



The Michigan Legal Assistant

Legal Assistants Section Newsletter

RED ALERT! STOP! STUDY THE ISSUES!

LICENSURE AND CERTIFICATION – WHAT ARE THEY?

By: Vicki Voisin, CLAS

Before Michigan legal assistants take steps toward supporting any form of regulation, they must give careful thought to both certification and licensure. It is imperative that everyone understands the definitions of both, the needs they serve, and their impact on this dynamic, thriving profession. Every legal assistant must also consider which of these forms of regulation would best serve his or her individual needs and professional goals.

The debate over a regulatory scheme for legal assistants is not just a matter of opinion. Rather, the type of regulation chosen should depend upon understanding the purposes and functions of licensure and certification programs and how they differ, the profession's expectations of a regulatory program, and upon what it may achieve for legal assistants.

FACT:

Licensure and Certification Programs – Differing Regulatory Mechanisms for Differing Purposes and Needs

LICENSURE PROGRAMS

- 1 Controls entry into a career field.
- 2 Mandated by state legislatures; governmentally controlled and dependent upon legislative appropriations.
- 3 Restricts and limits job duties and responsibilities; may vary greatly among states. Inflexible to change in career field.
- 4 State-wide in scope; establishes different criteria in each state for entry into the field.

CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

- 1 Legitimizes a profession.
- 2 Establishes standards and recognition for a career field. Less costly than licensure programs; no taxpayer burden.
- 3 Responsive to change; administered by the profession itself, by those most involved with the profession.
- 4 National in scope; certification credential is not threatened by move to another state.

Licensure or governmental regulation can do nothing for a profession that it cannot accomplish on its own, unless the profession seeks to deliver services directly to the public.

The chart at left outlines the discussion of licensure and certification which follows.

Two very important points should be made before continuing:

1. There is *no* mandatory licensing of legal assistants anywhere in the United States at this time.

2. Licensure and professional certification programs are two *entirely different* regulatory mechanisms.

Licensure is a mandatory legal condition of employment. It is enacted by legislation, administered by state agencies, and designed to demonstrate minimum levels of proficiency and competency for entry into a profession.

Standards for licensing are set by individuals who do not necessarily practice in the field. With licensure, the profession does not set standards for itself.

Continued on page 4

Table of Contents

Red Alert! Stop!
Study the Issues!
Licensure and
Certification –
What Are They? 1

Message from
the Chair 2

Education
Committee Report 2

News from the
National Association
of Legal Assistants 3

Winter Cruise 5

Spring Seminar 5

Writing Right! 6

Status of Committee
re: Paralegal Fees 6

1997 Paralegal
Compensation and
Benefits Report 7

Bet You Didn't
Know That 8

Legal Ease 9

Calendar of Events 10

Legal Assistants
Section Logo
Sweatshirts and
Polo Shirts 10

Helpful Hints 11

Legal Assistants
Section Videos 12

New Members 12

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

By: Rose E. Bareham

We are at the beginning of another year and I am looking forward to serving as your Chair for the next year.

The Council is in the process of planning the seminars and social activities for the upcoming year. We have several interesting seminars and activities planned. See the Education Chair's report later in this issue for further details, or contact Education Chair, Kelly LaGrave (517/371-8287) if you have any suggestions.

I would also like to thank all of you who took the time to vote in Council elections this year. We had an exceptional response to this year's ballot as many more Section members took the time to vote than have in the past. Remember, this is "YOUR" Section and every voice counts!

Time passes quickly, so please don't be left behind this year. There are plenty of ways to get involved in "YOUR" Section. If there is a direction that you would like to see the Section take, getting involved is the best way to point us in that direction. Please feel free to contact me or any of the other council members with your questions or suggestions. ■

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

By: Kelly A. LaGrave, CLA, Chair

The Council has planned many interesting seminars for the coming year. If you have any ideas for seminars, or would like to assist the education committee, please feel free to contact me. I'm always looking for new ideas and people willing to help!

