



What is the Difference Between a Paralegal Certificate and Certification?

By Janis Walter, J.D., Professor Emeritus and former Paralegal Program Coordinator, University of Cincinnati, and past Chair, ABA Standing Committee on Paralegals Approval Commission– reprinted with approval of the ABA Standing Committee on Paralegals.- [certificate-certification \(americanbar.org\)](http://americanbar.org)

It is important to distinguish between a paralegal certificate and certification, as the terms are often confused. The terms are not interchangeable and have separate meanings. A certificate is a credential that verifies a student has successfully completed a paralegal educational program. Generally, these programs are offered at universities and colleges. The prerequisites may vary but many require the student seeking a certificate to have already earned an associate or bachelor’s degree in another area of study. So, if a program offers a post-baccalaureate paralegal certificate, the student will have already obtained a bachelor’s degree in an area other than paralegal studies. It is possible that the student will take only legal specialty courses as part of their certificate work, as their general education requirements were satisfied by completing an associate or bachelor’s degree. Upon successful completion of the institution’s educational requirements, the student is issued a certificate of completion. The student is now *certificated* in paralegal studies and able to work in the field as a paralegal.



In contrast, certification is the process through which an organization grants formal recognition to an individual who meets certain established requirements. After completing a paralegal educational program, the graduates may pursue certification to validate their mastery of the subject matter. Certification may enhance their employment prospects and increase their income. To become certified, a paralegal must successfully complete a certification exam and/or other requirements of the certifying organization. The other requirements



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Paralegal Certificate</i>	1
<i>Tips and Tricks</i>	1
<i>Calendar of Events</i>	2
<i>Certificate .. continued</i>	3
<i>Member Spotlight</i>	4-5
<i>Message from the Chair</i>	6

Calendar of Events for 2022

	Date and Location
12:00 Brown Bag CLE Topic– New Notary Guidelines	February 16, 2022
12:00 Brown Bag CLE	March 16, 2022
11:00 a.m. Board Meeting 1:00 p.m. Lunch (Provided by the Division)	Saturday, April 2, 2022 State Bar of New Mexico
12:00 Brown Bag CLE – Topic is District Court Filing	April 20, 2022
Law Day CLE 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Saturday, May 14, 2022 State Bar of New Mexico
12:00 Brown Bag CLE	June 15, 2022
1:00 p.m. Board Meeting	Saturday, July 16, 2022 TBD
12:00 Brown Bag CLE	July 20, 2022
State Bar Annual Meeting Bench and Bar Conference	August 11-13, 2022 Tamaya Resort
Paralegal Division Annual Meeting Lunch	August 12, 2022
Paralegal Day Anniversary Celebration 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.	Saturday, August 27, 2022 TBD
Paralegal Day	August 26, 2022
<u>2nd Annual Paralegal Symposium</u> 9:00 a.m. CLE 12:00 p.m. Lunch (Provided by the Division) 1:00 p.m. Board Meeting 2:00 p.m. Planning Session 3:00 p.m. Board Meeting Continued. 4:00 p.m. Executive Committee Planning Session 5:00 p.m. Member mixer Happy Hour	Saturday, September 17, 2022 Roswell, NM
12:00 Brown Bag CLE	October 19, 2022
12:00 Brown Bag CLE	November 16, 2022
The Institute CLE 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Friday, December 2, 2022 State Bar of New Mexico
Holiday Dinner	Friday, December 2, 2022 6:00p.m., Location TBD Albuquerque, NM

“DO MORE THAN
BELONG:
PARTICIPATE.

DO MORE THAN CARE:
HELP.

DO MORE THAN BELIEVE:
PRACTICE.

DO MORE THAN BE FAIR:
BE KIND.

DO MORE THAN
FORGIVE: FORGET.

DO MORE THAN DREAM:
WORK.” – WILLIAM
ARTHUR WARD

“We can say
what we need to
say. We can
gently, but asser-
tively, speak our
mind. We do not
need to be judg-
mental, tactless,
blaming or cruel
when we speak
our truths.”

~ Melody
Beattie

Paralegal Certificate... continued

Complete a certification exam and/or other requirements of the certifying organization. The other requirements generally include educational requirements and paralegal work experience. Once the paralegal has met the established criteria, they may use a special designation namely, “*certified paralegal*.” To maintain their certification, paralegals may need to complete yearly continuing education units.

