



# HS Intro to Public Services

**Wednesday, April 29, 2020**



## HS Intro to Public Services

Overall Lesson: **Professions in the Legal Field**

Sub lesson for Wednesday, April 29, 2020: Interview with  
Paralegal

### **Learning Target:**

Students will be able to identify and explain the duties of a paralegal.



# Opening Exercise

- What is a paralegal?
  - “PARA-” means “next to or assistant to”
  - “LEGAL” means “concerned with the law”
  - **paralegal** (“beside law”): an assistant to a lawyer
- Can you think of other words that begin with “para”?
  - **paramedic** (“beside doctor”): medical personnel who treat injured or sick people before and while they are taken to a hospital, or who assist doctors
  - **paraprofessional** (“beside skilled person”): one who assists a professional worker such as a teacher



# Activity #1

- [HERE](#) is an audio recording of an interview with Kathy Bowen, a paralegal. Listen to the first 2:45 of this interview and be ready to answer these questions:
  1. What is the difference between a paralegal and a legal secretary?
  2. What education is required to be a paralegal?



## Activity #1 - ANSWERS

1. What is the difference between a paralegal and a legal secretary?  
A paralegal is more involved in the substance of the case than a legal secretary.
2. What education is required to be a paralegal?  
There isn't a degree required to be a paralegal, but it may help you get a job. There is a paralegal certificate that you can earn, but it does not have to be part of a degree.



## Activity #2

- [HERE](#) is the audio recording of an interview with Kathy Bowen, a paralegal. Listen from 2:45 to 8:58 of this interview and be ready to answer this question:
  1. What does a typical day look like as a paralegal?



## Activity #2 -ANSWERS

1. What does a typical day look like as a paralegal?

A typical day looks different according to what type of paralegal you are (plaintiff, defendant, family law, corporate law, etc.). Kathy works for a defense firm for insurance companies. Her daily activities include handling documents, organizing interviews, assisting attorneys with the information they need to write a motion, researching witnesses, preparing subpoenas, reading the rules and requirements for subpoenas, reading and comprehending legal terms, and preparing depositions.



## Activity #3

- [HERE](#) is the audio recording of an interview with Kathy Bowen, a paralegal. Listen from 8:58 to 12:13 of this interview and be ready to answer this question:
  1. What is the best part of being a paralegal?





## Activity #3 - ANSWERS

1. What is the best part of being a paralegal?

According to Kathy, the best part of being a paralegal is that you learn a little bit about a lot of different things. She loves the challenge of organization and learning to prioritize tasks (although some people may find that part of the job difficult). When prioritizing her daily tasks, she has to remember to be flexible since her tasks may change according to what the attorney needs. There are multiple steps to each task, and she has to start and stop different tasks throughout the day.



## Activity #4

- [HERE](#) is the audio recording of an interview with Kathy Bowen, a paralegal. Listen from 12:13 to the end (19:51) of this interview and be ready to answer these questions:
  1. How much do you get paid as a paralegal?
  2. What are the challenges of being a paralegal?
  3. What type of people skills do you need to be a paralegal?
  4. What advice do you have for someone interested in being a paralegal?



## Activity #4 - ANSWERS

1. How much do you get paid as a paralegal?

In her experience, paralegals get an average annual salary of \$40,000 to \$70,000 a year. They are not hourly employees, and they get paid more based on their experience.

2. What are the challenges of being a paralegal?

You can't always make the decisions that need to be made, and it's hard to ask the attorneys sometimes because they're busy. Starting and stopping tasks is tiring.



## Activity #4 - ANSWERS

3. What type of people skills do you need to be a paralegal?

You need to be able to talk to clients--in person or on the phone.

Sometimes you have to make “cold calls” to witnesses. However, you can’t give legal advice to clients, so you’re limited sometimes on what you can say.

4. What advice do you have for someone interested in being a paralegal?

If you’re interested in being a paralegal, start small by getting your foot in the door. Kathy started as a front desk receptionist at a legal firm. You learn a lot from being “on the job”. It helps with learning the “legal jargon” or legal terms that are used in the job.



# Additional Resources

- Check out this article about [Virtual Paralegals](#)
- [Paralegal Resources](#)
- [Paralegal Degree Programs in the Kansas City area](#)