PARALEGAL/LEGAL STUDIES

Employment for paralegals and legal assistants is projected to grow as fast as the average for all occupations through 2021. Employers are trying to reduce costs and increase the availability and efficiency of legal services by hiring paralegals to perform tasks once done by lawyers. Paralegals are performing a wider variety of duties, making them more useful to businesses. Competition for jobs should continue as many people seek to go into this profession; however, experienced, formally trained paralegals should have the best employment opportunities. Private law firms will continue to be the largest employers of paralegals, but a growing array of other organizations, such as corporate legal departments, insurance companies, real estate and title insurance firms, and banks hire paralegals. Job opportunities for paralegals will expand in the public sector as well. Community legal-service programs, which provide assistance to the poor, elderly, minorities, and middle-income families, will employ additional paralegals to minimize expenses and serve the most people. Federal, State, and local government agencies, consumer organizations, and the courts also should continue to hire paralegals in increasing numbers. Paralegals must work under the supervision of an attorney in Kansas and Missouri.

Demand has increased for some discretionary legal services, such as planning estates, drafting wills, and handling real estate transactions. Corporations are less inclined to initiate certain types of litigation when falling sales and profits lead to fiscal belt tightening. However, during recessions, corporations and individuals are more likely to face problems that require legal assistance, such as bankruptcies, foreclosures, and divorces. Paralegals, who provide many of the same legal services as lawyers at a lower cost, tend to fare relatively better in difficult economic conditions.

Employment Information

**Greater Kansas City Area:** In 2016, paralegal and legal assistants held an estimated 2,595 jobs in the fifteen counties that make up the Kansas City Metropolitan statistical Area (MSA), with 2,698 projected by 2021 (+4%).

**State:** Paralegal and legal assistants held an estimated 1,762 jobs in Kansas in 2016, with 1,880 jobs projected by 2021 (+7%). All together 118 openings are anticipated due to the need for replacements and growth.

**National:** Paralegal and legal assistants held 303,708 jobs in 2016, with 320,908 jobs projected by 2021 (+6%). Approximately 17,200 openings are expected due to growth and the need for replacement workers.

September 2017
Salary Information

*Greater Kansas City Area:* Paralegal and legal assistants employed in the Greater Kansas City area earned an average hourly wage of $22.59 in 2016.

*State:* Paralegal and legal assistants in Kansas earned an average hourly wage of $21.14 in 2016.

*National:* Paralegal and legal assistants working full-time earned an average hourly wage of $24.77 in 2016.

JCCC Placement and Salary Information

The JCCC Office of Institutional Research conducts a follow-up study of program completers one year after completion. Seventy-nine percent of the graduates who responded to the follow-up study conducted during 2015-16, and were employed, were employed in a related field and reported earning an average hourly wage of $17.29.

Note: Salary Information for Greater Kansas City, State, and National is based on EMSI 2016 third quarter data. JCCC information for career program completers is based on data supplied by respondents to follow-up studies and is not necessarily representative of all career program completers. Other sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics