

The State of the Paralegal Profession in 2025

Expanding Roles, Driving Innovation, and Bridging the Justice Gap

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Executive Summary

In 2025, the paralegal profession has entered a transformative era. No longer viewed as solely administrative or support roles, paralegals are increasingly recognized as strategic partners in the delivery of legal services. Paralegals occupy pivotal positions in legal operations, technology adoption, compliance oversight, and client engagement, while also advancing access to justice through innovative service models.

Technological advances—especially in AI and quantum computing—are redefining the profession’s potential, creating opportunities for paralegals to lead in knowledge management and legal innovation. Paralegals are positioned at the nexus of law, technology, and client service. Leveraging the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) Paralegal Core Competencies and the American Bar Association (ABA) Model Guidelines for the Utilization of Paralegal Services, the profession is entering an era where adaptability, interdisciplinary skills, and ethical foresight are paramount.

I. Expanded Roles of Paralegals in 2025

The responsibilities of paralegals in 2025 extend well beyond the traditional boundaries of document preparation, research, and attorney support. Today's paralegals operate as legal project managers, process engineers, technology implementers, and client relationship managers. Their work bridges the legal and business spheres, directly impacting efficiency, client satisfaction, and the overall competitiveness of legal service providers.

1. Legal Operations and Business of Law

- Leading legal operations functions, including vendor management, budgeting, knowledge management, and process improvement.
- Supporting data-driven decision-making by tracking key performance indicators or KPIs, analyzing matter management reports, and implementing workflow automation tools such as Clio, Ironclad, and Relativity.
- Driving client experience optimization through communication protocols, project tracking, and post-engagement feedback loops.

2. Specialized Practice Expertise

- Emerging high-demand areas: privacy law (General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA)), cybersecurity, e-discovery, and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) compliance.
- Paralegals as subject-matter experts in niche areas—ensuring continuity, training junior staff, and leading knowledge transfer initiatives.

3. Project Management and Client Interaction

- Increasing adoption of the Project Management Institute's Project Management Professional (PMP) and Agile/Scrum methodologies to coordinate multi-jurisdictional filings, manage litigation deadlines, and ensure stakeholder alignment.
- Directly managing client onboarding and facilitating cross-functional collaboration between attorneys, technologists, and business teams.

II. Access to Justice and Licensed Legal Practitioner Models

Access to justice remains one of the most pressing challenges in the legal ecosystem. Millions of individuals face legal problems without affordable representation, creating a widening justice gap. Paralegals, through both traditional and newly licensed paraprofessional roles, are stepping into that gap. By supporting innovative delivery models, participating in regulatory reform initiatives, and working directly with self-represented litigants, paralegals are expanding the reach of legal assistance and improving outcomes for underserved populations.

1. Regulatory Reform and Paraprofessional Licensure

- Expansion of state-authorized paraprofessional programs (e.g., Utah Licensed Paralegal Practitioner, Arizona Legal Paraprofessional, and pilot projects in Oregon and Minnesota) builds on early National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA) documentation of Limited License Legal Technician models.
- These roles increase affordable legal service delivery in high-need practice areas, particularly family law, landlord-tenant disputes, and debt collection.

2. Community-Based and Court-Integrated Services

- Paralegals are embedded in court navigator programs (e.g., New York Court Navigator) to assist self-represented litigants with procedural guidance and documentation.
- Nonprofit and pro bono programs leverage paralegal expertise to expand legal literacy and empower communities.

III. Legal Technology Integration

Technology has become the backbone of modern legal practice, and paralegals are at the center of this transformation. From mastering advanced case management systems to deploying AI-assisted research tools, paralegals must remain technologically fluent to maintain their value and ensure ethical compliance. This section explores how paralegals are driving legal tech adoption, shaping workflows, and safeguarding client data in a digital-first environment.

1. Technology Competency as an Ethical Obligation

- The ABA’s Comment 8 to Model Rule 1.1 requires lawyers—and by extension their teams—to understand the benefits and risks of relevant technology.
- NALA’s Core Competencies emphasize proficiency in case management, document automation, legal research tools, and e-discovery platforms.

2. AI, Automation, and Data Analytics

- AI tools such as Casetext, CoCounsel, and Harvey AI accelerate research, document review, and contract analysis.
- Paralegals act as *human-in-the-loop* reviewers to ensure AI outputs are accurate, relevant, and compliant.

3. Cybersecurity and Data Privacy

- Paralegals manage incident response protocols and compliance audits under GDPR and CCPA.
- They ensure ethical handling of client data, particularly in remote and hybrid work environments.

IV. Quantum Computing: The Next Frontier in Legal Knowledge Management

While AI adoption has been a visible leap forward for the profession, the next wave—quantum computing—is poised to revolutionize how legal professionals manage, analyze, and retrieve knowledge. Still in its early stages, quantum computing promises capabilities far beyond classical computing, offering transformative opportunities for legal research, compliance analysis, and strategic decision-making. Paralegals who understand and adapt to this technology will be uniquely positioned to lead innovation in legal knowledge management.

1. Why Quantum Matters to Legal Professionals

Quantum computing, though still emerging, promises computational capabilities orders of magnitude beyond classical computing. For legal professionals, this will revolutionize knowledge management by enabling:

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- Instant cross-jurisdictional legal research with contextual understanding of statutes, case law, and legislative histories.
 - Real-time contract analysis across global regulatory frameworks.
 - Predictive litigation analytics with unprecedented accuracy.

2. Potential Applications for Paralegals

- **Massive Document Analysis:** Quantum algorithms could parse petabytes of discovery material in seconds, identifying key evidence faster than current AI.
- **Complex Compliance Mapping:** Automatically aligning multinational compliance obligations for corporations, including ESG disclosures and benefits regulations.
- **Advanced Legal Search Engines:** Moving beyond keyword search to *conceptual legal reasoning* tools that retrieve and connect legal principles across contexts.

