

Salary Survey 2008: Highlights and Analysis

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by Karen McCall, in Collaboration with the Salary Survey Committee

In September 2008, the Paralegal Division conducted a salary survey to assess the current state of our profession in Utah. The results, some of which are highlighted below, provided us with not only valuable data on paralegal education, training, work environment, and, of course, salaries, but also with insights on how our Division can continue to improve and grow. For the complete survey results, please visit our website at www.utahparalegals.org.

The survey had a total of 99 respondents, 93.9% of whom are female, mirroring the low number of male paralegals in our Division membership. In addition, our membership reflects a wide range of experience in the paralegal profession – 31.6% of respondents have been employed in the field for 1–5 years, while 21.4% have been employed for 16–20 years.

Barely over one-half of respondents, at 52.5%, report membership in the Paralegal Division, while 35.4% claim membership in the Legal Assistants Association of Utah (LAAU). Twenty-four percent do not belong to any organizations, higher than the 18.2% belonging to the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA).

We found that only 51.5% of respondents have earned a paralegal certificate, which they understand to be required for hiring or advancement by only 42% of Utah employers. Nearly 72% of paralegals hold an associate's or bachelor's degree, with 90.4% possessing a degree in a subject other than paralegal studies. Passing a national certification exam, whether for a Certified Legal Assistant (C.L.A.) or Certified Paralegal (C.P.) designation, is reportedly not required by 92% of employers; 76% of survey respondents have not obtained either of these designations.

With regard to paralegal salaries, 22% of respondents report making \$40,000–\$44,999 per year. An equal number earn under \$40,000, with 3.2% pulling in less than \$25,000 each year. Another 11.6% of respondents make between \$45,000 and \$49,999 per year, with 20% earning \$50,000–\$54,999. The higher salary ranges of \$60,000–\$64,999, \$65,000–\$69,999 and \$70,000–\$74,999 are paid to only 5.3% of survey respondents respectively.

Nearly 43% of respondents indicate that their organization employs only 1 to 5 paralegals, while over 43% report that their organization has over 40 attorneys. It may

not come as a surprise, then, that 69.8% of paralegals report having to work overtime in an average month, with 22.9% of this number having to put in more than 10 hours of overtime.

We were pleased to find that nearly 62% of employers provide some form of in-house training for paralegals, giving those who belong to the Paralegal Division or other associations a valuable opportunity to satisfy their CLE requirements in a convenient way.

In response to our question on software and online program usage, we found that Microsoft products such as Word, Excel, and Outlook are dominant, with only 45.8% of respondents still using WordPerfect on a routine basis. For legal research, Westlaw was slightly preferred over LexisNexis, 41.7%–40.6%.

We appreciate all who participated in this survey and hope that it will lead to a larger discussion of the topics covered, as well as provide tools for your professional advancement. Our goal going forward is to conduct a similar survey on an annual basis to evaluate our Division's effectiveness and identify areas where improvement is needed in our profession. Thank you for your genuine feedback and continued support of our efforts.

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