

# PROGRAM GUIDE

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**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:

- Meet the program's education requirements through degrees and/or CLE credits.
- Have a minimum of 2000 - 4000 hours of substantive work experience as a paralegal. (Hours will vary based on qualifying educational requirements).
- Confirm and attest to not engage in the unlicensed practice of law.
- Consent to a criminal history background check.

## Education Requirements for Paralegal Certification

### Three pathways to certification:

#### Fully Meets Wisconsin Education Requirements

- Has an Associate or bachelor's from a qualified Wisconsin paralegal studies program\*.
- Completed 15 credits of CLE 3 of which are Ethics.
- Has worked as a Paralegal for a min of 2000 hours.
- Passed background check.
- Self-Attestation completed.

\*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

#### Partially Meets Wisconsin Education Requirement

- Any associate or bachelor's degree from a non-Wisconsin Paralegal Program\*\*.
- Has worked as a Paralegal for a min of 2000 hours.
- Passed background check.
- Self-Attestation completed.
- MUST Complete 18 credits of Wisconsin specific CLE, 3 of which are Ethics prior to application.
- MUST PASS GENERAL CERTIFICATION TEST

*\*Must be accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the United States Department of Education.*

#### Does Not Meet Wisconsin Education Requirement

- Associates or Bachelors degree from a non-paralegal studies program\*\*.
- Has worked as a Paralegal for a min of 4000 hours.
- Passed background check.
- Self-Attestation completed.
- MUST Complete 21 credits of Wisconsin specific CLE, 3 of which are Ethics prior to application.
- MUST PASS GENERAL CERTIFICATION TEST

*\*\*Must be accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the United States Department of Education.*

## Continuing Education and Experience Requirements

To maintain your paralegal certification, you must complete at least 15 hours of approved continuing paralegal education or continuing legal education (including at least 3 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, \$210, which includes a \$130 nonrefundable application fee and \$80 annual registration fee, and the appropriate information as outlined below to the program registrar.

- Original 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 licensed attorney
- Complete a minimum of 2000 - 4000 hours working as a paralegal under the direct supervision of a licensed attorney.
- 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 \$80 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 \$80 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.*



**STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN**

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