3. Ethical and Operational Considerations

- **Transparency:** Ensuring quantum-enabled recommendations remain explainable to clients and courts.
- **Training:** Paralegals must gain foundational quantum literacy—understanding how algorithms process legal information.
- **Collaboration with Technologists:** The role of the paralegal may expand to act as a translator between legal teams and quantum engineers.

V. The Modern Paralegals Course – Preparing the Future Workforce

Future-ready paralegals require more than just technical skills—they need business acumen, design thinking capability, and a fluency in emerging technologies. The Modern Paralegals Course, developed by Kristine Custodio Suero, ACP, and Kelli Radnothy, was created to meet this need. By combining experiential learning with forward-looking curriculum, the course equips paralegals to thrive in dynamic legal environments, ensuring they not only keep pace with change but actively drive it. Inspired by the “Modern Lawyers Course” curriculum at Charles University, this course emphasizes:

1. **Design Thinking for Legal Services – Applying human-centered design to client interactions, workflow optimization, and legal product creation.**

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2. Legal Technology Fluency – Hands-on experience with AI tools, e-discovery platforms, document automation, and legal analytics software.
 3. Legal Operations & Business Acumen – Skills in budgeting, vendor management, performance metrics, and knowledge management.
 4. Ethics in Emerging Technologies – Navigating professional responsibility in the age of AI, blockchain, and quantum computing.
 5. Durable Skills for Career Resilience – Communication, adaptability, problem-solving, and collaboration to future-proof paralegal careers.

This forward-looking program equips paralegals to lead innovation, enhance client service, and work effectively in cross-disciplinary teams, aligning with NALA Core Competencies and ABA utilization guidelines.

VI. Education, Certification, and Professional Development

Strong educational foundations and continuous skills development remain cornerstones of professional excellence. While ABA-approved programs provide rigorous entry-level preparation, the profession's evolving scope demands ongoing learning. Certifications, micro-credentials, and interdisciplinary training are increasingly essential for paralegals seeking to differentiate themselves and expand their career trajectories.

- Education Pathways: ABA-approved programs remain the gold standard (ABA Approved Paralegal Programs Directory).
- Certification: NALA's [Certified Paralegal](#), NFPA's [Registered Paralegal](#), and state-specific designations validate professional competence.
- Lifelong Learning: Micro-credentials in legal tech, project management, and quantum computing will distinguish the next generation of paralegals.

VII. Proper Utilization and Ethics

The value paralegals bring to legal teams depends on their proper utilization and adherence to ethical standards. The ABA's Model Guidelines for the Utilization of Paralegals and NFPA's Model Code of Ethics remain critical guardrails. In an era of remote work, cloud-based collaboration, and AI-assisted processes, ethical challenges are more complex than ever—demanding heightened awareness and proactive risk management from paralegals.

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- Proper Utilization: Following the ABA’s *Model Guidelines* ensures paralegals are engaged in substantive legal work—maximizing value while maintaining compliance.
 - Ethics in Technology: From AI bias to data breaches, paralegals must proactively manage emerging risks in technology-enabled workflows.

VIII. Looking Ahead to 2030

The legal profession is on the cusp of even greater transformation, driven by advances in technology, evolving client expectations, and changes in regulatory landscapes. By 2030, hybrid roles blending legal, business, and technology expertise will be the norm. Paralegals who cultivate adaptability, interdisciplinary skills, and strategic insight will be essential to the success of legal organizations worldwide.

- Hybrid Legal Roles blending paralegal, compliance officer, technologist, and project manager skill sets.
- Quantum-Enhanced Knowledge Management becoming a standard in top-tier firms and legal departments.
- Global Collaboration with virtual legal teams spanning continents.

Conclusion

The paralegal profession in 2025 is a driver of legal innovation, operational efficiency, and equitable service delivery. By embracing emerging technologies like AI and quantum computing, expanding into legal operations leadership, and upholding the highest ethical standards, paralegals are redefining what it means to deliver legal services in a fast-changing world.

The *Modern Paralegals Course* represents a concrete step toward preparing the next generation of legal professionals for this transformation—ensuring they are not just ready for the future of law, but actively shaping it.

About the Authors

Kristine Custodio Suero, ACP is an award-winning legal professional, a published author and a highly sought after speaker. A true servant leader, she has led the San Diego Paralegal Association and California Alliance of Paralegal Associations as President. Kristine teaches legal courses for a local San Diego paralegal program and lends her time to the program's advisory board. Kristine serves on the NALA Board of Directors as the Area 3 Director and is the past Chair of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee and past member of the NALA Professional Development Committee and Continuing Education Council as well as past Ethics Chair. Kristine is a Senior Paralegal/Business Development Director for Schechter Benefits Law Group LLP. Kristine may be reached at kristine.custodio@gmail.com.



Kelli Radnothy is a litigation paralegal with over 20 years of experience in the legal industry. She runs her own holistic legal solutions company, consulting with legal professionals and legal adjacent organizations to enhance the delivery of legal services. Kelli works as a Legal Researcher for the Nevada Attorney General's Office and as a course developer and instructor for the University of Washington Paralegal Program. Kelli serves as Treasurer for the Paralegal Division of the Nevada State Bar and as Second VP of Sierra Nevada Paralegal Association. Her passion focuses on advancing the paralegal profession and empowering others to make an impact in their community. Kelli holds a B.S. in Criminal Justice, a paralegal certificate from an ABA-approved program, and an E-discovery & Litigation Technology Certificate. Kelli may be reached at kelli@klrparalegal.com.

