



# Labor Market Assessment: Paralegal Occupations

December 2024

## Introduction

This report profiles Paralegals in California and the 12-County Bay Region for a proposed bachelor’s degree program.

This report provides student outcomes data on employment and earnings for Paralegal programs (TOP 1402.00) in the Bay Region. It is recommended that this data be reviewed to better understand how outcomes for students taking courses on this TOP code compare to similar programs at colleges in the region.

This report evaluates labor market needs and workforce alignment for the proposed bachelor’s degree program called “Paralegal Studies.” In the sections to follow, the report leverages state and regional data to provide insights into educational and occupational requirements, employment trends, salary differentials, hourly earnings, and degree alignment for three Paralegal occupations.

This report reviews three occupations within the paralegal field. However, as explained throughout, the focus ultimately centers on Paralegals and Legal Assistants, as this occupation best aligned with the goals of this bachelor’s program and the needs of the labor market. The results show increased demand for Paralegals and Legal Assistants at both state and regional levels. In the Bay Region, entry-level paralegal positions typically offer a wage of \$33 per hour — above the regional living wage of \$27 per hour. Additionally, there appears to be an “undersupply” of paralegals compared to demand, with a projected annual gap of approximately 912 students in the Bay Region.

## Occupations under Review

- **Paralegals and Legal Assistants (23-2011):** 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.

Occupational Characteristics	
Typical Entry-Level Educational	Associate degree
Work Experience Required	None
Typical On-the-Job Training	None
Existing Workforce (% of individuals age 25+ with an associate degree, certificate, or some postsecondary coursework as their highest level of education attainment)	40%

- **Legal Support Workers, All Other (23-2099):** All legal support workers not listed separately.

Occupational Characteristics	
Typical Entry-Level Educational	Associate degree
Work Experience Required	None
Typical On-the-Job Training	None
Existing Workforce (% of individuals age 25+ with an associate degree, certificate, or some postsecondary coursework as their highest level of education attainment)	28%

- **Legal Secretaries and Administrative Assistants (43-6012):** Perform secretarial duties using legal terminology, procedures, and documents. Prepare legal papers and correspondence, such as summonses, complaints, motions, and subpoenas. May also assist with legal research.

Occupational Characteristics	
Typical Entry-Level Educational	High school diploma or equivalent
Work Experience Required	None
Typical On-the-Job Training	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Existing Workforce (% of individuals age 25+ with an associate degree, certificate, or some postsecondary coursework as their highest level of education attainment)	51%

## State Level Analysis

Table 1 shows the number of job postings that list licenses and certifications which paralegals may choose to earn, although they are not required.

**Table 1. Educational Licenses or Certifications for Paralegal Occupations in California**

Licenses or Certifications	# of Job Postings	% of Total
Project Management Professional Certification	11	<1%
Project Management Certification	6	<1%
Certified Legal Assistant	6	<1%

Source: Lightcast 2024.4; "Job Posting Analytics." Dec 2023 - Nov. 2024

Note: This table combines Paralegals and Legal Assistants, Legal Support Workers, all others, and Legal Secretaries and Administrative Assistants.

Tables 2a-2c show the educational levels listed on job postings for each occupation. For Paralegals and Legal Assistants, 61% of job postings list a bachelor's degree as preferred. For Legal Support Workers (All Others), the figure is 56%, and for Legal Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, it is 35%. Over a twelve-month period, 28% to 61% of employers included an educational requirement or preference in their job postings, while the remainder did not.

Of those postings that did contain educational requirement information, Tables 2a-2c show that wages levels increase with more education which highlights the value of pursuing bachelor's degrees, particularly in fields where advanced education is preferred but not mandated for entry. This correlation underscores the economic benefits to students for continuing their education, supporting the case for expanding bachelor's degree programs in Paralegal Studies to align with employer demands and enhance workforce readiness.

These tables also show that most job postings were for Paralegals and Legal Assistants, rather than the other two occupations. Furthermore, Legal Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, the typical education preference is a high school diploma or equivalent.

