

**WHAT
IS
SOUTH JERSEY
PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION?**

A Historical Perspective

Organized 1980. Incorporated 1983.

Member, National Federation of Paralegal Associations, Inc.

Eleventh Edition

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INDEX

	<u>Page</u>
SJPA 2011 - 2012 BOARD OF DIRECTORS	3
Definition of Paralegal	4
Goals and Objectives of SJPA	4
Membership Categories of SJPA	4
History and Accomplishments of SJPA	5
Publications Available from the SJPA Library	7
SJPA Membership Benefits.....	8
National Allied Legal Professional Organizations.....	9

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**SOUTH JERSEY PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION
2011-2012
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DEFINITION OF A PARALEGAL

A paralegal is a person qualified through education, training, or work experience, who is employed or retained by a lawyer, law office, governmental agency, or other entity in a capacity or function which involves the performance, under the ultimate direction and supervision of an attorney. A paralegal handles specifically delegated substantive legal work, which, for the most part, requires a sufficient knowledge of legal concepts that, absent such assistance, an attorney would perform their own.

As stated by the New Jersey Supreme Court Committee on the Unauthorized Practice of Law, the terms paralegal and legal assistant are considered synonymous and are used interchangeably.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES of SOUTH JERSEY PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION

- to provide professional support to its members;
- to expand recognition of the paralegal profession;
- to offer continuing legal education and educational resources to its members;
- to facilitate improvements in paralegal education;
- to be actively involved in the events surrounding the development of paralegal regulation;
- to improve the cost-effective delivery of legal services; and
- to promote the paralegal image.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

VOTING membership is open to individuals currently employed or retained as a paralegal who possess **either**: a Bachelor's or Associate's Degree in paralegal studies/technology; a Bachelor's or Associate's Degree in any field plus a paralegal certificate; a certificate from an ABA-approved or AAFPE-member paralegal education program; a certificate from a non-correspondence paralegal program which is not ABA-approved or an AAFPE - member and two consecutive years, whether prior or current, of paralegal experience; or three consecutive years, whether prior or current, of paralegal experience.

ASSOCIATE membership is open to any individuals who are **either**: employed or retained as a paralegal not meeting any of the criteria for voting membership; a graduate of a non-correspondence paralegal education program, and currently unemployed; previously employed or retained as a paralegal, but currently unemployed; a paralegal member in good standing of an NFPA-member association other than SJPA; or currently a paralegal manager, coordinator, or administrator, and applying their past experience and/or education as a paralegal in their position.

STUDENT membership is open to a person currently enrolled in a non-correspondence paralegal education program.

SUSTAINING membership is open to a person, partnership, corporation, or other entity supporting the goals and purposes of the Association.

HISTORY AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS
of
SOUTH JERSEY PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION

South Jersey Paralegal Association (SJPA) is a nonprofit corporation comprised of paralegals and paralegal students. SJPA's members also include paralegal educational institutions and other entities that support its goals and the paralegal profession. The Association was organized to provide professional support, expand recognition of the paralegal profession, offer continuing legal education, facilitate improvements in paralegal education programs, and promote the paralegal image. SJPA continues to strive to achieve these and other goals.

Formation

In the late 1970s, educational facilities in New Jersey began offering a variety of paralegal education programs. Graduates of local programs realized the need for a professional support group. South Jersey Paralegal Association was organized in 1980 and incorporated in May, 1983. SJPA currently has members in many counties in the state and holds dinner meetings between September and June in various locations throughout Southern New Jersey.

Officers and Committees

The SJPA Board of Directors is made up of our officers and various committees and coordinators. Our policy committees include membership, delivery of paralegal services, professional development, nominations and elections, and pro bono. SJPA administrative committees include public relations, newsletter, continuing education, programs, job bank, dinner meetings, and fundraising. SJPA also has ad hoc committees as needs arise. The current ad hoc committees in place are website, membership directory, library, and regulation.

Officers are elected by voting members of the Association. The offices are president, vice president, treasurer, recording secretary, and primary and secondary representatives to the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA). Appointed officers are corresponding secretary and parliamentarian. Officers and policy committee chairs must be voting members in good standing; administrative and ad hoc committee chairs may be associate or student members in good standing.

