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ILLINOIS PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION'S VOLUNTARY ACCREDITATION PLAN
FOR THE
ILLINOIS ACCREDITED PARALEGAL (ILAP) CREDENTIAL

I. PURPOSE

The Illinois Paralegal Association (IPA) recognizes that the use of qualified paralegals by lawyers, law firms, and judicial, educational, business and government entities is the best way to provide the community with cost effective legal services.

In recognition of the above, IPA is offering a Voluntary Accreditation Program to those members who choose to become an Illinois Accredited Paralegal (ILAP) providing paralegal employees and employers with a benchmark to determine qualified individuals to provide legal services under the supervision of an attorney.

II. DEFINITIONS

As used in this Plan, unless the context otherwise requires:

- A. "Accreditation" shall mean authority granted by the IPA under this Plan to practice as an Illinois Accredited Paralegal, as evidenced by the issuing of a credentialing document.
- B. "Accredited Institution" shall mean an institution from an American Bar Association (ABA) approved paralegal program, a paralegal program offered at an American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE) member school or a paralegal program offered at a school that has been accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.
- C. "Accredited Paralegal" shall mean a paralegal that holds a valid Accreditation under the provisions of this Plan.
- D. "Code of Ethics" shall mean the rules of professional conduct for paralegals as adopted by the IPA and the National Federation of Paralegal Association (NFPA).
- E. "Continuing Legal Education" ("CLE") shall mean any legal or other educational activity or program which is designed to maintain and improve the professional competency of paralegals and is defined and approved by the IPA, and/or is accredited CLE for attorneys.
- F. "ILAP Accreditation Committee" shall mean a committee authorized by the IPA Board of Directors to accept applications and confer the ILAP credential.

- G. “Lawyer” or “Attorney” shall mean any person licensed or authorized to practice law.
- H. “Paralegal” shall mean a person qualified through education, training, or work experience to perform substantive legal work that requires knowledge of legal concepts and that is customarily, but not exclusively, performed by an attorney. This person is retained/employed by an attorney, law office, governmental agency, or other entity under the supervisory authority of an attorney; or is authorized by a governmental administrative agency or statutory or court authority to perform this work. Historically, the terms paralegal and legal assistant have been used synonymously.
- I. “Person” shall mean any individual, public or private corporation, political subdivision, governmental agency, municipality, partnership, association, firm, trust, estate, or other entity whatsoever.
- J. “Plan” shall mean the Illinois Paralegal Association’s Voluntary Accreditation Plan.
- K. “Regular Member” shall mean any person who is: (1) an Illinois resident employed as a paralegal on a full-time basis in the State of Illinois; or (2) a non-Illinois resident employed as a paralegal on a full-time basis in the State of Illinois; or (3) an Illinois resident employed as a paralegal on a full-time basis in any State contiguous to Illinois. Regular members shall be eligible to vote, hold elected office and chair committees.
- L. “State” shall include any state, district, commonwealth, territory, insular possession, and any other area subject to the legislative authority of the United States of America.
- M. “Substantive” shall mean work requiring recognition, evaluation, organization, analysis, and communication of relevant facts and legal concepts.

III. RESTRICTION ON USE OF NAME OR TITLE

No person shall purport to be, assume the duties incident to, or use the title “Illinois Accredited Paralegal (ILAP),” or any words or letters which indicate that the person is an Illinois Accredited Paralegal unless the requirements of this Plan are met and such person currently holds a valid ILAP Certificate from the IPA.

IV. CRITERIA – EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

An individual applying for the ILAP credential must be a Regular Member of IPA, in good standing, and meet one of the following criteria:

- A. A Masters degree in paralegal studies from an accredited institution AND one (1) year of substantive paralegal experience.
- B. A Masters degree in any discipline from an accredited institution AND a certificate from a paralegal program from an accredited institution AND one (1) year of substantive paralegal experience.
- C. Masters degree in any discipline from an accredited institution AND three (3) years of substantive paralegal experience.

- D. A Bachelor degree in paralegal studies from an accredited institution AND one (1) year of substantive paralegal experience.
- E. A Bachelor degree in any discipline from an accredited institution AND a certificate from a paralegal program from an accredited institution AND one (1) year of substantive paralegal experience.
- F. A Bachelor degree in any discipline from an accredited institution AND three (3) years of substantive paralegal experience.
- G. An Associate degree in paralegal studies from an accredited institution AND two (2) years of substantive paralegal experience.
- H. An Associate degree in any discipline from an accredited institution AND a certificate from a paralegal program from an accredited institution AND two (2) years of substantive paralegal experience.
- I. An Associate degree in any discipline AND three (3) years of substantive paralegal experience.
- J. A Certificate in paralegal studies from an accredited institution AND four (4) years of substantive paralegal experience.
- K. Five (5) years of substantive paralegal experience.
- L. Designation of PACE Registered Paralegal (RP), Certified Legal Assistant (CLA), Certified Paralegal (CP) or other paralegal credential approved and recognized by the IPA.

