

# 2011

NALA – The Association for  
Paralegals-Legal Assistants

Important Information from the:

NALA Certifying Board for  
Paralegals

## **CERTIFIED PARALEGAL EXAM COMPUTER BASED TESTING EXAMINEE AND PROGRAM INFORMATION**

As of September, 2010, the CP examination is delivered via computer based testing throughout the United States. This information describes the administrative rules and fees regarding this method of testing. This information is current as of May 1, 2011, and subject to amendment without notice. Watch the NALA web site for further announcements.

## CP Examination Moves to Computer Based Testing

As of September 2010, the NALA Certified Paralegal examination is administered via computer based testing, instead of the paper-pencil testing. This is a tremendous positive move for the Certified Paralegal program, opening access to the certification examination and simplifying the way paralegals may take the required five parts of the examination.

The Certified Paralegal examination is provided in a proctored environment. NALA utilizes testing centers and proctors through the nationwide ACT testing network. **Employers and schools that are not already designated as ACT testing centers may contact NALA for the requirements to become a test site for the CP examination. Examinees find this helpful by avoiding the ACT testing center fees.**

### Deadlines

The following deadlines apply for the Certified Paralegal Exam:

Application Deadline	Testing Window	Results Announced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• August 1</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• September 1-30</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• November 1</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• December 1</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• January 1-31</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• March 1</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• April 1</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May 1-31</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• July 1</li></ul>

The testing window concept means that the examination will be offered throughout the month, rather than specific days or a two-day period.

### Certified Paralegal Exam Qualifications and Application Forms

The requirements for taking the Certified Paralegal examination have not changed as a result of this new method of testing.

The NALA Certifying Board has a policy that allows paralegal students to take the examination before graduation under certain conditions.

Application forms must be complete when submitted to NALA Headquarters, and must arrive by the deadline date. Once approved, applications are active for a period of two years. The two year period begins when the examination is taken for the first time. This means that each examinee has a period of two years, 6 testing windows, to complete the Certified Paralegal exam. After the two year period has expired, the examinees must reapply as a new examinees.

### Testing Center Locations

Examinees have two options for taking the Certified Paralegal examination.

- **ACT testing centers.** The ACT Center Network provides over 230 permanent computer based test sites on college campuses and other locations in the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico. The number of testing centers in the ACT Network increases rapidly.

- A list of the ACT test sites may be found on the web at <http://www.act.org/actcenters/locate/index.html>
- Examinees sign up on-line through an address provided by the ACT. This information is sent to examinees when the ACT is ready to accept appointments for the CP exam.
- Examinees pay ACT directly for the testing fee for the facility and proctors. *(Examinees pay NALA the exam application fee.)*
- Examinees schedule their own test time(s) and days during the testing window month.
- Examinees may take any of the 5 required exam sections any time during the test window, and may set their own pace.

**ACT will send an e-mail to exam candidates when their system is ready to accept testing**

**appointments for the ensuing test window.** Examinees accessing the ACT Testing Center Network are URGED to make their testing appointment as early as possible. A testing seat is not guaranteed during the testing window unless an appointment is confirmed in advance. The ACT may offer testing sessions on Saturdays, and times other than the regular work day. Additional charges may apply and hours may vary by testing center.

- **Non-ACT testing centers.**

NALA has developed a procedure that allows a school or employer to be designated as a Certified Paralegal Examination testing center.

- The testing center may set the schedule for the exam sections.
- The testing center may charge examinees for facility and proctor fee.

This procedure is designed for groups of examinees, such as a class or graduates of a paralegal program, or a group of employees. The prospective testing center must register with NALA at least two weeks in advance of the testing window.

Examinees who are interested in this option are encouraged to request a Testing Center packet from NALA headquarters to share with a school or employer.

**Americans with Disability Act**

Examinees qualifying for special accommodations under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act must attend an ACT Testing Center.

**Testing Center Admission Requirements**

All examinees will receive a candidate test packet which will provide details about testing center rules and admission requirements. To be admitted to a testing center, examinees must provide a government issued picture ID, plus the test authorization form provided by NALA. This form provides the candidates their Test ID number, PIN number, and NALA account number. All three of these numbers are required for testing. On the day of the test appointment, if any of this information is missing, the candidate will be refused admittance, and the testing center fee will be forfeited.

## Testing Center Fees

- **ACT Testing Center Network**

Appointment fees for ACT testing centers are as follows:

1.5 hr exam - \$34.50

2 hr exam - \$42

2.5 hr exam - \$49.50

Examinees are required to be present 30 minutes prior to the stated exam start time for check-in and sign-in into the exam session. The time stated above is the time allowed for examination delivery plus the 30 minute check in.

The ACT web site accepts MasterCard and VISA to confirm the appointment and pay testing fees. Examinees who do not have a credit card or do not wish to use their card for web purchases are encouraged to acquire a pre-paid credit card for the purpose of transmitting payment. Pre-paid credit cards are available at various locations, including WalMart and convenience stores.

Examinees are cautioned that those who are termed “NO-SHOWS” will **forfeit** the examination appointment fee. A candidate may reschedule an unlimited number of times prior to the “red zone.” The “red zone” is two calendar days prior to the appointment date. For example, if a candidate scheduled a test on March 24, the last day the candidate may change an appointment would be March 21. Once the candidate is inside the “red zone” the appointment fee will be forfeited for a change or no-show.

Examinees who cancel their ACT appointment during a testing window will receive a refund provided the cancellation is not in the “red zone.” Refunds are issued by ACT as a credit back to the credit card the examinee used to make the appointment. Refunds are processed within 60 days of the close of the testing window.

NALA is not responsible for changes in fees or policies of the ACT that apply to the ACT Testing Center Network. NALA makes every effort to convey information about the ACT testing center policies and fees, but amendments to the fee schedule and policies may be made by ACT that are not immediately communicated to NALA.

- **Non-ACT Testing Center**

Fees for Non-ACT testing centers will be established by the individual testing center. The testing center will charge examinees direct for facility and proctor fees.

## **NALA Examination Fees**

The NALA exam fees will not change appreciably with the new procedure. Fees are as follows:

- **Application Fee - First Time Examinees:**  
\$250 NALA Members  
\$275 Non-NALA Members
  
- **Application Fee - Retake Fees:**  
\$60 Per Section
  
- **Application Fee - Late Fee:**  
Late filing of applications for the CP examination is allowed with a \$25 late fee.  
The applications will not be accepted for the ensuing test window if the application is received after:
  - December 10 - January Test Window
  - April 10 – May Test Window
  - August 10 – September Test Window

Applications received after this date will be processed for the next available testing window.

- **Withdrawal Fee:**  
If an applicant must withdraw the application, or the application is incomplete or rejected, payment will be refunded less a \$25 processing fee for each year the application is active and on file (a maximum of \$50).

## **Examination Application Active for Two Years**

An approved Certified Paralegal Examination application form will be active for a period of two years, beginning on the date the examination is first taken. During that time, the candidate must successfully complete all of the five required examination sections. If the examination is not completed during this time period, the candidate must re-apply for the CP examination, and retake the entire examination.

## **Timing of the CP Exam Sections**

The following are the required five sections of the CP exam with the time allowed as established by the NALA Certifying Board (Descriptions of the exam subjects may be found on the NALA web site):

- Communications – 1 ½ hours (Essay required)
- Judgment and Legal Analysis – 2 hours (Essay required)
- Ethics – 1 hour
- Legal Research – 1 ½ hours
- American Legal System (Substantive Law) – 2 hours  
*The American Legal System (Substantive Law) section consists of five parts. One is on the American Legal System which is required of all examinees; the other 4 parts are in practice areas of law and are selected by examinees from a list on the application form.*

The computer based testing allows the timing of each exam section to be enforced automatically. Timing begins when the test is opened by the proctor. When the time has expired, the exam will close automatically and the examinee will not have access to it again. If an examinee has not completed the test, and the time allowed expires, the work completed will be scored. Questions that are not completed will be scored as incorrect answers.

### **Examination Format – Essay Questions**

The web based testing does not change the examination format or structure. Essay questions are included on the Communications and Judgment and Legal Analysis examination. The only difference is that the answers are typewritten.

Similarly, the process for grading essay questions by NALA Certifying Board members will not change. The essays will continue to be reviewed by a minimum of two Certifying Board members. Grading of essay questions is “blind,” meaning that board members are not aware of the identity of the examinee, nor the points needed by the examinee to pass the exam section.

The standard for grading the Certified Paralegal examination has not changed.

### **Results**

The exam results are provided via US mail approximately 30 days after the test window closes.

Analysis and validation of examination data, test responses, and essay responses and scores are required before results may be announced. This is the reason that results are not provided until after the testing window closes and all examination sections are completed.

### **Additional Examinee Forms**

Upon sign-in to the examination web site, examinees will be asked to read and acknowledge the NALA Policy Statement regarding the certification program, and terms and conditions related to the delivery of the Certified Paralegal examination. Samples of these documents follow.

Copies of the Policy Statement and Terms and Conditions will be provided to examinees with additional instructions prior to the opening of the test window.

## Policy Statement

The Certified Paralegal Examination was developed by NALA-The Association of Legal Assistants-Paralegals and has been provided to the paralegal profession since 1976. The program is administered by the Certifying Board for Paralegals.

### Examinee Attestation

All examinees are required to sign the following attestation on the application for the Certified Paralegal examination. This serves as a reminder of your pledge of confidentiality, and reasons for suspension of authorization to use the Certified Paralegal credential:

I hereby declare that the above information [on the Certified Paralegal Examination Application Form] is complete and truthful. I further pledge not to divulge the contents of any examinations questions for certification as a legal assistant/paralegal by NALA (the "Examination Questions") and agree to be bound by the Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility of NALA. Inasmuch as it is and ever will be impracticable and extremely difficult to determine the actual damages resulting to NALA should I divulge the contents of any Examination Questions, I agree to pay NALA as liquidated damages and not as a penalty, the sum of \$500 for each breach of my agreement not to divulge the contents of any Examination Questions.

I further understand that the CLA/CP designation may be suspended or revoked and that I may be prohibited from taking any further NALA exams, including but not limited to any specialty practice area exams or retaking the general certification exam for the following reasons:

1. Falsification of information on application form.
2. Subsequent conviction of the unauthorized practice of law.
3. Failure to meet continuing legal education requirements as required by the Certifying Board.
4. Divulging the contents of any Examination Questions.
5. Subsequent conviction of a felony.
6. Violation of the NALA Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility.

### Terms and Conditions – Exam Delivery

Prior to allowing examinees to sign in to the testing site, all examinees are required to review the terms and conditions related to taking the CP examination via computer based testing. The information contained in the terms and conditions are also provided to examinees with the testing PIN and ID number, the NALA account number, and other instructions. Each examinee will be required to check "I accept these terms and conditions" prior to starting an examination.

### Results

Results of the examination are provided by mail notification to all examinees. The results will be released by the first day of the second month following the test window, i.e., the first day of March, July, and November. Results are not available by e-mail, telephone or fax.

### Appeal of Results

An examinee may appeal, in writing, to the Certifying Board for review of the Board's actions concerning examination results. The specific procedure for the appeal of examination results is posted on the NALA web-site.

### Retake Policy

Examinees in retake status must successfully complete the Certified Paralegal examination within two years (a maximum of five retake sessions) or credit for all passed sections will be forfeited. If the examination is not completed within this time frame, the examinee must re-submit a completed application form required of first-time examinees, and begin the certification process again.

**Confidentiality of Examinees**

The names of examinees for the Certified Paralegal examination are considered confidential and not released by NALA to any person, except examination proctors, without express approval of the examinee.

**Other Certified Paralegal Program Requirements**

This policy statement refers strictly to the delivery of the Certified Paralegal examination. It is the responsibility of each examinee to be familiar with the other policies and requirements of the Certified Paralegal Program, including but not limited to the continuing education requirements to maintain the Certified Paralegal credential, and examination and testing center fees.

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## Terms and Conditions

You are asked to agree to the following terms and conditions related to computer based delivery of the Certified Paralegal examination any time you sign in to the test web site. This information was provided to you with your examinee information from NALA.

PLEASE read the following carefully – some of the terms are duplicative of requirements of ACT testing centers, others are specifically required of all NALA examinees.

By clicking “I accept these terms and conditions” you are agreeing to the following:

- I have read the “Policy Statement” and I am familiar with its provisions.
- I will be continuously monitored during my appointment.
- I consent to video and audio recording of my test session and to the examination of the video and/or audio recording of my test session in the event that any questions should arise concerning possible violations of the procedures and/or rules of the test center. (*May not apply to all centers.*)
- I will follow instructions of the test proctor, represent myself honestly, and conduct myself quietly to avoid interfering with the performance of other examinees.
- I will neither give nor receive any form of unauthorized assistance during the examination or any breaks.
- I will not bring into the testing room any unauthorized items such as food, drinks, purses, briefcases, backpacks, cell phones, pagers, notes, note pads, photographic equipment, or any electronic devices. If I am observed using an electronic device, including a cell phone, in violation of these rules, it may be confiscated and sent to NALA for examination.
- If I have questions or concerns about the test environment, I will quietly notify the test proctor.
- I will report all problems related to the testing center, proctor, or computer delivery of the exam to the proctor immediately. If an examinee does not report problems with exam delivery immediately to the proctor, NALA will trust there are no problems, and no basis for complaint after the examination session has ended.
- I will allow testing center staff 30 minutes to resolve any technical problems that may arise (including power failure). I have the option of continuing the examination or requesting a rescheduling of the examination for technical or other problems outside of my control taking more than 30 minutes to resolve.
- I will sign in and out every time I enter or leave the testing room.
- During testing, the exam timer will remain running during any unscheduled breaks; therefore, it is in my best interest to use the restroom or otherwise address personal needs prior to beginning my test. I will remain in the test center and may leave only to use those restroom facilities that are closest to the test room. I will not leave the building. I will not access a phone or my personal belongings, except in the case of an emergency. Under such circumstances, I will notify the test proctor before accessing a phone or my personal belongings.
- I will not remove any written, printed, or recorded materials of my examination from the testing center. The examination questions remain the property NALA and I shall maintain the confidentiality of the questions and answers.
- I will return all materials, including scratch paper, provided to me by the test proctor when I have completed my examination and before I leave the test center.

Once I begin taking sections of the Certified Paralegal examination, I understand the examination, including retakes, must be completed within two years, (a maximum of five additional testing sessions). If the examination is

not completed within this time frame, credit for all passed sections will be forfeited and a new application form will be required.

Abuse of this site, or non-compliance of these terms and conditions will not be tolerated. Should information concerning abuse or non-compliance come to NALA's attention, the candidate's ID number and PIN will be terminated and NALA may take further disciplinary action.

**-end-**