SJPA has been represented on the New Jersey State Bar Association Paralegal Committee since approximately 1981. This representation enables interaction with members of the Bar and Judiciary, participation in matters of mutual interest, and an opportunity to increase recognition of paralegal participation in the delivery of legal services. In 1994, the NJSBA granted special committee status to the Paralegal Committee. With this recognition, membership to the Committee with voting privileges became open to any practicing paralegal in the state. Presently, the Committee is comprised of paralegals, attorneys and educators.

We encourage all our members to become involved in our organization. Participation is a key ingredient to the success of SJPA. All board meetings are open to any member and we invite you to attend. If you are interested in any of our open positions, please contact any board member.

National Membership

On June 5, 1984, SJPA became the 33rd member association of the National Federation of Paralegal Associations, Inc., which now represents paralegal associations nationwide. By this affiliation, SJPA members receive information on issues facing the profession across the country and have a forum to discuss issues of mutual concern. SJPA members have access to a network of paralegals from which they can obtain state-specific information as well as experts in specialty areas of law, etc.

Each SJPA member receives the NFPA publication, The National Paralegal Reporter, a journal that contains substantive articles of interest.

Paralegals On-Line

SJPA is now online!! We're very excited about our new website. Here, you will be able to find general information about our association, a calendar of upcoming events, membership applications, a photo gallery, and much more. Check us out at www.sjpparalegals.org. For all you "surfers" out there, come on by and take a swim!

NFPA is also online. At <http://www.paralegals.org>, individuals can access paralegal networking groups, worldwide resume service, seminar information and publications, and service directories. This forum permits you to exchange ideas, tips, and information on the profession. Networking groups are open to NFPA and American Association for Paralegal Education ("AAfPE") members.

Paralegals Involved in Pro Bono

SJPA has worked with Camden Regional Legal Services (CRLS) by assisting attorneys in providing pro bono legal services. Initial projects included research assignments, assistance with client intake, file review to determine the role of the paralegal, and more substantive paralegal tasks under attorney supervision. SJPA is proud to have received recognition awards from Camden Regional Legal Services for its contributions and participation in providing pro bono legal services through CRLS.

SJPA has also volunteered with Habitat for Humanity, and its members continue to participate in organized Pro Bono activities in New Jersey.

Professional Development

Through standardized quality paralegal education, paralegals can increase their effective utilization and productivity and assist in the delivery of cost-efficient legal services. To that end, SJPA has participated in facilitating improvements in paralegal educational programs.

In 1992, SJPA awarded its first paralegal scholarship. SJPA continues to offer an educational scholarship each year.

SJPA Newsletter

SJPA publishes a newsletter called The Reporter. Here you will find local, state and national news, opportunities for continuing legal education, classified job listings, and other articles of interest to SJPA members. Information about our dinner meetings and a reservation form are also included. The Reporter is an excellent means to keep informed about the profession in general, and, particularly about the profession in New Jersey.

Dinner Meetings

SJPA provides opportunities for continuing legal education to its members at its dinner meetings held in September, November, January, and March. The Association's Annual Meeting is held in May, which is also the meeting at which we elect our officers for the new year. At the June meeting, we have our installation of officers. The meetings are held at various locations throughout southern New Jersey. At each dinner meeting, there are speakers that provide discussions on a variety of legal specialty topics. SJPA also provides local and national news about the profession, and there is an informal opportunity to network.

For the student, the returning paralegal, the new paralegal, or just someone with an interest, networking is a chance to meet working paralegals and gain information and insight into the paralegal profession. SJPA members are happy to share their knowledge and experience with people who are attracted to the paralegal field, and our dinner meetings are the perfect forum.

Continuing Legal Education Seminars

SJPA has participated and continues to participate with the Legal Assistant's Association of New Jersey through the Garden State Alliance ("GSA") in offering a statewide, joint-venture educational convention. GSA Conventions offer numerous educational seminars taught by attorneys, educators and paralegals (including "A Day in the Life of the Paralegal" sessions), a Vendor Exhibitor Hall, and a luncheon. Over 400 paralegals and paralegal students have attended this convention in recent years. Additional information is available on the GSA website, www.gsaconvention.com.

