

# **Code of Ethics**

It is the responsibility of every paralegal to adhere strictly to the accepted standards of legal ethics and to live by general principles of proper conduct. The performance of the duties of the paralegal shall be governed by specific canons as defined herein in order that justice will be serviced and the goals of the profession attained. The canons of ethics set forth hereafter are adopted by the National Association of Legal Assistants, Inc., as a general guide and the enumeration of these rules does not mean there are no others of equal importance although not specifically mentioned.

## **Canon 1**

A legal assistant must not perform any of the duties that attorneys only may perform nor take any actions that attorneys may not take.

## **Canon 2**

A legal assistant may perform any task which is properly delegated and supervised by an attorney, as long as the attorney is ultimately responsible to the client, maintains a direct relationship with the client, and assumes professional responsibility for the work product. (See NALA Model Standards and Guidelines for Utilization of Legal Assistants, Sections IV and VII.)

## **Canon 3**

A legal assistant must not (See NALA Model Standards and Guidelines for Utilization of Legal Assistants, Section VI): (a) engage in, encourage, or contribute to any act which could constitute the unauthorized practice of law; (b) establish attorney-client relationships, set fees, give legal opinions or advice or represent a client before a court or agency unless authorized by that court or agency; and (c) engage in conduct or take any action which would assist or involve the attorney in a violation of professional ethics or give the appearance of professional impropriety.

## **Canon 4**

A legal assistant must use discretion and professional judgment commensurate with knowledge and experience but must not render independent legal judgment in place of an attorney. The services of an attorney are essential in the public interest whenever such legal judgment is required. (See NALA Model Standards and Guidelines for Utilization of Legal Assistants, Section VIII.)

## **Canon 5**

A legal assistant must disclose his or her status as a legal assistant at the outset of any professional relationship with a client, attorney, a court or administrative agency or personnel thereof, or a member of the general public. A legal assistant must act prudently in determining the extent to which a client may be assisted without the presence of an attorney. (See NALA Model Standards and Guidelines for Utilization of Legal Assistants, Section V.)

**Canon 6**

A legal assistant must strive to maintain integrity and a high degree of competency through education and training with respect to professional responsibility, local rules and practice, and through continuing education in substantive areas of law to better assist the legal profession in fulfilling its duty to provide legal service.

**Canon 7**

A legal assistant must protect the confidences of a client and must not violate any rule or statute now in effect or hereafter enacted controlling the doctrine of privileged communications between a client and an attorney. (See NALA Model Standards and Guidelines for Utilization of Legal Assistants, Section V.)

**Canon 8**

A legal assistant must do all other things incidental, necessary or expedient for the attainment of the ethics and responsibilities as defined by statute or rule of court.

**Canon 9**

A legal assistant's conduct is guided by bar associations' codes of professional responsibility and rules of professional conduct.