

# PROGRAM GUIDE



**CERTIFIED**  
**PARALEGAL™**

# State Bar of Wisconsin Certified Paralegal Program

Paralegals are an invaluable part of the legal profession. This voluntary certification recognizes the skill, education, and experience of today's paralegals and serves as a special distinction.

This program is the result of collaboration between the Paralegal Association of Wisconsin and the State Bar of Wisconsin.

## Key Requirements

All paralegal program applicants must:

- Be employed or retained by a lawyer, law office, corporation, or agency
- Be directly supervised by a Wisconsin-licensed lawyer
- Consent to a criminal history background check\*
- Meet the program's education **OR** experience requirements (see below)

## Education Requirements for Paralegal Certification

Applicants must have an associate's or bachelor's degree from a qualified paralegal studies program at one of the following institutions:

- Chippewa Valley Technical College
- Lakeshore Technical College
- Madison College
- Milwaukee Area Technical College
- Northeast Wisconsin Technical College
- Western Technical College or
- Any other institution:
  - Sanctioned by the Wisconsin Technical College System Board or the U.W. Board of Regents
  - Approved by the American Bar Association House of Delegates
  - OR
  - That is a member of the American Association for Paralegal Education
  - AND
  - That teaches Wisconsin-based substantive and procedural law content as required by the State Bar's paralegal program

If you have not graduated from a paralegal studies program, you may be eligible if you have:

- An associate's or bachelor's degree from any accredited post-secondary institution
- At least 18 credits from a qualified paralegal studies program with credits in designated subject-matter areas (see Section III(A)(1)(b) of State Bar of Wisconsin Certified Paralegal Program Requirements for the paralegal program's credit and subject-matter breakdown)

If your educational program lacked the necessary Wisconsin-based content, you may meet the educational requirements for certification by earning at least 21 CLE credits in Wisconsin law topics (7 of these credits must be in Wisconsin litigation practice) from one of the following institutions:

- The State Bar of Wisconsin
- Chippewa Valley Technical College
- Lakeshore Technical College
- Madison College
- Milwaukee Area Technical College
- Northeast Wisconsin Technical College
- Western Technical College

## Experience Requirements for Paralegal Certification

As an alternative to meeting the educational requirements listed above, you may instead be eligible based on work experience if you meet one of the two requirements listed here:

- Worked as a paralegal for at least 4,800 hours in the 5 years preceding your application
- Taught full-time for at least 3 years in an approved paralegal studies training program

If applying for the paralegal program under the experience requirements, you must apply by January 1, 2020, or within two years of establishing residency in Wisconsin, whichever is later.

### Other Experience Requirements:

- High school diploma (or GED equivalent)
- 3 hours of approved continuing paralegal education or continuing legal education in legal ethics and professional responsibility during the 12 months immediately preceding the date of application

## Continuing Education Requirements

To maintain your paralegal certification, you must complete at least 12 hours of approved continuing paralegal education or continuing legal education (including at least 2 hours of legal ethics and professional responsibility) during each 2-year reporting period. (For approved continuing education requirements, see Section V.5 of State Bar of Wisconsin Certified Paralegal Program Requirements).

You may also fulfill this requirement by completing one credit from a qualified paralegal studies program during each reporting period (earning at least a "C" grade).

### Continuing Education Reporting Period

The reporting period for a paralegal certified in an even-numbered year will end on June 30 of each even-numbered year following the year of initial certification.

The reporting period for a paralegal certified in an odd-numbered year will end on June 30 of each odd-numbered year following the year of initial certification.

## Application Process

You must submit a completed application form, \$200, which includes a \$125 nonrefundable application fee and \$75 annual registration fee, and the appropriate information as outlined below to the program registrar.

### If applying based on educational experience:

- Official transcript from educational institutions you attended
- OR
- Acceptable proof that you have successfully completed any additional educational requirements as described in the section above titled "Education Requirements for Paralegal Certification"
- AND
- Proof of employment or retainer by a Wisconsin-licensed attorney

### If applying based on work experience:

- Sworn or affirmed declarations from the attorney(s) with whom you work or have worked attesting to your substantive paralegal work experience, the total hours of which must meet the minimum requirements of the program
- OR
- If applying based on teaching experience, verified employment records showing you have met the minimum teaching requirements

Upon approval by the program registrar, you will be issued a certificate and may use the credential "State Bar of Wisconsin Certified Paralegal."

Certification is valid for 2 years from the date of issuance unless revoked sooner in accordance with the procedures set forth in the State Bar of Wisconsin Certified Paralegal Program Requirements.

## Biannual Recertification

In order to maintain your certification, you must:

- Renew certification by June 30 every two years
- Meet the continuing education requirements
- Meet the employment/paralegal practice requirements
- Not be ineligible for certification or recertification (as explained below)
- At least 60 days before the end of the current certification period, remit the \$75 nonrefundable recertification fee along with proof that the continuing education requirements and employment/practice requirements have been met, together with such recertification forms as may be directed by the program registrar.

## Yearly Renewal Fee

At least 60 days before the end of the current certification year, remit the \$75 fee along with proof that the employment/practice requirements have been met.

## Certification Ineligibility

You will not be eligible for paralegal certification if you have:

- A suspended or revoked license to practice law
- Resigned your license in lieu of suspension or revocation
- Been convicted of a felony in any state or jurisdiction and your civil rights have not been restored\*
- Engaged in the unauthorized practice of law
- Information in your criminal history background check that would disqualify you from membership in the State Bar of Wisconsin

\*Results of the criminal history background check will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and may not disqualify an applicant from consideration.

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**The Certified Paralegal Program has been endorsed by:**



**STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN**

*Your Practice. Our Purpose.®*