

Paralegal Occupations

Labor Market Analysis: San Diego County

October 2020

Summary



The brief provides labor market information about *Paralegal Occupations* to assist the San Diego and Imperial Counties Community Colleges with program development and strategic planning. *Paralegal Occupations* include “Paralegals and Paralegals,” “Court Reporters,” “Title Examiners, Abstractors, and Searchers,” “Legal Support Workers, All Other,” and “Legal Secretaries.” According to available labor market information, *Paralegal Occupations* in San Diego County have a labor market demand of 895 annual job openings (while average demand for a single occupation in San Diego County is 277 annual job openings), and seven educational institutions in San Diego County supply 263 awards for these occupations, suggesting that there is a supply gap in the labor market. Entry-level wages for all occupations except for “Legal Support Workers, All Other” and median wages for all occupations are above the living wage. This brief recommends proceeding with developing a **new** program because 1) most of these occupations’ entry-level and median earnings are above the living wage; 2) employers require, at minimum, an associate degree for these occupations and 3) a supply gap exists for these positions.

Introduction

This report provides labor market information in San Diego County for the following occupational codes in the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)¹ system:

- **Paralegals and Legal Assistants** (SOC 23-2011): Assist lawyers by investigating facts, preparing legal documents, or researching legal precedent. Conduct research to support a legal proceeding, to formulate a defense, or to initiate legal action.
- **Court Reporters** (SOC 23-2091): Use verbatim methods and equipment to capture, store, retrieve, and transcribe pretrial and trial proceedings or other information. Includes stenocaptioners who operate computerized stenographic captioning equipment to provide captions of live or prerecorded broadcasts for hearing-impaired viewers.
- **Title Examiners, Abstractors, and Searchers** (SOC 23-2093): Search real estate records, examine titles, or summarize pertinent legal or insurance documents or details for a variety of purposes. May compile lists of mortgages, contracts, and other instruments pertaining to titles by searching public and private records for law firms, real estate agencies, or title insurance companies.
- **Legal Support Workers, All Other** (SOC 23-2099): All legal support workers not listed separately. "All Other" titles represent occupations with a wide range of characteristics which do not fit into one of the detailed O*NET-SOC occupations.
- **Legal Secretaries** (SOC 43-6012): Perform secretarial duties using legal terminology, procedures, and documents. Prepare legal papers and correspondence, such as summonses, complaints, motions, and subpoenas. May also assist with legal research.

For the purpose of this report, these occupations are referred to as *Paralegal Occupations*.

¹ The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system is used by federal statistical agencies to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating or disseminating data. [bls.gov/soc](https://www.bls.gov/soc).

Projected Occupational Demand

Between 2019 and 2024, *Paralegal Occupations* are projected to increase by 202 net jobs or three percent (Exhibit 1a). During this period, employers in San Diego County are projected to hire 895 workers annually to fill new jobs and backfill jobs due to attrition caused by turnover and retirement, for example.

