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Labor Market Analysis

Paralegals and Legal Assistants



Prepared by Central Valley/Mother Lode Center of Excellence



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Summary

The Central Valley/Mother Lode Center of Excellence developed this report for San Joaquin Delta College to determine whether there is demand in the local labor market that is not being met by the supply from postsecondary programs. This report summarizes labor market demand, wages, skills, and postsecondary supply for:

- Paralegals and Legal Assistants (SOC 23-2011)

Key Findings

- **Occupational Demand** — *Paralegals and Legal Assistants* have a labor market demand of 82 annual job openings in the North Central Valley/Northern Mother Lode (NCV/NML) subregion. Between 2022 and 2027, *Paralegals and Legal Assistants* are projected to have 5% growth in the NCV/NML subregion.
- **Wages** — The average entry-level wage of \$22.86/hour for *Paralegals and Legal Assistants* is higher than the living wage in the NCV/NML subregion, which is \$12.65/hour for a single adult.¹
- **Employers and Job Titles** — Employers in the NCV/NML subregion include Merced County and International Rescue Committee. The most common job titles are Legal Assistants and Paralegals.
- **Skills** — The top baseline skill is filing; the top specialized skill is legal pleadings; and the top software skill is Microsoft Office.
- **Education** — An associate degree is typically required for *Paralegals and Legal Assistants*.
- **Supply and Demand Analysis** — Based on 82 annual openings (i.e., demand) and 2 postsecondary awards conferred (i.e., supply), an analysis of supply and demand suggests there is an undersupply of 80 workers in the NCV/NML subregion. In the CVML region, 90 awards were conferred suggesting an undersupply of 153 workers (based on 243 annual openings in the CVML region).

Recommendation

Based on a comparison of demand and supply, there is an undersupply of trained workers in the NCV/NML subregion and the CVML region. The Center of Excellence recommends that San Joaquin Delta College work with the regional directors, the college's advisory board, and local industry in the creation or expansion of programs to address the shortage of workers.

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://insightccd.org/tools-metrics/self-sufficiency-standard-tool-for-california/>.

Introduction

The Central Valley/Mother Lode Center of Excellence developed this report to provide San Joaquin Delta College with labor market information for *Paralegals and Legal Assistants*. The geographical focus for this report is the North Central Valley/Northern Mother Lode (NCV/NML) subregion, but regional demand and supply data has been included for broader applicability and use. Analysis of the program and occupational data related to *Paralegals and Legal Assistants* is included in the report. The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System code and occupational title used in this report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and O*NET OnLine are shown below.

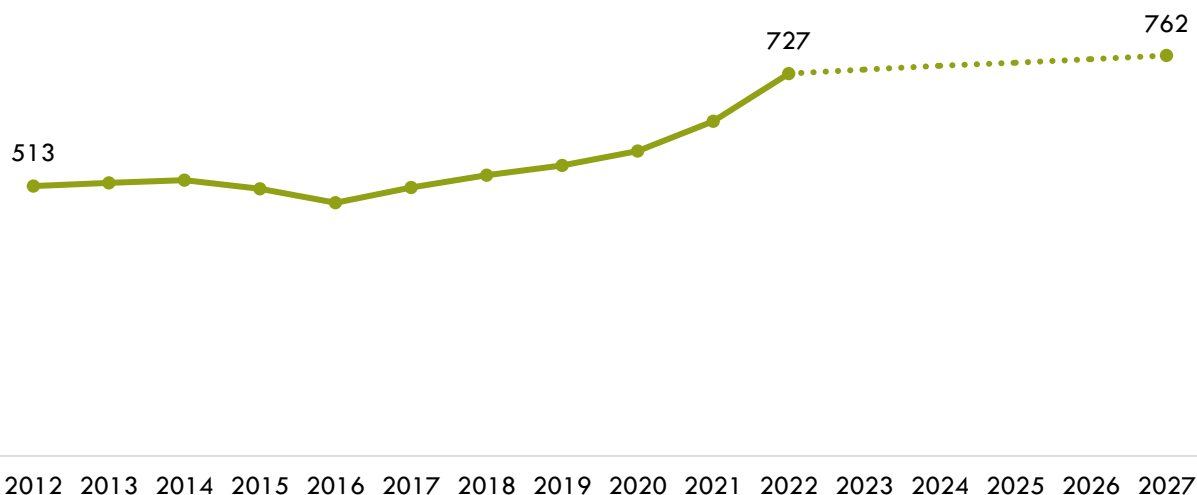
Paralegals and Legal Assistants (SOC 23-2011)