V. APPLICATION AND TRANSCRIPT PROCESS

Once an individual meets one of the above criteria, the following items must be submitted to the ILAP Accreditation Committee of the IPA (“the Committee”):

- A. Verified completed application (see Form A);
- B. Certified copy of the individual’s official transcript(s) from the educational institution(s) attended OR a letter from the educational institution(s) attended stating the dates of the individual’s attendance and the date of the individual’s graduation OR a copy of the diploma received by the individual from the educational institution(s) attended. Registered Paralegals (RPs), Certified Paralegals (CPs), Certified Legal Assistants (CLAs), or other paralegal credential approved and recognized by the IPA need only submit a copy of their original RP, CP, CLA or paralegal credential certificate and a copy of their current letter/certificate of good standing. An individual applying for the ILAP credential under Section IV.K. above need not provide documentation relating to educational institutions;
- C. Declaration(s) from an attorney(s) with whom the individual works or has worked attesting to the individual’s substantive paralegal work experience (see Form B). The total number of attested years of substantive paralegal experience must meet the minimum number of years as provided in the Subsection of the above Criteria under which the individual is applying; and

D. A non-refundable fee of \$35.00 made payable to the Illinois Paralegal Association.

VI. ISSUANCE OF CREDENTIAL “ILAP”

Following submission of a verified application, payment of the processing fee and review and approval by the Committee, a certificate will be issued to the applicant indicating Accreditation by IPA based on the educational and experience criteria set forth in Section IV. Upon such Accreditation, the applicant will be permitted to use the credential “ILAP” (Illinois Accredited Paralegal).

VII. CODE OF ETHICS

Every ILAP will be bound by the IPA’s Code of Ethics and the NFPA’s Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility. Any ILAP who violates any provision of either Code of Ethics or who is convicted of a felony or crime of moral turpitude or engages in the unauthorized practice of law, as determined by the IPA Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee which is charged with reviewing these types of matters, will have his/her credential revoked. An ILAP may appeal the Committee’s revocation decision by written request to the IPA Board of Directors (the “Board”) within 45 days of receipt of the decision.

VIII. ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

The Committee will consist of five (5) voting IPA Regular members appointed for a term of two (2) years (three (3) Regular members appointed in even years and two (2) Regular members appointed in odd years) by the IPA Board of Directors. The Committee Chair will be appointed by the Board and will report to the Vice President or other designated director as determined by the Board. The Vice President or other designated director will advise the Committee as needed and will attend Committee meetings when necessary but will not have voting privileges on the Committee. In the event a Committee member or chair is unable to fulfill his/her term, the Board will appoint a replacement expeditiously. The Board has the discretion to appoint Board members to the Committee. Committee members shall not receive compensation for their services. The Committee will examine the qualifications of each applicant for Accreditation and will determine whether the applicant meets the requirements of Accreditation. If any applicant is denied Accreditation by the Committee, the applicant may file an appeal to the Board within 45 days of receipt of the denial. The Board shall make the final determination on the acceptance or rejection of the ILAP Accreditation.

IX. MAINTENANCE AND RENEWAL OF ACCREDITATION AND CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENT (“CLE”)

In order to maintain Accreditation, the Committee has set forth the following Accreditation requirements. Failure of an ILAP to fulfill any requirement and/or documentation will result in revocation of the ILAP Accreditation.

Ninety (90) days prior to the Accreditation renewal date, the Committee will notify the ILAP that renewal of Accreditation is due and provide the deadline date by which all renewal information must be received by the Committee.

An ILAP shall:

- A. Renew Accreditation status every two (2) years from the initial Accreditation date.
- B. Submit a **non-refundable two (2) year renewal fee of \$15.00 made payable to the Illinois Paralegal Association.**
- C. Complete twelve (12) hours of CLE with two (2) of the twelve (12) hours being in ethics. When counting CLE credit hours, count only the actual hours of instruction. All non-instructional portions of CLE programs (such as breaks and lunches) will NOT be included in the credit hour computation. To be accepted as CLE credit hours, the credits must be obtained prior to the ILAP's credential expiration date, and within two (2) years of the ILAP's anniversary date.
- D. Submit to the Committee the completed CLE Reporting Form, required documentation for each CLE program, and Proof of Attendance (See FORM D). The documentation must be submitted at least 45 days prior to the renewal date. At the time of renewal, an ILAP must be employed as a paralegal and must be a voting member of IPA.

