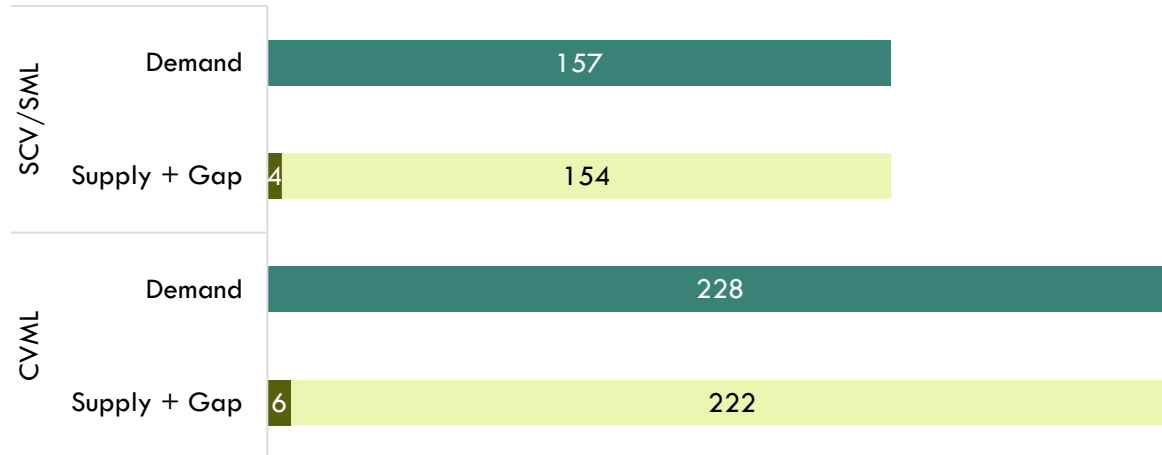
Student Outcomes

There was no data available for employment and wage outcomes from the California Community College Chancellor's Cal-PASS Plus LaunchBoard for the TOP code related to paralegals and legal assistants.

Conclusion

The entry-level wages of the five occupations exceed the SCV/SML subregion's average living wage. There were 247 job postings in the past six months for occupations related to paralegals and legal assistants in the subregion. Analysis of skills and certification requirements in job postings indicates:

- The top baseline skill is communication skills, and the top specialized skill is legal documentation.
- The top software skill is Microsoft Office.
- The top certification is paralegal certification.

There is an undersupply of trained workers, 154 in the SCV/SML subregion and 222 in the region.

Recommendation

Based on these findings, it is recommended that Porterville College work with the regional directors, the college's advisory board, and local industry in the development of programs to address the shortage of paralegals and legal assistants workers in the region.

Appendix A: Methodology & Data Sources

Data Sources

Labor market and educational supply data compiled in this report derive from a variety of sources. Data were drawn from external sources, including the Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc., the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems Data Mart and the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Below is the summary of the data sources found in this study.

Data Type	Source
Labor Market Information/Population Estimates and Projections/Educational Attainment	Economic Modeling Specialists, Intl. (EMSI). EMSI occupational employment data are based on final EMSI industry data and final EMSI staffing patterns. Wage estimates are based on Occupational Employment Statistics (QCEW and Non-QCEW Employees classes of worker) and the American Community Survey (Self-Employed and Extended Proprietors). Occupational wage estimates also affected by county-level EMSI earnings by industry: economicmodeling.com.
Typical Education Level and On-the-job Training	Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) uses a system to assign categories for entry-level education and typical on-the-job training to each occupation for which BLS publishes projections data: https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/educational-attainment.htm.
Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment Estimates	California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division: labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov.
Job Posting and Skills Data	Burning Glass: burning-glass.com/.
Additional Education Requirements/ Employer Preferences	The O*NET Job Zone database includes over 900 occupations as well as information on skills, abilities, knowledge, work activities and interests associated with specific occupations: onetonline.org.

Key Terms and Concepts

Annual Job Openings: Annual openings are calculated by dividing the number of years in the projection period by total job openings.

Education Attainment Level: The highest education attainment level of workers age 25 years or older.

Employment Estimate: The total number of workers currently employed.

Employment Projections: Projections of employment are calculated by a proprietary Economic Modeling Specialists, Intl. (EMSI) formula that includes historical employment and economic indicators along with national, state and local trends.

Living Wage: The cost of living in a specific community or region for one adult and no children. The cost increases with the addition of children.

Occupation: An occupation is a grouping of job titles that have a similar set of activities or tasks that employees perform.

Percent Change: Rate of growth or decline in the occupation for the projected period; this does not factor in replacement openings.

Replacements: Estimate of job openings resulting from workers retiring or otherwise permanently leaving an occupation. Workers entering an occupation often need training. These replacement needs, added to job openings due to growth, may be used to assess the minimum number of workers who will need to be trained for an occupation.

Total Job Openings (New + Replacements): Sum of projected growth (new jobs) and replacement needs. When an occupation is expected to lose jobs, or retain the current employment level, number of openings will equal replacements.

Typical Education Requirement: represents the typical education level most workers need to enter an occupation.

Typical On-The-Job Training: indicates the typical on-the-job training needed to attain competency in the skills needed in the occupation.