**Table 2a. Educational Level and Entry Level Wages for Paralegals and Legal Assistants in California**

Education Level	# of Job Postings	% of Total	25% Hourly Advertised Wage
High school or GED	1,285	17%	\$24
Associate degree	1,244	17%	\$25
Bachelor's degree	4,607	61%	\$29
Master's degree	212	3%	\$32
PhD. or professional degree	146	2%	\$33

Source: Lightcast 2024.4; "Job Posting Analytics." Dec. 2023 - Nov. 2024

Note: 55% of records have been excluded because they do not include a degree level. As a result, the chart above may not be representative of the full sample.

**Table 2b. Educational Level and Entry Level Wages for Legal Support Workers, All Other in California**

Education Level	# of Job Postings	% of Total	25% Hourly Advertised Wage
High school or GED	35	27%	\$20
Associate degree	8	6%	\$23
Bachelor's degree	72	56%	\$33
Master's degree	5	4%	\$33
PhD. or professional degree	8	6%	\$67

Source: Lightcast 2024.4; "Job Posting Analytics." Dec. 2023 - Nov. 2024

Note: 39% of records have been excluded because they do not include a degree level. As a result, the chart above may not be representative of the full sample.

**Table 2c. Educational Level and Entry Level Wages for Legal Secretaries and Administrative Assistants in California**

Education Level	# of Job Postings	% of Total	25% Hourly Advertised Wage
High school or GED	516	44%	\$30
Associate degree	235	20%	\$32
Bachelor's degree	407	35%	\$34
Master's degree	14	1%	\$28

Education Level	# of Job Postings	% of Total	25% Hourly Advertised Wage
PhD. or professional degree	5	<1%	\$40

Source: Lightcast 2024.4; "Job Posting Analytics." Dec. 2023 - Nov. 2024

Note: 72% of records have been excluded because they do not include a degree level. As a result, the chart above may not be representative of the full sample.

Table 3a indicates that most job postings for Paralegals and Legal Assistants (69%) require only 0 to 3 years of work experience. Compared to 45% of Legal Support Workers (All Others) and 59% of Legal Secretaries and Administrative Assistants' jobs postings list only 0 to 3 years of work experience (see Tables 3b and 3c). Legal Support Workers (All Others) also had the highest percentage (11%) of job postings requiring 10 or more years of experience, reflecting the broad range of opportunities within this category.

**Table 3a. Work Experience Requirement for Paralegals and Legal Assistants in California**

Working Experience Required	Job Postings	% of Total
0 - 1 Years	1,462	17%
2 - 3 Years	4,496	52%
4 - 6 Years	2,324	27%
7 - 9 Years	276	3%
10+ Years	168	2%

Source: Lightcast 2024.4; "Job Posting Analytics." Dec. 2023 - Nov. 2024

Note: 35% of records have been excluded because they do not include experience level. As a result, the chart above may not be representative of the full sample.

**Table 3b. Work Experience Requirement for Legal Support Workers, All Other in California**

Working Experience Required	Job Postings	% of Total
0 - 1 Years	10	11%
2 - 3 Years	31	34%
4 - 6 Years	32	36%
7 - 9 Years	7	8%
10+ Years	10	11%

Source: Lightcast 2024.4; "Job Posting Analytics." Dec. 2023 - Nov. 2024

Note: 35% of records have been excluded because they do not include experience level. As a result, the chart above may not be representative of the full sample.

**Table 3c. Work Experience Requirement for Legal Secretaries and Administrative Assistants in California**

Working Experience Required	Job Postings	% of Total
0 - 1 Years	189	10%
2 - 3 Years	964	49%

Working Experience Required	Job Postings	% of Total
4 - 6 Years	673	34%
7 - 9 Years	84	4%
10+ Years	75	4%

Source: Lightcast 2024.4; "Job Posting Analytics." Dec. 2023 - Nov. 2024

Note: 32% of records have been excluded because they do not include experience level. As a result, the chart above may not be representative of the full sample.

Table 4 shows that paralegal employment in California is substantial. In 2023, there were 69,714 positions, and the field is projected to grow by 1% statewide over the next 10 years. However, this growth is driven by Paralegals and Legal Assistants at 9%, while there is no projected growth for Legal Support Workers (All Others) and a 13% decline for Legal Secretaries and Administrative Assistants.

Additionally, entry-level to experienced wages range from \$28 to \$35 per hour for Paralegals and Legal Assistants. For Legal Support Workers (All Others), the range is \$25 to \$35, and for Legal Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, it is \$24 to \$29.