Currently, all certification programs in the United States are voluntary. Two of the national paralegal organizations, NALA and the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA) offer certification exams. The scope, length and requirements for the credential are determined by each organization. The requirements differ, so it is important to check with the credentialing

organization to determine the requirements. Some state bar associations, such as North Carolina and Ohio, and state paralegal associations, such as Kentucky, also offer voluntary certification by examination for paralegals working in those states. Other states, including Texas and California, offer certification in select areas of law. California is currently the only state that has issued specific paralegal regulations. Persons using the titles “paralegal” or “legal assistant,” must meet certain educational/experiential qualifications and comply with continuing education requirements.

Paralegals in Indiana, who have met specified education and experience requirements, can register with the Indiana Bar Association. This enables the paralegal to identify themselves as an Indiana Registered Paralegal. Several states recognize

certified paralegals if they have successfully completed a national paralegal examination. Paralegals should check with their state authority to ascertain the necessary requirements for certification within their own state.

The American Bar Association (ABA) does not certify individual paralegals. Instead, the ABA approves paralegal studies educational programs that have applied for and passed a comprehensive self-study. The ABA also reapproves programs that apply for reapproval and demonstrate that they are in compliance with the [Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs](#). The ABA's approval process applies to the paralegal education program rather than to the individual paralegal. Therefore, graduates of

ABA approved paralegal programs offering paralegal certificate degrees are *certificated paralegals* and may state that they graduated from an ABA approved paralegal education program. They may not identify themselves as an “ABA Certified Paralegal” or claim that they have “ABA Certification”.

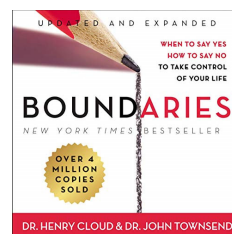
Personal Development and Growth-

Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of your Life.

By Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend.

Does your life feel like it's out of control? Perhaps you feel

like you have to say yes to everyone's requests. This book has helped more than 4 million people learn when to say yes and how to say no in order to take control of their lives. Available in both book and audio.



“WHEN WE FAIL TO SET BOUNDARIES AND HOLD PEOPLE ACCOUNTABLE, WE FEEL USED AND MISTREATED.”

~ BRENE BROWN

Member Spotlight—Daniel Berg

The following is a written interview provided by Daniel Berg.

Tell us a little about yourself:

My name is Daniel Berg. I was born in San Diego, California. I moved to Albuquerque, NM after a bit of troubles in my teenage years. I was able to find purpose here. First, when struggling to find trajectory, I enrolled in the Business Office Technology program of the Albuquerque Job Corps center. My internship was with a local attorney who did criminal defense contract work with the State Public Defender. I enjoyed the work and helping people considered to be burdens and problems for society. People who I could have turned out to be. We had success and won cases. But I saw the shortcomings of the criminal justice system and knew that staunch advocacy for our clients was critical to balancing the scales of justice. My career pursuits continue to advocate for criminal defendants to this day.

I am a father of two children and enjoy spending time with them. My weekends are spent watching volleyball right now. I've recently become a certified yoga teacher. Yoga, hiking and exercise

are very important to my life.

Tell us about your job:

I work for the Federal Public Defender Department in New Mexico. I am the only paralegal working in the Albuquerque office. My work primarily involves preparing cases for trial, mitigation work and discovery management. I've been producing sentencing videos on cases where attorneys seek to get credit time served sentences. I work on massive cases with large amounts of discovery. I have interns working with me every semester through the CNM program. Much of my day is spent dealing with digital discovery and computer evidence. I am a certified forensic examiner for computers and cell phones. I miss doing investigation work, but my job allows me great flexibility and an opportunity to do various types of work. Working for the Federal Public Defender Department has been enriching and fulfilling.

How long have you been a member of the Paralegal Division? Why did you join?

I think I've been a member of the New Mexico Paralegal Division for almost 10 years. I joined because I thought it would look good on a resume, but over the years I've discovered but it's also a way of giv-

ing back, adding credibility to our profession and an opportunity to work and socialize with other paralegals. The paralegal division offers great opportunities for education which I am very fond of.

How long have you been on the Board of Directors? Why did you want to have a leadership position?

This is my second year on the board of directors. I felt like I had an obligation to give back to my profession which has given so much to me. I'm blessed to have found purpose and a career that fulfills a great part of my life. Being on the board of directors allows me to have an impact on my profession. New Mexico is small state and there are only somewhere between 1000 and 1500 paralegals in the state. I am also very passionate about advancing the profession of paralegals to allow for limited licensure. This will allow for paralegals to have a more role in the legal system and in justice.