Exhibit 1a: Number of Jobs for Paralegal Occupations (2009-2024)²

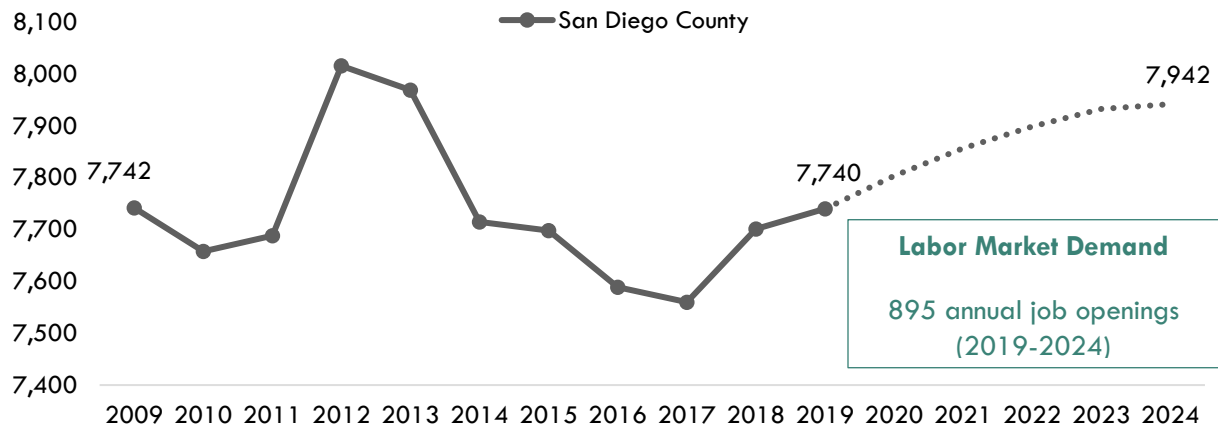


Exhibit 1b breaks down the projected number of jobs change by occupation more specifically: *Paralegals and Legal Assistants* are projected to increase the most by 315 total jobs between 2019 and 2024. *Legal Secretaries*, however, are projected to decline during this period (Exhibit 1b).

Exhibit 1b: Number of Jobs for Paralegal Occupations in San Diego County (2019-2024)

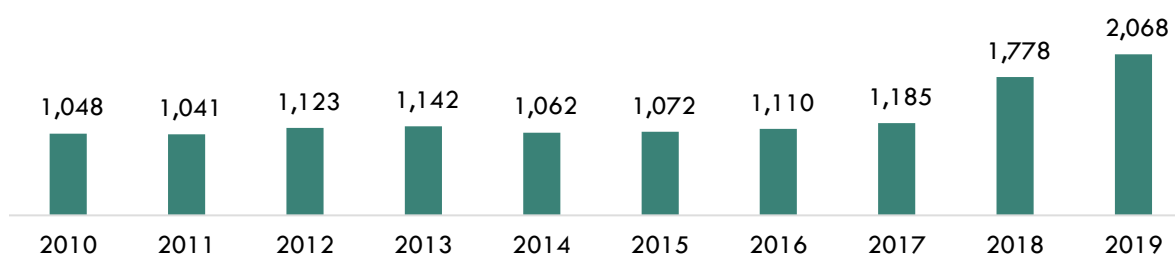
Occupational Title	2019 Jobs	2024 Jobs	2019 - 2024 Net Jobs Change	2019-2024 % Net Jobs Change	Annual Job Openings (Demand)
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	3,233	3,548	315	10%	421
Legal Support Workers, All Other	923	956	33	4%	90
Court Reporters	219	224	5	2%	22
Title Examiners, Abstractors, and Searchers	459	463	4	1%	43
Legal Secretaries	2,906	2,751	-155	-5%	319
Total	7,740	7,942	202	3%	895

² EMSI 2020.02; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

Online Job Postings

This report analyzes not only historical and projected data (traditional labor market information or LMI), but also recent data from online job postings (real-time LMI). Online job postings may provide additional insight about recent changes in the labor market that are not captured by historical data. Between 2010 and 2019, there was an average of 1,263 online job postings per year in San Diego County for *Paralegal Occupations* (Exhibit 2). Please note that online job postings do not equal labor market demand; demand is represented by annual job openings (Exhibit 1b). Employers may post a position multiple times for various reasons, such as increasing the pool of applicants, for example.

Exhibit 2: Number of Online Job Postings for *Paralegal Occupations* in San Diego County (2010-2019)³



Earnings

The entry-level hourly earnings for *Paralegal Occupations* range from \$15.78 to \$25.97 (Exhibit 3a).

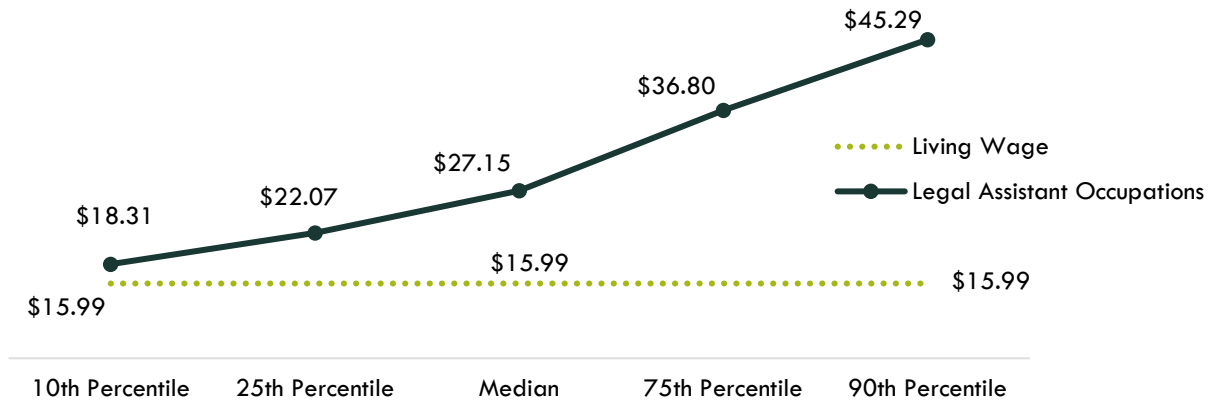
Exhibit 3a: Hourly Earnings for *Paralegal Occupations* in San Diego County