On February 20, 1998, a 1/2 day seminar will be held in the Lansing area. The seminar will cover two topics: the revised Limited Liability Company Act and Stress Management. There will be drawings for a weekend for two at the Lansing Radisson and for two five minute chair massages. After the seminar, there will be a very nice happy hour/buffet. Please attend and use this opportunity to meet other legal assistants and your Council members. Further details will be coming to you in the mail in early January.

On Saturday, May 16, 1998 the Section will be sponsoring a 1/2 day seminar at the beautiful Garland Resort, in Lewiston, Michigan. The seminar topics will include Ethics for the Legal Assistant and Personal Investing for Retirement. Spouses/significant others will be invited to attend the investment portion of the seminar. We are in the process of planning many activities so that members can use the time to "get away" for the weekend and have some fun with other members of the Section. Some of the possible activities include: a golf clinic, golfing packages, and for something really different, a croquet outing with an afternoon tea. We will be forwarding information to the members prior to the seminar. Mark your calendars now for this event as it promises to be a really good time for all! ■

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NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LEGAL ASSISTANTS

By: Evelyn L. Symonds

NALA FEATURED ON "THE EXECUTIVE FORUM" TELEVISION SERIES.

The National Association of Legal Assistants, Inc., was a featured guest on "The Executive Forum" television program, hosted by Edwin Newman, aired December 7 through December 13, 1997. The subject of the program was the ways in which corporate legal departments and law firms are benefitting by the employment of paralegals.

Edwin Newman, well known for his work at "NBC NEWS" for over 35 years, has hosted "The Today Show" and a multitude of documentaries. He anchored live coverage of such major news events as the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King. He is the author of several books including "Strictly Speaking" and "A Civil Tongue." His most recent book is "I Must Say" which examines the English language and takes a look at news coverage and other matters.

Viewers of "The Executive Forum" are those in upper management positions in corporations and law firms. National exposure gained by NALA through this program benefits the paralegal profession by informing corporate decision makers of the tremendous positive aspects of including paralegals on the legal team and by informing others of NALA's services and programs. In addition, the national exposure of leading experts talking about issues of concern to NALA keeps the eye of the media watching "The Executive Forum" for trends and solutions. This program may lead to future media coverage for the benefit of the paralegal profession.

LEGAL ASSISTANT SEMINARS ON THE INTERNET. The National Association of Legal Assistants, Inc., and West Publishing Company have entered into an agreement to provide paralegal seminars on the Internet. Used as a review course for the CLA examination, the entire Internet program will consist of 15 courses covering all subjects of the CLA examination, and will be moderated by experts in the field. Each course will consist of four classes and registrants will have up to four weeks to complete a course. Courses will feature live discussion with instructors and will offer opportunities for registrants to communicate with each other. The web site will feature a library, FAQ page, evaluation forms, career center and course catalog. The pilot course, "Communications," is complete and will be offered in January, 1998. After comments and evaluations of the pilot programs are analyzed, courses will become available in March. All 15 courses will be introduced over a 12-month period. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, this program will serve those who are:

- preparing for the CLA examination and cannot attend a live seminar or are looking for instruction to supplement a live seminar;
- seeking continuing education credit toward maintaining the CLA credential;
- preparing to retake one or two sections of the CLA examination and need a quick review;
- seeking programs to be used for in-house training of paralegals in law firms or corporations;
- seeking ways to be kept up to date with changes in laws and procedures without leaving home; and
- seeking to learn and excel in their career field.

For further information about NALA and its programs, contact the National Association of Legal Assistants, Inc., 1516 South Boston, Suite 200, Tulsa, OK 74119 (918-587-6828, FAX 918-582-6772). NALA's web site is found at <http://www.nala.org>.

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RED ALERT! STOP! STUDY THE ISSUES!

– Continued from page 1

The licensing process is cumbersome: it takes time to establish and implement; it takes time to effect change to keep pace with shifts and growth in the profession.