**Table 4. Employment Outlook for Paralegal Occupations in California**

Occupations	2023 Jobs	2033 Jobs	10-yr Change	10-yr % Change	Annual Openings	Annual Replacement Rate	25% Hourly Wage	50% Hourly Wage
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	40,808	44,300	3,492	9%	4,684	10%	\$28	\$35
Legal Support Workers, All Other	7,487	7,483	-4	0%	806	11%	\$25	\$35
Legal Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	21,418	18,728	-2,690	-13%	2,282	11%	\$24	\$29
<b>Total or Average</b>	<b>69,714</b>	<b>70,511</b>	<b>798</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>7,772</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>\$25</b>	<b>\$33</b>

Source: Lightcast 2024.4

In summary, the state-level analysis shows that most job postings were for Paralegals and Legal Assistants, and this field is driving overall growth. Many postings for this occupation required a bachelor's degree, and the majority specified less than three years of work experience. Therefore, the remainder of the report will focus solely on Paralegals and Legal Assistants to explore the historical trends, labor market conditions, educational supply, and living wages specifically for the Bay Region.

## Regional Level Analysis

### Employment Historical Trend for Paralegals and Legal Assistants

Table 5 shows the number of professionals employed in Paralegals and Legal Assistants over the past decade, with California having 40,808 jobs and the Bay Region accounting for about 9,854 jobs, or 24% of the total Paralegal positions. Furthermore, there has been a 25% increase in Paralegal and Legal Assistants' jobs in the Bay Region and a 37% increase statewide.

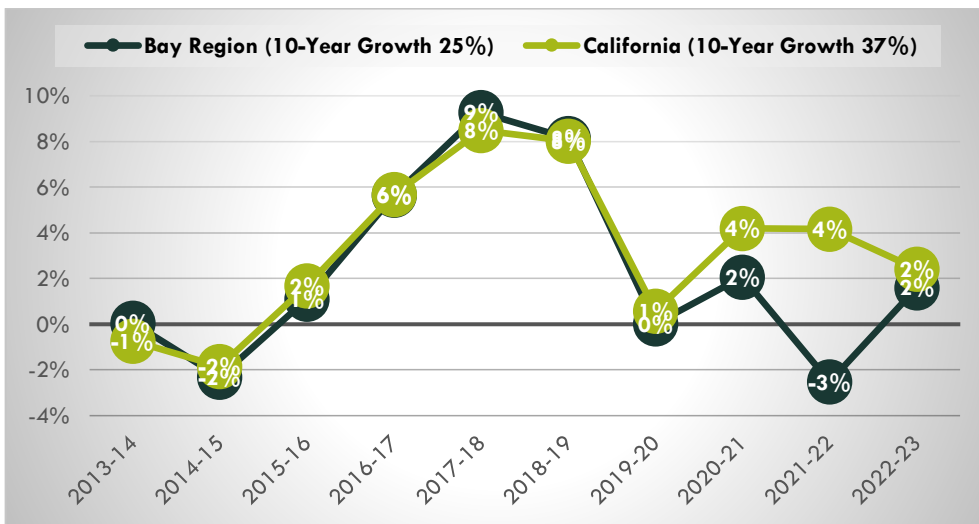
**Table 5. Historical 10-Year Employment Trend for Paralegals and Legal Assistants in the Bay Region vs. California**

Area	2013 Jobs	2023 Jobs	10-yr Change	10-yr% Change
Bay Region	7,894	9,854	1,960	25%
California	29,738	40,808	11,070	37%

Source: Lightcast 2024.4.

Figure 1 illustrates the historical employment trend for Paralegals and Legal Assistants at both the state and regional levels. It shows that the Bay Region had a similar growth rate to the state from 2013 to 2019. However, the Bay Region saw a slightly lower growth rate between 2019 and 2022, before reaching equivalency with the state in 2022-2023.

**Figure 1. Historical 10 Year to Year Present Change in Employment for Paralegals and Legal Assistants in the Bay Region vs. California**



Source: Lightcast 2024.4. Year 2013-Year 2023.

## Occupational Demand

Table 6 highlights that employment for Paralegals in the Bay Region is moderate in size, with 9,833 jobs in 2023 and a projected growth rate showing no change through 2033. This occupation offers competitive wages, with an entry-level hourly rate of \$33 and a median hourly wage of \$41. This reflects the field's continuous demand and strong earning potential in the region.