Occupational Title	Entry-Level Hourly Earnings (25 th Percentile)	Median Hourly Earnings	Experienced Hourly Earnings (75 th Percentile)
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	\$25.97	\$32.35	\$38.72
Court Reporters	\$25.54	\$29.57	\$44.25
Title Examiners, Abstractors, and Searchers	\$22.45	\$28.34	\$36.36
Legal Secretaries	\$20.59	\$25.62	\$32.52
Legal Support Workers, All Other	\$15.78	\$19.84	\$32.15

³ Burning Glass Technologies, "Labor Insight Real-Time Labor Market Information Tool." 2010-2019.

On average, the entry-level hourly earnings for *Paralegal Occupations* is \$22.07; this is more than the living wage for a single adult in San Diego County, which is \$15.99 per hour (Exhibit 3b).⁴

Exhibit 3b: Average Hourly Earnings⁵ for *Paralegal Occupations* in San Diego County⁶



Educational Supply

Educational supply for an occupation can be estimated by analyzing the number of awards in related Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) or Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes.⁷ There are **four** TOP codes and **four** CIP codes related to *Paralegal Occupations* (Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4: Related TOP and CIP Codes for *Paralegal Occupations*

<i>Paralegal Occupations</i>
TOP 051110: Escrow
TOP 051410: Legal Office Technology
TOP 051430: Court Reporting
TOP 140200: Paralegal
CIP 22.0301: Legal Administrative Assistant/Secretary
CIP 22.0302: Legal Assistant/Paralegal
CIP 22.0303: Court Reporting/Court Reporter
CIP 52.1501: Real Estate

⁴ "California Family Needs Calculator (formerly the Self-Sufficiency Standard)," Insight: Center for Community Economic Development, last updated 2018. insightccd.org/2018-self-sufficiency-standard.

⁵ 10th and 25th percentiles could be considered entry-level wages, and 75th and 90th percentiles could be considered experienced wages for individuals who may have been in the occupation longer, received more training than others, etc.

⁶ EMSI 2020.02; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

⁷ TOP data comes from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart (datamart.cccco.edu) and CIP data comes from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data).

According to TOP data, five community colleges supply the region with awards for these occupations: Cuyamaca College, Palomar College, San Diego City College, San Diego Miramar College, and Southwestern College. According to CIP data, two non-community colleges supply the region with awards: National University and University of San Diego (Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5: Number of Awards (Certificates and Degrees) Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions (Program Year 2014-15 through PY2018-19 Average)

TOP6 or CIP	TOP6 or CIP Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY16-17 to PY18-19)	Other Educational Institutions 3-Yr Annual Average Awards (PY14-15 to PY16-17)	3-Yr Total Average Supply (PY14-15 to PY18-19)
051410	Legal Office Technology	4	0	4
	• San Diego City	2	0	
	• Southwestern	2	0	
140200	Paralegal	101	0	101
	• Cuyamaca	22	0	
	• Palomar	2	0	
	• San Diego City	1	0	
	• San Diego Miramar	62	0	
	• Southwestern	14	0	
22.0302	Legal Assistant/Paralegal	0	158	158
	• National University	0	12	
	• University of San Diego	0	146	
			Total	263

Demand vs. Supply

Comparing labor demand (annual openings) with labor supply⁸ suggests that there is a **supply gap** for these occupations in San Diego County, with **895** annual openings and **263** awards. Comparatively, there are **9,077** annual openings in California and **1,863** awards, demonstrating that there is a supply gap across the state⁹ (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6: Labor Demand (Annual Openings) Compared with Labor Supply (Average Annual Awards)

	Demand (Annual Openings)	Supply (Total Annual Average Supply)	Supply Gap or Oversupply
San Diego	895	263	632
California	9,077	1,863	7,214

Please note: This is a basic analysis of supply and demand of labor. The data does not include workers currently in the labor force who could fill these positions or workers who are not captured by publicly available data. This data should be used to discuss the potential gaps or oversupply of workers; however, it should not be the only basis for determining whether or not a program should be developed.