Licensing legislation is designed to protect the consumer/public. However, the consumer of legal assistant services at this time is the attorney – not the general public. Therefore, the general public is protected because work product responsibility rests with the attorney who is licensed to provide legal services to the public.

Certification, on the other hand, is the process by which a non-governmental agency or association recognizes that an individual has met certain predetermined qualifications specified by that agency or association.

Certification is a *voluntary* process. Certification is *not* mandatory for entry into a career field. Examples of voluntary certification programs administered by professional associations include the Certified Public Accountant program, the trial specialist certification of the National Trial Advocacy Board, Certified Life Underwriters program, and the Certified Legal Assistant program.

The Certified Legal Assistant (CLA) program is offered by the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA). Established in 1975, it provides a valid professional credential, based upon the traditions and history of association self-regulatory programs. There are over 8,000 Certified Legal Assistants nationwide. Over 700 legal assistants have demonstrated their competency in specific fields by achieving a specialized credential.

After 20 years of research and development, the CLA program is well-established. It is administered by a board composed of a majority of Certified Legal Assistants (who have also achieved a specialty certification), legal assistant educators, and attorneys. A nationwide certification program must include the input of the profession's practitioners, educators and employers. The CLA program does this.

Certification enables consumers of professional services to distinguish between those who have attained a specified level of competency and those who have not. Therefore, association credentialing programs address two very important goals:

- To provide consumers with a comprehensible and identifiable measure of competency, and
- To aid the profession by establishing a means for attaining and recognizing high professional achievement.

The certification program administered by NALA meets these criteria by speaking to the consumers of legal assistant services: *attorneys*.

Long-term career goals must be given consideration when discussing certification and licensure.

One such goal is to be certain that legal assistants are able to find employment in any state. Many legal assistants now employed in Michigan will find their career paths carrying them to other areas of the country. They must be sure they can find a job.

Self-regulatory certification programs are the only means available to establish national standards. Licensure is regulated by state legislatures and establishes state-wide regulations. Each state may have different criteria for entry into the field. This can create difficulty for legal assistants seeking a job in another state. A certification program is national in scope, so certification is not threatened by a move to another state.

Another goal is to be certain there is recognition of the skills of advanced paralegals, setting them apart from those just entering the profession. Licensure programs only establish conditions for entry into a career field and define job responsibilities and duties. It is the duty of a profession itself to set its own standards, define itself, and establish credibility. The CLA program was initiated by members of the profession to establish standards for and recognition of the legal assistant field.

For professional growth to continue, and for the public to receive the services it needs from the legal community at a price the public can afford, the role of the legal assistant must increase to include expanded job responsibilities. Licensure sets specific limits on job responsibilities. Certification offers unlimited possibilities. It is through certification that opportunities for professional growth can be created. Today, opportunities for legal assistants are limited in only two ways: (1) legal assistants cannot give legal advice, and (2) legal assistants cannot engage in the unauthorized practice of law. It is up to legal assistants themselves to utilize the opportunities offered by certification, to take advantage of its positive influence, and to work to expand their duties and responsibilities.

Both licensure and certification programs establish competence through their eligibility requirements and the knowledge tested at a specific time. However, no program, whether voluntary or mandatory, certification or licensure, can guarantee who does or does not deserve entry into a profession. They cannot predict the future, nor can they predict whether one will continue to stay informed, or respect ethical and moral codes. The CLA designation may be revoked for any of these violations, as may a license. The result is the same.

Markets that have adopted the CLA certification as a hiring standard and encourage the professional development of legal assistants have benefited greatly. The legal assistant concept is accepted and recognized to a greater degree. As a result, more opportunities are available for legal assistants.

Remember, legal assistants are not required to be licensed to be employed in any state in this country. Members of the profession in Louisiana, California, Florida and Texas have established voluntary state specific certification examinations,

however, and CLA certification is a prerequisite for state certification.

