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Q&A: Continuing Education For Legal Professionals

*Ethical standards, state laws and other important rules and regulation are constantly being revised for legal professionals, and essential to keep up to date. The Legal Professionals Sectionspoke with **Patricia Greer**, professor of Paralegal Studies at Berkeley College in Woodland Park, New Jersey, to discuss why continuing education is essential.*



What types of continuing education are important for legal professionals?

I'd divide continuing education into two categories. The first is general continuing education that's useful for everyone in a particular field. An example of this is ethical training. Ethics affects everyone, and if state ethical guidelines change relating to issues like attorney-client privilege, its important that paralegals stay updated on these changes. The second category would be specialty training covering topics in the particular area of practice. For example, if your firm specializes in real estate you may need training in changes to real estate law. The paralegal isn't conducting closings, but may need to know changes in law that affect them. Not all regions of the country have the same continuing education requirements for legal professionals, but even if not required, continuing education never hurts.

If a legal professional also serves as a Notary, do you recommend continuing education on Notary-related topics also?

You should definitely stay updated on Notary ethics and laws if you hold a Notary commission. Some states, like New Jersey, don't require an exam to become a Notary while others like California do. Whether your state requires education and testing or not, staying updated can only benefit you.

How often do you recommend paralegals and paralegal-Notaries take continuing education courses?

I would say around once or twice each year to update your training in ethics and law updates, and also when a major regulatory change affecting your work takes place.

Any tips for scheduling continuing education around your work schedule?

I actually think big firms and companies are more flexible when it comes to scheduling continuing education for employees. They often realize the need and can offer training in-house. It's smaller firms, with less staff and resources that are usually less flexible. But many classes are offered on weekends, online or after business hours so you can schedule them around your work hours.

What kind of costs should be expected?

Aside from class fees, many courses require a textbook. However, many classes offer textbooks and materials in a less expensive electronic format. Also, many students these days are renting textbooks from other people, especially if they only need the book for one class. It's less expensive, but of course it means you can't write any notes in the margins! Also, always check with your employer. Despite the economy, many employers are still funding continuing education for their staffers.

Additional Resources

- [Notary Training](#)