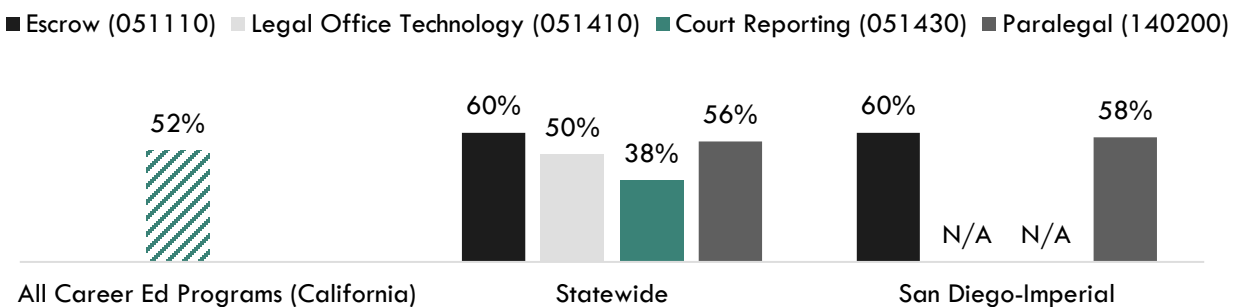
⁸ Labor supply can be found from two different sources: EMSI or the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart. EMSI uses CIP codes while MIS uses TOP codes. Different coding systems result in differences in the supply numbers.

⁹ "Supply and Demand," Centers of Excellence Student Outcomes, coecc.net/Supply-and-Demand.aspx.

Student Outcomes and Regional Comparisons

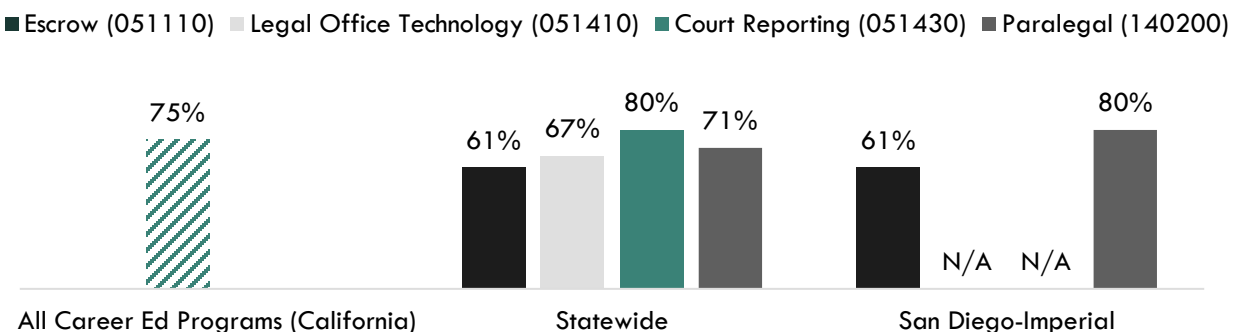
According to the California Community Colleges LaunchBoard, between 58 to 60 percent of students in the San Diego-Imperial region earned a living wage after completing a program related to *Paralegal Occupations*, compared to 38 to 60 percent statewide and 52 percent of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 7a).¹⁰

Exhibit 7a: Proportion of Students Who Earned a Living Wage, PY2016-17¹¹



According to the California Community Colleges LaunchBoard, between 61 to 80 percent of students in the San Diego-Imperial region obtained a job closely related to their field of study after completing a related program, compared to 61 to 80 percent statewide and 75 percent of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 7b).¹²

Exhibit 7b: Percentage of Students in a Job Closely Related to Field of Study, PY2015-16¹³



¹⁰ "California Community Colleges Strong Workforce Program," California Community Colleges, calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/SWP.aspx.

¹¹ Among completers and skills builders who exited, the proportion of students who attained a living wage.