The CLA credential offers Michigan legal assistants vast, unlimited opportunities for professional development and recognition. Michigan legal assistants might also give serious consideration to the establishment of a state specific certification examination as a means of further advancing their careers. ■

Vicki Voisin, CLAS, has been employed as a legal assistant since 1978. She achieved the Certified Legal Assistant credential offered by the National Association of Legal Assistant (NALA) in 1984 and the real estate specialty certification in 1992. As a member of NALA, she has served the Association in many capacities, currently holding the office of First Vice President. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Central Michigan University, has served as an adjunct professor at North Central Michigan College, and is currently a member of the Legal Assistant Advisory Board at Lake Superior State University. Vicki has authored several articles and lectured extensively on topics relating to the legal assistant profession. She is employed with the firm of Pointner, Joseph & Corcoran in Charlevoix.

Information for this discussion was provided in part by Karen M. Dunn, CLAS, author of "Licensure and Certification Myths and Facts," and Connie Kretchmer, CLAS, author of "The Issues: What Are They? Who Are They Talking About?" Reprints of both articles, as well as information relative to the CLA program, may be requested from the National Association of Legal Assistants at <http://www.nalanet.org>.



Notes from the Editor

- A previous issue on legal assistant regulations has continued to attract articles. Our promised article on legal assistant management will appear in the next issue, space permitting.
- The Pro Bono Survey form does not appear in this issue because of limited space. Please contact Marta Lazar with inquiries at (248) 661-3003.

WINTER CRUISE Radisson Hotel Lansing Friday, February 20, 1998

- **SEMINAR: – 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM •**

PERSONAL ESTATE PLANNING
FOR THE LEGAL ASSISTANT

Douglas A. Mielock, Esq.

Foster Swift Collins & Smith

- **3:30 PM - 5:00 PM •**

STRESS MANAGEMENT

John Prame, Massage Therapist

Alternative Relaxations Wellness Center

- **AFTERWARDS: – 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM •**

PARTY AND HAPPY HOUR

Join us for appetizers, cash bar and free gift giveaway.

Seminar Cost: \$20 members, \$25 non-members.

Happy hour is free.

Send payment (checks made out to the State Bar of Michigan), with the following form and return to: Kelly LaGrave; Foster Swift Collins & Smith; 313 S. Washington Square; Lansing, Michigan 48933. Contact Kelly if you have any questions: (517) 371-8287; klagrave@fosterswift.com

Name _____

Employer _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____

Fax _____ Email _____

Please check all boxes that apply. I will be attending:

- Personal Estate Planning for the Legal Assistant / Stress Management Party

SPRING SEMINAR Garland Resort, Lewiston (Northeast of Grayling) Saturday, May 16, 1998

SEMINAR: – 8:00 AM REGISTRATION

8:30 AM - 10:00 AM – SESSION ONE

10:30 AM - 12:00 Noon – SESSION TWO

TOPICS: ETHICS – N. Vicki Voisin, CLAS

First Vice President, National Association of Legal Assistants

INVESTING FOR RETIREMENT – Christopher Ballard, Esq.

Foster Swift Collins & Smith

Seminar includes continental breakfast and outdoor barbeque lunch. Cost will be announced. Watch for your flyer in the mail. Please contact Kelly LaGrave with questions: (517) 371-8287; klagrave@fosterswift.com

*Introducing a new column by
Liz Sherry and Susan McIntyre . . .*

WRITING RIGHT!

Why is knowing how to “Write Right” important to Legal Assistants? In the contemporary business environment where every project has a “rush” deadline, communication is often hasty and informal. However, when it becomes necessary to put ideas, responses, or analyses on paper “hasty and informal” will not be appropriate. For legal assistants who are striving to achieve higher and higher degrees of competency and recognition as legal professionals, a command of standard, professional written English is imperative. In law, effective use of language is critical.

