

The Job of a Legal Secretary

A legal secretary assists lawyers in preparing documents, filing cases, and other tasks. No specific educational qualification is required to be a legal secretary, however, now you can find courses and diplomas offered by law educational institutes. They play an important role in a law firm or working with a lawyer, and with experience one can earn a good salary.

In the context of the practice of law in the United States, a legal secretary or administrative assistant or executive assistant is someone who assists the lawyers in their day to day activities. They perform their daily activities to ensure that the legal office is being run in a smooth way. They assist the lawyers in filing motions and appeals. They also undertake research on behalf of the lawyers for cases. Hence a legal secretary needs to possess certain skills unique to the legal profession.

Legal secretaries are expected to handle a myriad of tasks in a legal office, all of them requiring multitasking ability. Legal secretaries help prepare correspondence and type legal documents, including pleadings, motions, discovery documents, and subpoenas. They help the law firm in meeting the legal filing deadlines. They create spreadsheets and index and update pleadings. They also schedule depositions and draft correspondence and routine legal documents such as deposition notices and legal invoices. Over and above this, legal secretaries also assist with legal research and communicate with attorneys, experts, opposing counsel, vendors, and other staff. This clearly shows us that a legal secretary needs to be proficient at her task. With a multitude of tasks which a legal secretary has to handle, it takes years of practice and experience to be proficient at their jobs. Lawyers tend to rely on their legal secretaries in a big way and older legal secretaries often stick with one attorney as they are used to their unique work style.

In the United States, there is no specific educational requirement to qualify as a legal secretary. However, unlike an

administrative assistant, a legal secretary needs to be familiar with legal jargon and terms as they assist their lawyers closely with regards to research and filing. Many colleges and universities offer programs which help a person get ready for a career as a legal secretary. Such courses are offered by community colleges, technical centers, and private career schools and usually are of one to two years duration. Some secretaries have no formal training. However in these times, most career opportunities exist for formally trained legal secretaries who have completed some post-secondary training or a four-year college degree. The National Association for Legal Professionals (NALS) bestows an ALS designation upon legal secretaries who pass a four-hour, three-part examination.

A legal secretary needs to be familiar with legal terminology. Since they work closely with an attorney, they must know the state and federal laws, basic legal protocols, and so on. They are also required to have excellent secretarial skills. They need to have excellent short hand and typing skills. With the increased automation of legal processes, legal secretaries with computer skills and proficient with presentations, billing software and so on are being preferred. The key skills that a legal secretary should have are excellent proof reading skills. She needs to be efficient, patient, and calm under pressure.

The salary of a legal secretary purely depends upon experience, location, and the type of firm. Smaller firms may pay an entry level secretary a relatively lesser salary as compared to a large firm. Secretaries with pertinent qualifications can also expect a higher salary.

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For the legal industry, a legal secretary is an invaluable resource. Lawyers heavily depend on their legal secretaries to make the right decisions which facilitate the smooth workings of a case. In the near future, there will be an increased

demand for techno savvy legal secretaries particularly in the corporate arena. Without the help, guidance and assistance of a legal secretary, a lawyers job would be extremely tedious.

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