Why does Professional Development interest you?

Professional development is extremely important to me because paralegals are an important part of the law. Right now, there are programs that seek to educate paralegals with online certificate programs that take less than 100 hours. I gradu-



ated from the CNM paralegal program which was a two year degree. I believe that paralegals as a profession should be held to a high standard and the lengthy educational process.

Explain to our members the purpose of the Professional Development Committee:

The professional development committee seeks to advance the education and professional acuity for paralegals. We work with educational institutions to ensure they are educating paralegals with the skills needed today in law. The legal profession, especially for paralegals, is about technology and understanding digital tools, as well as legal research and shepardizing. The professional development committee is also interested in better understanding the needs of lawyers and the legal community as a whole.

What do you think the Division could do to better inform the legal community about the use of paralegals?

I believe the paralegal division needs to remind the legal community of the educational and experiential backgrounds of paralegals. My father was a nurse. I believe that Paralegals are to lawyers as nurses are to doctors. Paralegals

themselves should remind their attorneys they are educated, highly skilled and trained. There is a lot that paralegals can do. Sure we can't sign pleadings, but I draft a lot of motions and attorneys trust me to prepare important legal pleadings. Paralegals can be trusted with this and more duties in the legal system.

What changes have you seen in the legal community that may impact paralegals?

One of the biggest changes in the legal community is the use of technology. Although many attorneys like to have binders and all the documents in a hardcopy. It is our role as paralegals to advance and educate our attorneys to new technology and systems in place that allow for effective representation without killing so many trees. I kid. But truly, it is much easier to search through thousands of pages of documents using an indexing system rather than turning page by page by page looking for a name or topic.

What educational trends have you seen that may impact paralegals?

I graduated from CNM in 2006 and I have worked with nearly a dozen paralegal interns. It seems to me that the educational system is pretty similar

from when I was in school. But today technology rules the legal profession. There are interesting, helpful and effective legal software that can make our life easier. We should ensure that paralegals are being educated in all the different software and technology that makes our work easier. Also when I went to school, I was educated by lawyers who worked in the field. I remember taking evidence with the honorable judge Neil Candelaria. I remember taking civil rights with Cindy Mars. Lawyers in all aspects of law should continue to teach paralegals through paralegal programs.

What do you think the Division can do to help ensure the future of our profession?

I feel like a bit of a rebel. The paralegal division, in my opinion, should advocate on behalf of professional licensure, limited licensure as has been done in Utah. I also think we need to work with educational programs to ensure they meet some minimum criteria. I am concerned about programs that offer students a paralegal certificate requiring 100 hours or less of education. In my opinion these students are not qualified to call themselves paralegals.

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PARALEGAL DIVISION

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Ad Hoc: Oral History Project

Harnessing the power of Excel

Most of us barely scratch the surface of all the things that excel can do. Here are just a few things to make your life easier.

- Ctrl 1- brings the formatting cell menu.
- Autosum- Totals the amounts in the columns above and automatically resums if any amounts are changed; very handy for medical billing summaries. An alternative is Alt= to total the column or row of numbers.
- Freeze Panes to make your headers stay constant while you scroll through your spreadsheet. Found under View and then Freeze Panes.

A Message from the Chair Linda Sanders

“Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.” – Albert Einstein
Easier said than done... and exhausting as well! Since the start of my term as Chair, I have often felt as if I am pedaling as fast as I can and still am unbalanced. So, what do I do? First, I have a support system. I have relied heavily on our Board of Directors and Committee Chairs, the State Bar and my boss for guidance and support. And I can't thank them all enough. Second, I have a goal. This helps keep me stay focused and on track. Some goals are small and easily achieved (weekly posts on our Division so-

cial media sites). Others are more long-term and require more effort (developing and implementing a strategic plan for the Division). Third, I fail forward. By this I mean I view each failure as a lesson learned. One of the greatest lessons my father taught me is that attitude is a choice. This was not so much a lesson in my home, but a family mantra. I choose to be happy. I choose to love my job, challenges, and all. I choose to succeed. Fourth, I swerve (and even change direction). When things come along that throw me off balance, I adjust. Hopefully I swerve in a

positive direction. But if I don't, I rely on the steps above to get back on track. So, back to the exhausting part. I happen to disagree with Mr. Einstein. I am not a perpetual motion machine. I stop to smell the flowers, enjoy the view and recharge (balance of a different sort). Of course, he was speaking about life, not me. So, in that regard I have to agree, and I hop back on the bike because I'm supposed to go somewhere with my life.

