



Know the difference between a PARALEGAL and a LEGAL DOCUMENT ASSISTANT (LDA)

Effective January 1, 2000, Business and Professions Code Section 6400 et seq. redefined "paralegal" to mean only those who work for and are supervised by attorneys. A "legal document assistant" is authorized under California law to prepare legal documents for consumers. Paralegals may not work independently for consumers.

What **can** a Paralegal do?

A paralegal assists an attorney in preparation of legal documents, gathering facts, performing research, interviewing witnesses, and other tasks at the direction of an attorney.

What **can't** a Paralegal do?

- Cannot set or accept fees for services from a consumer
- Cannot independently prepare documents for consumers
- Cannot represent you in court
- Cannot give you legal advice
- Cannot work as LDAs unless meeting the requirements of being bonded and registered.

What **can** a Legal Document Assistant do?

At your direction, LDAs can complete court forms for you. LDAs may file forms with the court and have them served. LDAs may also supply books and publications authored or approved by attorneys.

What **can't** a Legal Document Assistant do?

- Cannot represent you in court
- Cannot give you legal advice
- Cannot tell you what information should be inserted in the documents
- Cannot interpret documents
- Cannot select forms

What you need to know before hiring a Legal Document Assistant:

Contact the County Clerk or County Recorder for a list of the registered LDAs in your County and confirm the LDA is registered and bonded. Ask to review the Contract for Services, a document required to be executed by both parties under California State law. If you do not understand your legal rights or need advice on your matter, consult an attorney before you direct the LDA to complete your documents.

To locate a Legal Document Assistant:

Look in the telephone directory under "Legal Document Assistants" or "Legal Documents & Forms Preparation Services", contact the County Clerk Recorder or check the California Association of Legal Document Assistants online member locator at:

www.CALDA.org/Search.asp.