

Paralegal Practice Task Force **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The State Bar of Wisconsin Paralegal Practice Task Force was created in response to the concerns expressed over unmet legal needs in the State Bar's Commission on the Delivery of Legal Services.

The creation of the Task Force also addressed the concerns of state paralegal groups that were addressing the issues of a professional career track for paralegals by drafting legislation that would require paralegal licensure through the Wisconsin Department of Regulation and Licensing.

The Task Force pulled together the talents and resources of attorneys, paralegals and paralegal educators to work together to explore the possibility of creating a professional track for paralegals and better incorporating their skills and services to meet the legal needs of low and moderate income individuals in Wisconsin.

The Task Force Report is the product of nearly four years of effort on the part of the members and other expert participants. Although sharp differences of opinion among the Task Force members were evident when the group initially was convened, extensive and intensive study and deliberation lead to clear consensus on the Report's recommendations.

The Task Force recommends that the Supreme Court, as part of its constitutional authority in Article VII over the administration of all courts and its inherent authority over the practice of law, regulate those individuals who would use the occupational title of "Paralegal". The recommendations are drafted as Supreme Court Rules in six different areas:

- **Definition:** A paralegal would work under the supervision of an attorney.
- **Education and Training:** A paralegal would be required to attend and receive 18 semester credits of course work from a qualified paralegal studies program. An attorney, receiving the proper coursework could work as a paralegal.
- **Licensure Based on Experience :** A three-year window would be provided for individuals who are currently providing the services of a paralegal to apply for licensure if they obtain at least three credits of continuing paralegal education in ethics and if they provide documentation from a supervising attorney that they have performed paralegal services for no less than 4,800 hours any time during the past 5 years.
- **Continuing Education Requirement:** A paralegal would be required to complete at least 10 hours of continuing paralegal education during each 2-year reporting period.
- **Ineligibility:** An individual cannot be licensed as a paralegal if their license to practice law has been revoked or suspended, if they have been convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude or if the individual lacks good moral character.
- **Rules of Ethics:** A paralegal would be held to a set of ethical rules fashioned after those standards regulating attorneys under Supreme Court Rule 20.