SJPA Library

In 1996, SJPA instituted a lending library program for its members. The current listing of available books, audio cassettes and video cassettes is published periodically in The Reporter. Included in the library are titles on topics ranging from how to write a resume, legal research, and the NFPA Annual Salary Survey. The materials are maintained by the SJPA Librarian and are available at no charge to all members of SJPA for one month lending periods.

The following NFPA brochures are available to SJPA members. Please contact any Board Member for additional information.

Attorney-Client and Attorney Work Product; Privileges: Their Application to Paralegals; NFPA Member Benefits; CLE: Staying Current in the Legal Profession; Model Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility; NFPA Pro Bono - Paralegals Making a Difference; NFPA - The Association's Partner in Progress; PACE: Ready to be a PACE-setter; Paralegal Involvement with Bar Associations; Paralegals and Conflict of Interest; Recovery of Paralegal Fees; Statement on Issues Affecting the Paralegal Profession; Paralegals: Defining the Profession.

Accomplishments

In the course of SJPA's history, our members have been instrumental in charting the course of paralegals in New Jersey. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of our members, paralegals in our state now have the right to carry business cards and practice independently as contract paralegals.

The New Jersey Supreme Court issued its decision In re: Opinion 24 of the Committee on the Unauthorized Practice of Law on May 14, 1992. On May 18, 1999, the New Jersey Supreme Court declined to act on the recommendations of its Committee on Paralegal Education and Regulation to implement a licensing scheme. The issue of regulation continues to be debated in many venues.

SJPA has also had a voice in the codification of Rule 4:42-9 (b) as it relates to recoverability of paralegal fees and the ABA commission on non-lawyer practice.

Future Challenges for SJPA

SJPA is proud of the success of the Association. SJPA members look forward to continued growth and development of the paralegal profession, continued achievement of the Association's goals and objectives, and strengthening the lines of communication with the Bar and Judiciary. Looking forward, SJPA welcomes the knowledge that continued work and dedication will increase paralegal participation in the delivery of cost-efficient legal services.

SJPA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- Automatic individual membership in the NFPA;
- Subscriptions to the SJPA newsletter, The Reporter; and the NFPA journal, The National Paralegal Reporter.
- Dinner meetings that include a business meeting, seminars on a variety of subjects affecting paralegals, and an opportunity to network with colleagues;
- Access to a local and national repository of information about the profession and the issues surrounding it, such as work-product, unauthorized practice of law, confidentiality, case law, and ethical responsibilities;
- Access to Internet and work groups;
- Access to reduced price services that meet the professional needs of paralegals;
- Opportunity to debate and vote on issues which establish SJPA policy at general membership meetings, and opportunity to debate and vote on issues which establish NFPA policy at regional and annual meetings;
- Monitoring of legislation which may affect paralegals by SJPA;
- A local network of paralegals in most legal specialty areas, a comprehensive membership directory, and a national network among paralegal associations through discussions at NFPA meetings, correspondence, and exchange of newsletters;
- Additional benefits available through NFPA. Please check the NFPA website for more information.

NATIONAL ALLIED LEGAL ORGANIZATIONS

American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE)

19 Mantua Road
Mt. Royal, NJ 08061
Telephone: 856-423-2829
Fax: 856-423-3420
Web Address: www.aafpe.org
E-mail: info@aafpe.org

American Bar Association (ABA)

Standing Committee on Legal Assistants
321 North Clark Street
Chicago IL 60610
Telephone: 312-988-5000
Web Address: www.abanet.org
E-Mail: askaba@abanet.org

Association of Legal Administrators (ALA)

75 Tri-State International, Suite 222
Lincolnshire, IL 60069-4435
Telephone: 847-267-1252
Fax: 847-267-1329
Web Address: www.alanet.org
E-mail: membership@alanet.org

International Paralegal Management Association (IPMA)

(formerly Legal Assistants Management Association)

P. O. Box 659
Avondale Estates, GA 30002-0659
Telephone: 404-292-IPMA (4762)
Fax: 404-292-2931
Web Address: www.paralegalmanagement.org
E-mail: info@paralegalmanagement.org

National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA)

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