¹² "California Community Colleges Strong Workforce Program," California Community Colleges, calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/SWP.aspx.

¹³ Most recent year with available data is Program Year 2014-15. Percentage of Students in a Job Closely Related to Field of Study: Among students who responded to the CTEOS, the percentage reporting employment in the same or similar field as their program of study.

Top Employers

Between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2019, the top five employers in San Diego County for these occupations were CACI, DLA Piper, Procopio, Cory, Hargreaves & Savitch LLP, APC Technology Group, and Ricoh Electronics (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8: Top Employers in San Diego County for Paralegal Occupations¹⁴

Top Employers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CACI• DLA Piper• Procopio, Cory, Hargreaves & Savitch LLP• APC Technology Group• Ricoh Electronics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• County of San Diego• U.S. Government• Higgs Fletcher & Mack LLP• Talent Fusion Point• APLC Incorporated

Education, Skills and Certifications

Paralegal Occupations have a national educational attainment ranging from a high school diploma or equivalent to an associate degree (Exhibit 9a).

Exhibit 9a: National Educational Attainment for Paralegal Occupations¹⁵

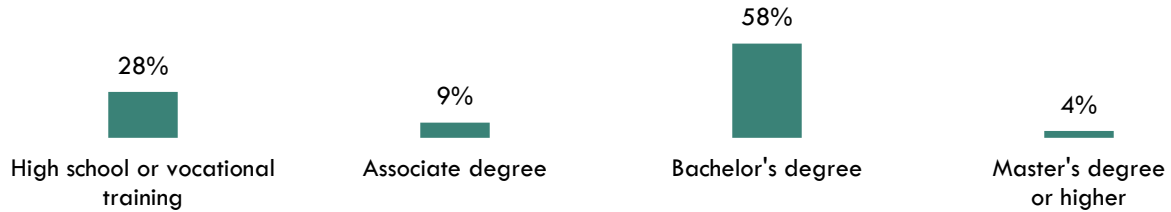
Occupational Title	Typical Entry-Level Education
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	Associate degree
Legal Support Workers, All Other	Associate degree
Court Reporters	Postsecondary non-degree award
Title Examiners, Abstractors, and Searchers	High school diploma or equivalent
Legal Secretaries	High school diploma or equivalent

¹⁴ Burning Glass Technologies, "Labor Insight Real-Time Labor Market Information Tool." 2017-2019.

¹⁵ EMSI 2020.02; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

Based on online job postings between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2019 in San Diego County, the top listed educational requirement for *Paralegal Occupations* is a **bachelor's degree** (Exhibit 9b).¹⁶

Exhibit 9b: Educational Requirements for *Paralegal Occupations* in San Diego County¹⁷



*May not add to 100% due to rounding

Exhibit 10 lists the top specialized, soft and software skills that appeared in online job postings between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2019.

Exhibit 10: Top Skills for *Paralegal Occupations* in San Diego County¹⁸

Specialized Skills	Soft Skills	Software Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Litigation • Legal Support • Administrative Support • Legal Documentation • Scheduling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Skills • Detail-Oriented • Organizational Skills • Writing • Multi-Tasking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Excel • Microsoft Word • Microsoft PowerPoint • Word Processing • Microsoft Outlook

¹⁶ Burning Glass Technologies, "Labor Insight Real-Time Labor Market Information Tool." 2017-2019.

¹⁷ "Educational Attainment for Workers 25 Years and Older by Detailed Occupation," Bureau of Labor Statistics, last modified September 4, 2019. bls.gov/emp/tables/educational-attainment.htm.

¹⁸ Burning Glass Technologies, "Labor Insight Real-Time Labor Market Information Tool." 2017-2019.

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Important Disclaimers

All representations included in this report have been produced from primary research and/or secondary review of publicly and/or privately available data and/or research reports. This study examines the most recent data available at the time of the analysis; however, data sets are updated regularly and may not be consistent with previous reports. Efforts have been made to qualify and validate the accuracy of the data and the report findings; however, neither the Centers of Excellence for Labor Market Research (COE), COE host district, nor California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office are responsible for the applications or decisions made by individuals and/or organizations based on this study or its recommendations.

This workforce demand report uses state and federal job projection data that was developed before the economic impact of COVID-19. The COE is monitoring the situation and will provide more information as it becomes available. Please consult with local employers to understand their current employment needs.