

# NEW MEXICO JUDICIAL BRANCH

## APPELLATE PARALEGAL

(At-Will)

*This job description is ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY and is not a comprehensive listing of all functions performed.*

### **SUMMARY**

Under the direction of a Court of Appeals Judge or Supreme Court Justice; prepare, edit, technically review, and proofread appellate opinions and other documents; maintain case files, statistics, and research materials; maintain and monitor chambers docket and resource calendar, and docket memoranda of court action; perform research and document research results in support of appellate opinions; coordinate and fulfill the administrative, technical and clerical requirements of the Judge's office; write memoranda, correspondence and other communication; assist the public and other court staff. This is a full performance job classification that works with a great deal of independence and autonomy.

### **QUALIFICATIONS**

A Paralegal shall have several qualification options; however, all shall be in accordance with the New Mexico Supreme Court Rules Governing Paralegal Services, Paralegal qualifications, Rule 20-115 NMRA (January 30, 2014).

“A paralegal shall meet one or more of the following educational, training or work experience qualifications:

A. graduation from a paralegal program that is:

- (1) approved by the American Bar Association;
- (2) an associate degree program;
- (3) a post-baccalaureate certificate program in paralegal studies; or
- (4) a bachelor's degree program;

B. graduation from a post-secondary legal assistant program which consists of a minimum of sixty (60) semester hours or equivalent, as defined by the American Bar Association guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs, of which at least eighteen (18) semester hours or equivalent are general education courses and eighteen (18) semester hours or equivalent are legal specialty courses;

C. a bachelor's degree in any field plus two years of substantive law-related experience under the supervision of a licensed attorney. Successful completion of at least fifteen (15) semester hours of substantive paralegal courses may be substituted for one year of law-related experience;

D. graduation from an accredited law school and not disbarred or suspended from the practice of law by the State of New Mexico or any other jurisdiction;

E. certification by the National Association of Legal Assistants, Incorporated, Federation of Paralegal Associates, Incorporated or other equivalent national or state competency examination plus at least one (1) year of substantive law-related experience under the supervision of a licensed attorney; or

F. a high school diploma or equivalent plus seven (7) years of substantive law-related experience under the supervision of a licensed attorney.”

**Other:** Completion of a post offer background check may be required.

**Knowledge: Advance knowledge of** proper English language and usage, grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, proofreading, legal terminology, legal technical writing and editing, including recognition and understanding of forms of appellate opinions, decisions, memorandum opinions, and orders; legal and court writing styles; extensive citation procedures and rules, and legal procedures; knowledge of general math and statistics; utilization of pleadings, briefs , and case records; court rules, policies, and operations; court case management systems, applied programs and applicable software; information networks; problem solving techniques; advanced understanding of the tools and resources of legal research, including electronic databases such as WestlawNext, Lexis, and New Mexico One Source of Law and other electronic legal databases; hard copies of legal materials such as New Mexico Statutes Annotated (NMSA 1978), and New Mexico Rules Annotated (NMRA), law review articles, and legislative materials; utilizing reference works on legal citation/use and English writing style such as *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation*, *Garner’s Dictionary of Legal Usage*, *The Gregg Reference Manual*, and *Black’s Law Dictionary* and other legal reference materials and guides; New Mexico Judicial Branch Personnel Rules; electronic rules and filing procedures; office and courtroom equipment including fax, copier, scanner, printer, multi-line telephone, computer systems, spreadsheets, tables and flow charts; electronic and hard copy calendaring and case file scanning; other court agencies and resources; emergency plans; organizational management; conflict resolution; customer service practices; maintaining confidentiality; collaboration and teamwork; sources for fact gathering, data collection, and retrieving information; forms of opinions and legal writing styles.

**Skill & Ability: Advanced skill in** applying proper English language, grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling; reading comprehension; report writing; effective communication, both oral and written; effective listening; use of legal terms, phrases and reference materials; proofreading and rewriting sections of appellate opinions, decisions, and memorandum opinions; reading and analyzing cases cited and case materials (i.e., records proper and transcripts) with advanced reading comprehension and analytical skills; performing technical reviews of appellate opinions validating the form of legal citations and verifying facts against records and transcripts for accuracy, completeness, and relevance; performing legal research and analysis; determining arguments from briefs; preparing legal documents, correspondence, and error-free appellate opinions for publication; compiling information and writing reports, memoranda, and correspondence; using computers, including hardware and software; understanding and utilizing

legal terms and phrases; applying and communicating complex rules; working closely and cooperatively with others; training and mentoring; working effectively under pressure; maintaining confidentiality, professional demeanor, and composure. **Ability to** use the appellate courts' case management system, perform extensive legal research and analysis; compile and interpret various court statistics and write reports; communicate effectively both orally and in writing; work independently, use good judgement, and perform difficult, highly detailed work under pressure; exercise independent judgment in appraising situations and making decisions; establish priorities; multitask to achieve objectives; effectively manage time within restrictive time frames; provide guidance, consultation, and assistance to new law clerks and paralegals; serve as a liaison and Judge's representative to other court staff, Judges, other governmental agencies, attorneys, and the public; establish and maintain cooperative working relationships; utilize and update legal reference materials and train new law clerks and paralegals in technical and procedural aspects of their jobs.

