

WORKING WITH A PARALEGAL¹

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A paralegal is a great tool for every client and for every law firm. The paralegal serves as the gatekeeper between the client and the attorney. Paralegals are given a great deal of information from each client they work with. It is up to the paralegal to review the documents and to gather the key information needed for each particular client.

While paralegals cannot offer legal advice to clients, they must be familiar with the laws associated with bankruptcy. Generally, a paralegal can answer many of a client's questions without consulting with the attorney; however, if the question is legal in nature, it must be referred to the attorney. Paralegals cannot engage in the unauthorized practice of law.

A good advantage to working with the paralegal is the cost difference. The hourly rate for a paralegal is normally lower than the hourly rate for an attorney; so many general questions can be directed to the paralegal at an affordable rate. The paralegal is there to assist you and make your life easier.

When gathering information for a paralegal, the more organized the information is, the easier it is to analyze, and in turn, less time and expense will be involved. It is important to have a good "working" relationship with your paralegal. This involves good and effective communication on both sides. The better the communication, the more efficient the process can be.

While the paralegal plays a major role in assisting you with your case, the attorney is also an important resource. Together, the attorney(s) and paralegal make up the "team" to make the process as easy as possible.

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