Consider the following common problems often found in text that has been written in a hurry and has not been reviewed, revised, and proofread:

1. Run-on sentences
2. Incorrect use of adjectives and adverbs
3. Redundancy
4. Use of the passive voice
5. Use of colloquialisms and cliches
6. Shifting from one point of view to another
7. Use of singular (plural) verbs with plural (singular) subjects

These and other grammatical and stylistic pitfalls will be the subjects of future columns. Please e-mail questions, and suggestions to:

esherry@dickinson-wright.com

or

mcintyres@pepperlaw.com

Newsletter Deadlines

April Issue – March 1st

July Issue – June 1st

October Issue – September 1st

Please submit your articles!

STATE BAR OF MICHIGAN

LEGAL ASSISTANT SECTION MEMORANDUM

TO: Board Members
FROM: Suzanne Fogle
RE: Status of Committee re: paralegal fees
DATE: December 11, 1997

Attached is a copy of the article which will run in the next NFPA publication regarding our effort. The article was written by NFPA editors based upon information we provided. A similar article is being done for several other Michigan and national publications.

We are in the process of preparing our submittal to the State Senate Judiciary Committee. It will include the following information:

- (1) A Summary
- (2) Michigan Bar Association Utilization Guidelines
- (3) American Bar Association Utilization Guidelines
- (4) United States Supreme Court Decision, **Missouri v Jenkins**
- (5) ALR Article regarding the cost of services provided by paralegals as a compensable element of award in state courts. 73 ALR 4th 938.
- (6) Court of Appeals Decision Joerger v Gordon Foods 224 Mich App 167 (1997)
- (7) Copies of the statutes from all other states which address our issue.

We expect to submit the package to the office of State Senator Gary Peters in January. His office will assign a legislative assistant to review and research this issue. At that point, Senator Peters will determine whether he will sponsor the bill (the preliminary indication is that he will – he is an attorney). He will then have the proposed legislation drafted by his staff.

Our committee will make its next report at the next board meeting in January. In the meantime, if anyone has any comments or suggestions, please give me a call at 313.496.8433.

1997 PARALEGAL COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This survey collected information from members of various paralegal associations across the country regarding demographics, education, compensation, benefits, satisfaction levels, employer types, and other topics of interest to the paralegal profession. The following table presents the average responses concerning important aspects of a paralegal's job and characteristics of members of the paralegal profession.

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Average Response</i>	<i>1997 Percentage or Average of Population with Characteristic for Michigan</i>	<i>1997 Percentage or Average of Population with Characteristic Nationally</i>
Respondents		101	4,129
Gender	Female	93%	92%
Race	Caucasian	95%	91%
Age	Average	39	38
Education – College	Bachelor degree	55%	53%
Education – Paralegal	Paralegal studies ABA-approved	91% 65%	85% 64%
Employer Type	Law firm	68%	71%
Time Employed as a Paralegal		7-10 years	7-10 years
Billing Rate	\$41-\$80/hour	65%	66%
Salary	Average Salary	\$35,223	\$34,514
Bonus	Average Bonus Percent Receiving a Bonus	\$2,281 69%	\$2,094 64%
Benefits	Vacation Paid Sick Leave Life Insurance Fully-paid Employee Medical Insurance Pension or Retirement Plan Savings Plan [401(k) type]	85% 62% 72% 54% 47% 66%	90% 78% 68% 52% 45% 65%
Areas of Greatest Satisfaction	Attorney Contact Responsibility	34% 34%	33% 34%
Areas of Least Satisfaction	Bonus Salary Secretary Support	42% 38% 28%	45% 29% 36%

BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT . . .

By: Margaret Lucas Agius, Council Member

The proposed licensing of legal assistants has caused quite a stir in the profession. I have worked for the Attorney Discipline Board for almost ten years, and have a thorough understanding of the privilege of holding a professional license and the consequences involved. I'd like to share a few things I've learned regarding attorney discipline which affect legal assistants at this time, as well as a few issues which may affect them in the future.

ATTORNEYS MAY BE DISCIPLINED FOR ACTIONS OF LEGAL ASSISTANTS

Traditionally, a legal assistant's supervising attorney is charged with responsibility for the actions of the legal assistant. An attorney may be charged with misconduct and subject to discipline for failure to properly supervise a legal assistant.¹ Licensing of legal assistants would shift at least part of the burden to the legal assistant.