### **EXAMPLES OF WORK PERFORMED**

**Manage the Chambers** – Administratively manage the appellate chambers and chamber functions that support the court; coordinate and manage chamber workload; identify critical differences and technical issues in proposed opinions of authoring Judge and panel members; transcribe legal documents, oral arguments, and lower court hearings from tapes and/or handwritten materials; prepare, edit, perform technical analysis, and proofread appellate opinions, decisions, or dispositional orders of affirmance/summary; calendar cases (both authorship and participation) to check for correct grammar, structure, and format; read the cases cited to ensure that they stand for the cited proposition and check the record cites to ensure the facts accurately represent appellate opinions; independently perform legal research using both electronic legal databases and legal materials, including case law, statutes, court rules, law journals, and historical documents; collect, compile, and utilize technical information to make independent decisions and recommendations to incorporate substantive and technical changes into appellate opinions, decisions, dispositional orders, and memorandum opinions and carefully edit and proofread; assure all case citations are correct in accordance with *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation*; review history of each case to appropriately annotate any negative subsequent history, such as whether it has been overruled, reversed, or superseded; perform legal research and analysis as necessary; create annotated bibliographies of primary source materials that address specific legal issues and related questions; using correct grammar, structure, and format of appellate opinions, decisions, dispositional orders, and memorandum opinions; draft legal documents (i.e., memoranda of the court's actions, orders, and other documents required for the Justice's or Judge's review and approval); in collaboration with appellate paralegals, staff counsel, and the chief clerk develop, draft, and document instructions, internal procedures and manuals that apply to appellate opinions and the internal appellate process; manage office files and records; answer telephones and provide information as needed, and set up appointments; draft and prepare correspondence and documents; prepare court files for oral arguments or conferences; circulate and file appellate opinions to comply with court procedures; perform computer site coordinator duties for Justice or Judge and chamber staff; manage administrative minutes; screen chamber email and postal mail and forward to appropriate parties; prepare materials for lectures, conferences, or committees conducted or attended by Justice or Judge;

maintain the Justice's or Judge's library; make travel arrangements and prepare itemized schedules of travel expenses and travel reimbursement requests; serve as a liaison and Judge's representative to other court staff, Judges, other governmental agencies, attorneys, and the public; provide assistance to other chambers as requested; schedule wedding ceremonies, prepare vows; draft opinions with simple issues; train and mentor new law clerks and paralegals on extensive citation rules, technical reviews, case information, and provide technical and procedural supervision including providing instruction on court process and procedures in the specialized appellate court environment.

**Case Management** - Maintain the Judge's calendar for hearings, oral arguments, speaking engagements, and meetings; accurately track and maintain case files and events and docket essential information including memoranda of court action, appellate opinions, motions, orders, and other legal functions of the chambers; monitor and docket daily entry of court votes; implement and perform task manager functions and e-filing to ensure clear, prompt, accurate, and comprehensive flow of information, including pleadings, orders, motions, and briefs among the Judges or Justices, law clerks, and the court clerk's office; maintain the chamber docket and resource calendar, and manage chamber files; screen incoming documents (i.e., petitions for writs of certiorari, mandamus, or superintending control) for completeness. **May** draft orders or memorandum opinions with simple issues; transcribe legal documents, oral arguments, and lower court hearings from tapes and/or handwritten materials; electronically record oral arguments and update the court website.

### **WORK ENVIRONMENT AND PHYSICAL DEMANDS**

The following functions are representative of the work environment and physical demands an employee **may** expect to encounter in performing tasks assigned to this job.

The employee will work closely with judges, attorneys, and the public. The work is performed in an often fast paced and stressful work environment, and the employee may have to make quick decisions under stress. The work requires the extensive use of computers and is performed in an office or court setting. The employee is regularly required to sit for long periods of time, read typed and/or handwritten material; perform repetitious hand, arm, and finger motions as well as use manual/finger dexterity and may also be required to move, lift, pull, and carry up to 25 pounds; travel (valid driver's license required); work overtime and/or flexible hours, weekends, and holidays; and may be exposed to fluctuating building temperatures. The employee may be exposed to hostile or violent situations that may arise when dealing with individuals involved in court cases; be exposed to disturbing and/or hazardous court exhibits and/or nuisance or threatening telephone calls.

Created: 2/05, Rev: 11/10/10, 10/3015