- **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, Critical Thinking

Employment

Exhibit 1a shows employment trends for *Paralegals and Legal Assistants* in the NCV/NML subregion. Between 2012 to 2027, the number of jobs for *Paralegals and Legal Assistants* is projected to increase by 34 – growth of 5%.

Exhibit 1a. Historical employment and projected occupational demand for Paralegals and Legal Assistants in the NCV/NML subregion, 2012-2027



In 2022, there were 727 *Paralegals and Legal Assistants* in the NCV/NML subregion (Exhibit 1b). This occupation is projected to have 82 job openings every year through 2027.

Exhibit 1b. Current employment and projected occupational demand for Paralegals and Legal Assistants in the NCV/NML subregion, 2022-2027

Occupation	2022 Jobs	2027 Jobs	5-Year Change	5-Year % Change	Annual Openings
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	727	762	34	5%	82
TOTAL	727	762	34	5%	82

Wages

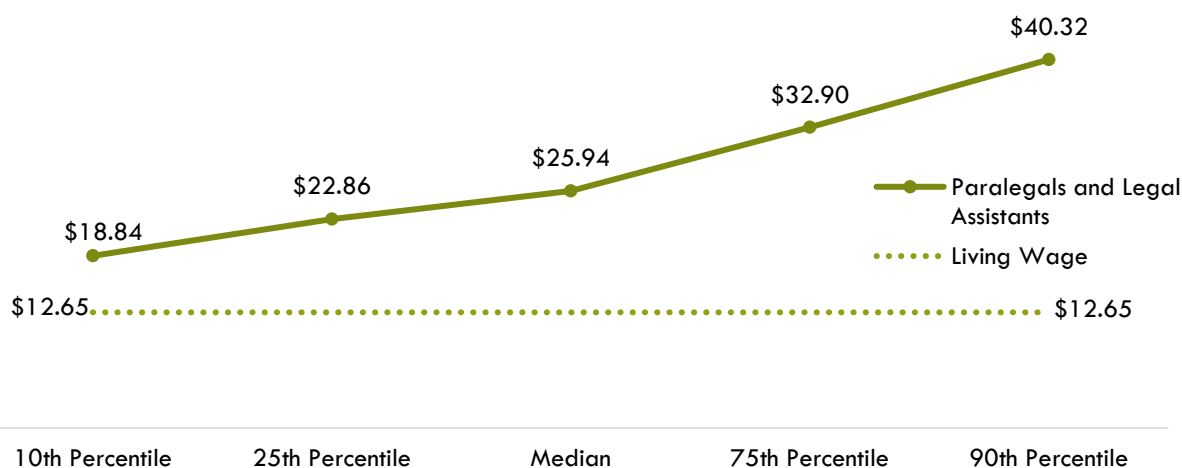
The average living wage for a single adult in the NCV/NML subregion is \$12.65/hour.² Exhibit 2a shows the hourly wages for the occupation studied in this report. *Paralegals and Legal Assistants* have an entry-level wage, \$22.86/hour.³

Exhibit 2a. Hourly wages for Paralegals and Legal Assistants in the NCV/NML subregion

Occupation	25 th Percentile Hourly Earnings	Median Hourly Earnings	75 th Percentile Hourly Earnings
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	\$22.86	\$25.94	\$32.90

Exhibit 2b shows the average hourly wages for *Paralegals and Legal Assistants*; all five average hourly wages are above the living wage for the NCV/NML subregion.