CLE REQUIREMENTS

All CLE credit hours may be obtained in person, via audio or on-line or video. CLE credits on the following subject matter will be accepted:

- 1. Substantive law issues.
- 2. Specific nature of the paralegal profession such as enhancing computer skills or research techniques, increasing management skills, etc.

Courses/Seminars/Programs

- 1. Courses/seminars offered by the ABA or any state bar association.
- 2. Courses/seminars offered by approved national, state or local law-related organizations (e.g., American Association for Justice, Illinois Trial Lawyers Association, etc.).
- 3. Courses/seminars offered by any national, state or local paralegal association.
- 4. Courses/seminars offered by any accredited education institution or organization (e.g., Northwestern University).
- 5. Courses/seminars offered by professional education providers (e.g., Institute for Paralegal Education, Lexis/Nexis, West LegalEdcenter, Lorman, Organization of Legal Professionals etc).
- 6. Courses/seminars offered by any federal/state regulatory or government authority.
- 7. Courses/seminars/programs offered in-house by the applicant's employer/firm/corporation.

- When applying for CLE credit hours, the ILAP must submit with the renewal application an outline of the seminar topics, including a brief summary of each topic being presented and, if available, a copy of the seminar brochure, the number of hours attended, and the certificate of completion.
- There is no restriction on the number of CLE credit hours obtained in this manner.

Self-Study Programs

Self-study programs provided by any of the entities listed above under Courses/Seminars/Programs which are available on audio and/or videotape and have supporting written materials.

- When applying for CLE credit hours, the ILAP must submit with the renewal application a copy of the promotional brochure and the certificate of completion. The determination of the number of credit hours is based on the amount of time it takes to view and/or listen to the tapes. Written materials including books and seminar manuals will be based on 50 pages per hour.
- A maximum of three (3) CLE credit hours may be obtained in this manner.

Teaching/Speaking/Guest Lecturing

Teaching, speaking or guest lecturing at a seminar or course on substantive law or issues relevant to employed paralegals and/or paralegal students.

- When applying for CLE credit hours, the ILAP must submit with the renewal application a copy of the course advertisement or seminar brochure, a description of the seminar topic or a copy of the seminar outline, if offered, the number of credits available to attendees; and number of hours/minutes of the engagement. The number of credit hours will be based upon the length and content of the presentation.
- A maximum of five (5) CLE credit hours may be obtained in this matter. CLE credit is provided only one time for any seminar/course presentation.

Publishing Articles

Authoring an article or publication on substantive law relevant to employed paralegals and paralegal students. The article must be the ILAP's original work product.

- When applying for CLE credit hours, the ILAP must submit the article(s) for consideration, proof the article was published; and the date of publication. The number of credit hours will be based upon the length and content of the article(s).
- A maximum of two (2) CLE credit hours may be obtained in this matter. The article(s) must be published prior to the ILAP's Accreditation.

Pro Bono Services

Delivering substantive pro bono legal services pursuant to the IPA Code of Ethics and the NFPA Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility.

- The pro bono legal services must be certified by an affidavit completed by the supervising attorney, program or agency coordinator or firm stating the number of hours of pro bono legal services performed and that said services were substantive in nature.
- A maximum of two (2) CLE credits may be obtained in this manner. One (1) hour of CLE credit will be awarded for every three (3) hours of pro bono legal services performed.

IPA Specialty Section Meetings

Meetings which have been designated by the IPA Board of Directors as qualifying for ILAP CLE credit.

- Attendees will be required to sign an attendance sheet at each designated meeting. Attendees will receive a certificate attesting to their attendance at each designated meeting.
- One-half hour of ILAP CLE credit will be awarded for each designated meeting attended.

X. REVOCATION OF ILAP CREDENTIAL

An ILAP's credential may be revoked for the following reasons:

- A. The ILAP fails to maintain membership in IPA.
- B. The ILAP violates the IPA Code of Ethics and/or the NFPA's Model Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility, is convicted of a felony or a crime of moral turpitude or engages in the unauthorized practice of law.
- C. The ILAP fails to complete the requisite number of CLE hours as referenced in Section IX above.
- D. The ILAP provided false information on the application for the ILAP credential.

An ILAP may appeal the Committee's revocation decision upon written request to the IPA Board within 45 days of the receipt of the decision.

Any ILAP who has had his/her ILAP credential revoked may not reapply for reinstatement for a period of one (1) year from the date of the revocation.

(Effective 10/04/12, Updated 12/7/2016)