**Table 6. Employment Outlook for Paralegals and Legal Assistants in the Bay Region**

2023 Jobs	2033 Jobs	10-yr Change	10-yr % Change	Annual Openings	Annual Replacement	25% Hourly Wage	50% Hourly Wage
9,854	9,833	-21	0%	1,008	10%	\$33	\$41

Source: Lightcast 2024.4

The Bay Region includes: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, Napa, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano and Sonoma counties

## Educational Supply

There is one community college in the state with a Paralegal Studies bachelor's degree program.

- Orange County Region: Santa Ana College

There are eight community colleges in the Bay Region issuing 93 associate degree awards on average annually (last 3 years ending 2021-23) on TOP 1402.00 - Paralegal.

There is one other CTE educational institution in the Bay Region issuing 3 associate degree awards on average annually (last 3 years ending 2020-22) on CIP 22.0302- Legal Assistant/Paralegal, but there are no other educational institutions in the Bay Region issuing awards on CIP 22.0302- Legal Assistant/Paralegal.

**Table 7a. Community College Awards on TOP 1402.00 - Paralegal in the Bay Region**

College	Subregion	Associate Degree	Total
Canada	Mid-Peninsula	4	4
Deanza	Silicon Valley	27	27
Evergreen Valley	Silicon Valley	21	21
Merritt	East Bay	11	11
San Francisco	Mid-Peninsula	3	3
Santa Rosa	North Bay	9	9
Skyline	Mid-Peninsula	8	8
West Valley	Silicon Valley	10	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>93</b>

Source: Data Mart

Note: The annual average for awards is 2020-21 to 2022-23.

**Table 7b. Other CTE Institutions Awards on CIP 22.0302- Legal Assistant/Paralegal in the Bay Region**

College	Subregion	Associate degree	Total
Empire College	North Bay	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>

Source: Data Mart

Note: The annual average for awards is 2019-20 to 2021-22.

## Gap Analysis

Based on the data included in this report, there is a labor market gap in the Bay Region with 1,008 annual openings for Paralegals and Legals Assistants and 96 annual (3-year average) awards for an annual undersupply of 912 students. If approved and implemented, West Valley College's program could potentially reduce the undersupply from 912 to 882, assuming the program enrollment allows 30 students.

## Living Wage

The Self-Sufficiency Standard Calculator estimates the income needed for working families to meet basic living standards, considering family composition, children's ages, and regional costs. It calculates a living wage as the hourly income required for full-time workers to cover basic needs, factoring in family budgets, taxes, and local cost variations across counties, Metropolitan Statistical Areas, and states.

Table 8 shows that for Paralegals and Legal Assistants, the entry level hourly wage is \$33, and the median wage is \$41. These wages are sufficient to support an adult with no dependents or an adult with one teenager. However, the starting wage does not fully meet the hourly living wage requirements for an adult with one infant, preschooler, or school-age child.

**Table 8. Hourly Living Wage compared to Entry- and Mid-Level Wages for Paralegals and Legal Assistants in Bay Region**

Earning Wage		Hourly Living Wage				
25% Hourly Wage	50% Hourly Wage	Adult Only	Adult + Infant	Adult +Preschool	Adult + School-age	Adult + teenage
\$33	\$41	\$27	\$56	\$53	\$46	\$36

Source: Lightcast 2024.4

Note. The Self-Sufficiency (SS) Standard for California (2024) Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington. The data combines Paralegals and Legal Assistants, Legal Support Workers, all others, and Legal Secretaries and Administrative Assistants.

## Methodology

The occupation for this report was identified by West Valley College. Labor demand data is sourced from Lightcast occupation and job postings data. Educational supply and student outcomes data is retrieved from multiple sources, including CCCCCO Data Mart.

## Sources

Data and information referenced in this report were compiled from the following public and proprietary sources:

- Lightcast [URL: [lightcast.io](https://lightcast.io)].
- California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) [DataMart](#).
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System ([IPEDS](#)).
- U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Occupational Information Network ([O\\*NET](#)).
- Self-Sufficiency Standard at the Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington. 2024 [California Dataset](#).

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