Exhibit 2b. Average hourly wages for Paralegals and Legal Assistants in the NCV/NML subregion



² 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://insightccd.org/tools-metrics/self-sufficiency-standard-tool-for-california/>.

³ Note: 10th and 25th percentiles are considered entry-level wages while 75th and 90th are considered experienced wages, which may be obtained through long-term employment or extra training, etc.

Job Postings

There were 224 unique job postings for *Paralegals and Legal Assistants* in the NCV/NML subregion from January to December 2023.⁴

Top Employers

The employers with the most job postings are listed in Exhibit 3. The top employers in online job postings were Merced County, International Rescue Committee, and Brunn & Flynn.

Exhibit 3. Top employers of *Paralegals and Legal Assistants*

Employer
Merced County
International Rescue Committee
Brunn & Flynn
Chennault Law
Sodhi Law Group
E & J Gallo International
Haden Law Office
Berliner Cohen

Top Job Titles

Exhibit 4 shows the most common job titles for *Paralegals and Legal Assistants* in the NCV/NML subregion.

Exhibit 4. Top job titles for *Paralegals and Legal Assistants*

Job Title
Legal Assistants
Paralegals
Family Law Paralegals
Litigation Paralegals
Immigration Legal Assistants

⁴ Other than occupational 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*. These are calculated by Lightcast using a machine learning model built from millions of job postings every year. This accounts for adjustments based on location, industry, skills, experience, education, among other variables.

Exhibit 5. Market salaries for *Paralegals and Legal Assistants*

Market Salary	Job Postings
\$30,000-\$39,999	12
\$40,000-\$44,999	26
\$45,000-\$49,999	31
\$50,000-\$54,999	30
\$55,000-\$59,999	27
\$60,000-\$64,999	9
\$65,000-\$69,999	10
\$70,000+	19

Education

Of the 224 unique job postings, 143 listed a minimum educational requirement for the position being filled. Among those, 29% requested a high school diploma or GED, 25% requested an associate degree, and 39% requested a bachelor’s degree (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6. Education levels requested in job postings for *Paralegals and Legal Assistants*

Education Level	Job Postings	% of Job Postings
High school diploma or GED	41	29%
Associate degree	36	25%
Bachelor's degree	56	39%
Master's degree or higher	10	7%

Baseline, Specialized, and Software Skills

Exhibit 7 depicts the top baseline, specialized, and software skills in job postings. The most requested baseline skill is filing. The most requested specialized skill is legal pleadings. The most requested software skill is Microsoft Office.

Exhibit 7. In-demand baseline, specialized, and software skills for *Paralegals and Legal Assistants*

Baseline Skills	Specialized Skills	Software Skills
Filing	Legal Pleadings	Microsoft Office
Communication	Legal Discovery	Law Practice Management Software
Research	Lawsuits	Aderant
Detail Oriented	Family Law	Calendaring Software
Organizational Skills	Legal Research	Project Management Software

Education, Work Experience, & Training

An associate degree is typically required for the occupation studied in this report: *Paralegals and Legal Assistants* (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8. Education, work experience, training, and Current Population Survey results for *Paralegals and Legal Assistants*⁵

Occupation	Typical Entry-level Education	Work Experience Required	Typical On-The-Job Training	CPS
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	Associate Degree	None	None	42%

⁵ "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey," Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/>.

Supply

An analysis of program data from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Datamart for the last three program years shows that, on average, 2 awards were conferred in the NCV/NML subregion (Exhibits 9 and 10). NOTE: No supply data was available for the CIP listed below.

