

Tips from Guest Speakers

Preparation for the paralegal career

Completed the AAS in Paralegal Studies at NVCC.
Participate in Continuing Legal Education (CLE)
Maintain Virginia Registered Paralegal credential
Volunteered with a legal aid society to gain experience
Will take the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA) CRP exam next month.

Completed the Paralegal Studies Program at NOVA
Began working as a contract paralegal.

Worked in diverse fields (accounting, property management, private investigations) before becoming a paralegal.

Suggestions

Attain and maintain excellent computer skills, which will improve your efficiency writing, researching, and organizing; and increase your value to attorneys. Save your writing samples—many employers ask for writing samples to demonstrate your ability to write and to apply law to particular situations and issues.

Act as a bridge between the attorney and client (lay person)

Provide emotional support to clients

Exhibit a good personality and be a team player.

Involvement in Paralegal organizations

Member of Paralegal Association of Northern Virginia (PANV) and Fairfax Bar Association (FBA)—Paralegal Section

While a student at NOVA I was a member of the Paralegal Student Association (PSA), and student member of American Bar Association (ABA), FBA, and PANV. PANV is a great resource for networking. National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA) and ABA memberships also include publications that have interesting and relevant content. PANV, FBA, and NFPA also offer CLE opportunities.

Students enrolled in NOVA's Paralegal Studies program may join FBA at no cost!

Role of Paralegal from the perspectives of attorneys, paralegals, and law office administrators

Of course be facile with technology. Your lawyers may or may not be. This includes on-line access to courts, and to research sources.

Don't say, "I can't do that." Always say when you can. "I can do that by Wednesday." Don't be afraid to ask questions. There's no such thing as a dumb question if you don't know the answer."

Attention to detail, there's no task too small and a team mindset is essential. Also, when gearing up for trial, expect and embrace long hours.

Do not be afraid to take initiative

Being involved in a project without making themselves the center of it. Be a silent force so the attorney is able to focus on the legal issues.

I would say caring about what you do. That is such an important quality. If I have an assistant who actually cares about what they are doing, it makes all the difference.

My advice would be to listen carefully to clients and attorneys. Be meticulous with documents. Be thoughtful and compassionate.

Willingness to get outside of your comfort zone and learn a new practice group. Don't just focus on one area.