SUSPENDED OR DISBARRED LAWYERS MAY BE LEGAL ASSISTANTS

A suspended or disbarred lawyer may be a legal assistant.

[I]n lieu of granting leave to appeal, we MODIFY the order of the Attorney Discipline Board . . . to the extent that it bars the respondent during his period of suspension from working as an "agent, clerk or employee" of a licensed attorney. Insofar as those activities do not require a license to practice law in Michigan, prohibiting respondent from engaging in those activities as a part of his suspension exceeds the Board's power . . .

Grievance Administrator v Chappell, 418 Mich 1202; 344 NW2d 1 (1984). [Emphasis added.]

Prior to the Michigan Supreme Court's order in **Chappell**, *supra*, it was widely held that suspended or disbarred attorneys:

[S]hould not act in any professional or quasi-professional capacity, individually or as an employee of another. State Bar of Michigan, Committee on Professional and Judicial Ethics, Formal Opinion C-211 (July 1971). See also, American Bar Association, Committee on Ethics and Professional Responsibility, Informal Opinion 1434 (February 15, 1979).

In the Matter of Jenkins, File Nos. DP-45/81; 35224-A (ADB 1982). [Footnote 1.]²

If legal assistants become licensed, suspended or disbarred attorneys may be barred or prevented from being legal assistants.

RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS

The Michigan Rules of Professional Conduct and Chapter 9 of the Michigan Court Rules [Professional Disciplinary Proceedings] govern attorneys. Legal assistants would need to have similar rules of professional conduct and professional disciplinary proceedings if they become licensed.

POSSIBLE INCREASE IN BAR DUES

Licensing and an accompanying disciplinary system may increase Affiliate Member bar dues. Rule 4 of the Supreme Court Rules Concerning the State Bar of Michigan governs membership dues. Sub-rule (a) states:

[T]he dues consist of two components: \$160 for State Bar expenses other than the attorney discipline system and an amount to be set annually by the Supreme Court to fund the Attorney Grievance Commission and Attorney Discipline Board . . .

If legal assistants become licensed, they may also be required to pay for their own disciplinary system. Likewise, the rule which directs that an attorney be suspended for non-payment of bar dues may also apply to legal assistants if they become licensed.³

OTHER ISSUES

Other issues may include licensing examinations, character and fitness investigations, and reinstatement after suspension or revocation, as well as individual rules of professional conduct (i.e. competence, diligence, confidentiality, conflict of interest, successive government and private employment, safekeeping property, etc.)

The consequences, as well as the privileges, of holding a professional license are necessary components of a balanced discussion of the proposed licensing of legal assistants. I look forward to new developments in this area, and more opportunities to share my experience with professional disciplinary proceedings. ■

ENDNOTES

1. MRPC 5.3: Responsibilities Regarding Nonlawyer Assistants. See also, **In the Matter of Hudnut**, File No. 34884-A (ADB 1979).
2. See also, **In the Matter of Chappell**, File No. DP-21/81 (ADB 1981). [NOTE: Not the same **Chappell** case which is the subject of the Michigan Supreme Court order cited above.]
3. Supreme Court Rules Concerning the State Bar of Michigan, Rule 4(b).

LEGAL EASE

By: Rochelle R. Smith

As Legal Assistants, we all know what silver-tongued, smooth talkers attorneys are, so it's hard to believe they would ever say anything that was not carefully thought out and delivered with extreme finesse. Originally, I came across the following list of quotes in a Dear Abby column by Abigail Van Buren. While I was busy obtaining the appropriate permission to reprint the column for your reading pleasure, the list has appeared in coffee rooms and copy centers of several law firms. In case you have not had the opportunity to read the questions (taken from official U.S. court records), they are reprinted here with permission from Universal Press Syndicate (all rights reserved).