Exhibit 9. TOP and CIP codes for Legal Assistant/Paralegal

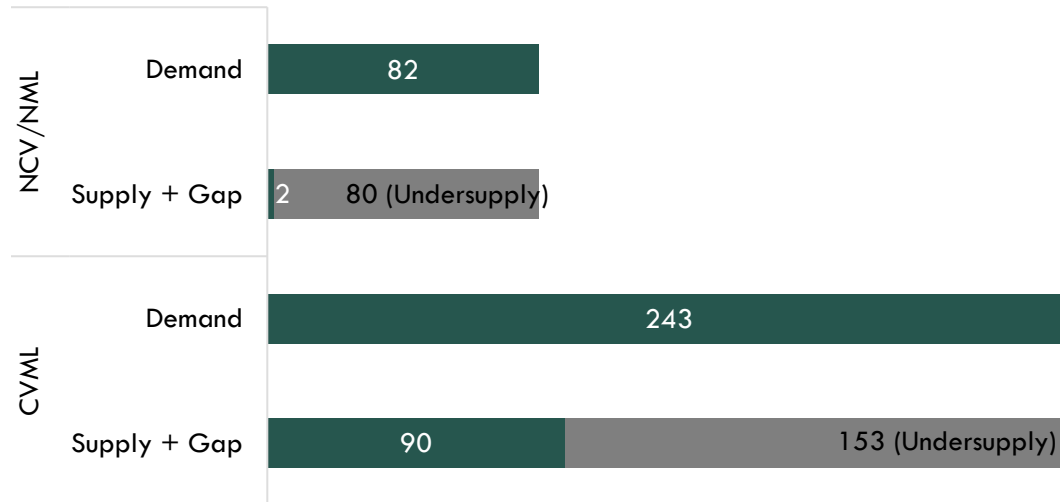
TOP Titles	CIP Titles
1402.00 – Paralegal	22.0302 – Legal Assistant/Paralegal

Exhibit 10. Postsecondary supply for Paralegal Programs, 2019-20 through 2021-22

TOP Code	Program	College	2019-2020 Awards	2020-2021 Awards	2021-2022 Awards	3-Year Award Average
1402.00	Paralegal	San Joaquin Delta	-	2	4	2
		NCV/NML Subtotal	-	2	4	2
		Cerro Coso	15	21	29	22
		Fresno City	62	50	51	54
		Sequoias	19	8	8	12
		SCV/SML Subtotal	96	79	88	88
CVML Subtotal			96	81	92	90

There is an undersupply of 80 *Paralegals and Legal Assistants* in the NCV/NML subregion and an undersupply of 153 workers in the CVML region (Exhibit 11).

Exhibit 11. Workforce demand (annual job openings), postsecondary awards (supply), and additional students needed to fill gap in the NCV/NML subregion and CVML region



Recommendation

This report suggests there is a shortage of 80 workers in the NCV/NML subregion and a shortage of 153 workers in the CVML region for *Paralegals and Legal Assistants*. Based on these findings, it is recommended that San Joaquin Delta College work with the regional directors, the college’s advisory board, and local industry in the creation or expansion of programs to address the shortage of workers in the region.

Appendix: 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. (Lightcast). Lightcast occupational employment data are based on final Lightcast industry data and final Lightcast 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 Lightcast 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 .
LaunchBoard	Chancellor’s LaunchBoard. https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/SWP.aspx
Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment Estimates	California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division: labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov .
Job Posting and Skills Data	Lightcast: https://lightcast.io/ .
Additional Education Requirements/ Employer Preferences	The O*NET Job Zone database includes over 900 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. (LIGHTCAST) formula that includes historical employment and economic indicators along with national, state and local trends.

LaunchBoard (Attained the Living Wage): Among SWP students who exited college and did not transfer to any postsecondary institution, the proportion who attained the district county living wage for a single adult measured immediately following academic year of exit.

LaunchBoard (Median Annual Earnings): Among SWP students who exited the community college system and who did not transfer to any postsecondary institution, median earnings following the academic year of exit.

LaunchBoard (Median Change in Earnings): Among SWP students who exited and who did not transfer to any postsecondary institution, median change in earnings between the second quarter prior to the beginning of the academic year of entry and the second quarter after the end of the academic year of exit from the last college attended.

LaunchBoard (Job Closely Related to Field of Study): Among SWP students who responded to the CTE Outcomes Survey and did not transfer to any postsecondary institution, the proportion who reported that they are working in a job very closely or closely related to their field of study.

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.