- Q:** Was that the same nose you broke as a child?
- Q:** Now, doctor, isn't it true that when a person dies in his sleep, in most cases he just passes quietly away and doesn't know anything about it until the next morning?
- Q:** What happened then?
- A:** He told me, he says, "I have to kill you because you can identify me."
- Q:** Did he kill you?
- Q:** Was it you or your brother that was killed in the war?
- Q:** Were you alone or by yourself?
- Q:** How long have you been a French Canadian?
- Q:** Do you have any children or anything of that kind?
- Q:** I show you Exhibit 3 and ask you if you recognize that picture.
- A:** That's me.
- Q:** Were you present when that picture was taken?
- Q:** Were you present in court this morning when you were sworn in?

- Q:** Now, Mrs. Johnson, how was your first marriage terminated?
- A:** By death.
- Q:** And by whose death was it terminated?
- Q:** Do you know how far pregnant you are now?
- A:** I'll be three months on Nov. 8.
- Q:** Apparently, then the date of conception was Aug. 8?
- A:** Yes.
- Q:** What were you doing at that time?
- Q:** Mrs. Jones, do you believe you are emotionally stable?
- A:** I used to be.
- Q:** How many times have you committed suicide?
- Q:** So you were gone until you returned?
- Q:** She had three children, right?
- A:** Yes.
- Q:** How many were boys?
- A:** None.
- Q:** Were there girls?
- Q:** You don't know what it was, and you didn't know what it looked like, but can you describe it?
- Q:** You say that the stairs went down to the basement?
- A:** Yes.
- Q:** And these stairs, did they go up also?
- Q:** Have you lived in this town all your life?
- A:** Not yet.
- Q:** Do you recall approximately the time that you examined the body of Mr. Edington at the Rose Chapel?
- A:** It was in the evening. The autopsy started about 8:30 p.m.
- Q:** And Mr. Edington was dead at the time, is that correct? ■

Rochelle Smith is a Legal Assistant at Miro Weiner & Kramer, and has been working with Michael Kramer for 15 years.

The Legal Assistants Section of the State Bar of Michigan would like to thank the writers and committee members who have contributed to the Section newsletter, and have helped create a positive image for the legal assistant profession in Michigan. Without their help the newsletter would never have flourished as it has. In the most recent months, those individuals have included:

Jeff Work	Evelyn Symonds	Alice Callum	Susan McIntyre
Kathleen Neher	Cynthia Meachum	Suzanne Fogle	Margaret Lucas Agius
Kimberly Jenison	Elizabeth Sherry	Nancy Hess	Cynthia Benner
Pamela Stegink	Jaxine Wintjen	Sinikka Bulkley	Lisa Silverthorn
N. Vicki Voisin	Kelly LaGrave	Beth Johns	<i>And all the committee members who</i>
Maria Brummel-Schutte	Rochelle Smith	Marta Lazar	<i>have been instrumental in putting</i>
Linda Jevahirian	Christine Schultz	Rose Bareham	<i>together the newsletter!</i>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
February 20	Winter Cruise: Radisson Hotel Lansing State Bar of Michigan, Legal Assistants Section <i>See ad this issue</i>
April 16	Seminar: <i>(tentative)</i> Paperchase: Filing in the Tri-County Area <i>Contact:</i> Donna at the Oakland County Bar Association for more information (248) 334-3400
April 16-19	National Federation of Paralegal Associations Convention Hilton Hotel, Anchorage, Alaska <i>Seminar Topics on April 16 include:</i> • Elder Law, Estate Planning/Probate, and Arbitration • PACE short course <i>Contact:</i> Lu Hanglely (816) 941-4000 or http://www.paralegals.org
May 15	Spring Seminar: Garland Resort State Bar of Michigan, Legal Assistants Section <i>See ad this issue</i>
May 15	Application Deadline for July 24-25 Nationwide CLA Examinations – Testing sites determined prior to test dates. <i>Contact:</i> Marge Dover (918) 587-6828
July 15-18	NALA Annual Convention Colorado Springs, CO <i>Contact:</i> Marge Dover (918) 587-6828
October 1	Application Deadline for December 4-5 Nationwide CLA Examinations – Testing sites determined prior to test dates. <i>Contact:</i> Marge Dover (918) 587-6828

Mark Your Calendars NOW!

WANTED

Newsletter Committee seeks Calendar Column writer. Responsibilities include contacting legal assistant organizations for updates on activities they would like to list. Writer must be a member of the State Bar of Michigan, Legal Assistants Section. Publications are four times per year. Please contact the editor: Linda Jevahirian at (248) 471-3443 or e-mail lindajev@aol.com for details.

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In response to numerous requests from our members, we are once again selling our high quality logo shirts. The sweatshirts are 80% cotton and 20% polyester. The polo shirts are 100% cotton. Sweatshirts are either grey with navy **embroidered** logo or navy blue with white **embroidery**. Polo shirts are navy with white **embroidered** logo.

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**ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CALL
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For further information contact Marie Castiglione of the newsletter committee at (248) 816-9659.

PRICES ARE PER ISSUE:

- \$150.00 – full page/insert
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- \$100.00 – half page
- \$50.00 – business card/
classified

HELPFUL HINTS

By: Lisa J. Silverthorn, CLA

Question: What are the new Register of Deeds recording requirements?

Answer: Act 459 of the Public Acts of 1996 imposes new recording requirements for any instrument executed after April 1, 1997. The provisions of the Act do not apply to any decree, order, judgment or writ of a court, will, death certificate, or any instrument executed outside of Michigan. Nor do the new provisions apply to any plat or other instrument whose size is regulated by another law or regulation. The Act requires:

1. A margin of unprinted space at least 2 1/2 inches at the top of the first page;
2. A margin of unprinted space at least 1/2 inch on all remaining sides of each page;
3. A single statement on the first line of the first page identifying the recordable event that the document evidences – e.g. Mortgage **not** Mortgage and Assignment of Rents;

4. Be electronically, mechanically, or hand printed in 10 point type (or the equivalent of 10 point type);
5. Legible print in black ink on white paper of not less than 20 pound weight;
6. Size between 8-1/2 inches wide by 11 inches long and 8-1/2 inches wide by 14 inches long;
7. Contain no attachment that does not comply with the above size requirements; and
8. Purport to evidence only one recordable event.

While the Act clearly requires that the print be in black ink and 10 point type, you may wish to call ahead to the Register of Deeds office in the county in which you will be recording for some clarification. For instance, documents with signatures in blue ink have been accepted for recording in some counties while other counties have refused to record them. Also, at least one Register of Deeds has indicated that type larger than 10 point is the equivalent of 10 point and would be acceptable for recording. ■

Check out these Web Sites and Email Addresses

National Association of
Legal Assistants (NALA) www.nala.org

American Association for
Paralegal Education (AAfPE) www.aafpe.org

Legal Assistants Association
of Michigan golaam@aol.com

Legal Assistant Management
Association lamaoffice@aol.com

Legal Search
& Management www.lindajev.com

National Federation
of Paralegal
Associations (NFPA) www.paralegals.org

State Bar of Michigan www.michbar.org

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Legal Assistants Section Videos

The Legal Assistants Section has the following videos of past seminars available for purchase at \$15.00 per video:

- 1. Trends in Fee Agreements and Impact on Legal Assistant Utilization
- 2. How to Afford a Legal Assistant
- 3. How to Enhance Your Career
- 4. Information Management – Litigation in the '90's
- 5. Utilization of Legal Assistants in Trial Practice
- 6. Profile of a Winning Team
- 7. Paralegals – Practice & Profit
- 8. Writing Seminar
- 9. Law and Ethics on the Cyber Frontier
- 10. Changes in Probate
- 11. Litigation Support Software
- 12. Due Diligence & Public Record Searching
- 13. Estate Settlement Act: An Overview – Judge Bruce Newman

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Address: _____

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If you are interested in purchasing any of the Legal Assistants Section videos please complete this form and send it with your check, made payable to the State Bar of Michigan, to

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