



# THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

January 29, 2026

The Honorable Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy  
The Supreme Court of Ohio  
65 South Front Street  
Columbus, OH 43215-3431

Re: Proposed Amendment to the Rules for the Government of the Bar of Ohio to license legal paraprofessionals

Dear Chief Justice Kennedy:

The Buckeye Institute hereby proposes an amendment to the Rules for the Government of the Bar of Ohio. Accompanying this letter is the proposed amendment, which establishes a licensing procedure for legal paraprofessionals. This amendment is based on the existing attorney licensing framework in Ohio and modifies the methodology in a way similar to the legal paraprofessional program implemented by the Arizona Supreme Court.

As your Honor has consistently acknowledged, over 6.5 million Ohioans across 82 counties live in areas with an insufficient number of attorneys to meet the community's basic legal needs. Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy, *Rural Practice Incentive - Letter from Chief Justice Kennedy* (2024). "People living in these communities are far less likely to have access to lawyers as they navigate complex legal issues related to health care, housing, food assistance, criminal defense, juvenile cases, abuse, and delinquency." *Id.* The proposed amendment takes a crucial step toward addressing Ohio's legal deserts. See Arizona Board of Nonlawyer Legal Service Providers, *2024 Annual Report on the Status of the Legal Paraprofessional Program* (2025); Supreme Court of Texas, *Supreme Court advances access-to-justice efforts with proposed new rules to license legal paraprofessionals* (2024). By licensing and regulating legal paraprofessionals, the proposed amendment builds on the Rural Practice Incentive program and other initiatives your Honor has championed.

The proposed amendment allows licensed legal paraprofessionals to perform limited legal tasks without attorney supervision in the areas of family, civil, criminal, administrative, and juvenile law. Specific education, training, and examination requirements will ensure that legal paraprofessionals are well-prepared to carry out these tasks. Additionally, because the proposed amendment regulates legal paraprofessionals in a manner comparable to Ohio attorneys, it reduces the administrative burden associated with managing the program.

By licensing legal paraprofessionals, as other states have done, the Supreme Court of Ohio can significantly enhance access to justice for Ohio's most underserved communities. Therefore, The Buckeye Institute respectfully requests that the Supreme Court of Ohio consider and adopt the proposed amendment.

Sincerely,  
Robert Alt  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
The Buckeye Institute

Enclosure: Proposed Rule Amendment

Cc: Justice Patrick F. Fischer  
Justice R. Patrick DeWine  
Justice Jennifer Brunner  
Justice Joseph T. Deters  
Justice Daniel R. Hawkins  
Justice Megan E. Shanahan  
Richard Schuster, Chief Legal Officer

## **AMENDMENT**

### **Section 1. Definitions.**

As used in this rule:

- (A) “Advocacy” means course content or practical experience that demonstrates and develops skills that are associated with conducting court hearings and trials, administrative hearings, mediation and arbitration, and settlement and plea negotiation.
- (B) “Certification” means achievement of subject area competency within an endorsement.
- (C) “Civil procedures course” means at least 3 credits from a course dedicated to civil procedure and the remaining required credits can be obtained through a course or courses that cover an area of civil law, such as administrative law, if the course includes procedural law content.
- (D) “Experiential learning” means learning through a format such as an internship, externship or clinical experience during which students develop knowledge, skills, and values from direct experiences outside a traditional academic setting.
- (E) “Legal Paraprofessional” means an individual licensed pursuant to this rule to provide legal services without the supervision of an attorney in the areas of law and within the scope of practice defined herein.
- (F) “Legal specialization course” means a course that covers substantive law or legal procedures and that was developed specifically for, and that teaches practical skills needed by, paralegals or legal paraprofessionals. Courses in general “business law” designed for undergraduate or graduate business curricula and law-related courses that focus solely on theory do not qualify as a legal specialization course.
- (G) “Substantive, law-related experience” means the provision of legal services as a law clerk, paralegal, or paralegal student including, but not limited to, drafting pleadings, legal documents, or correspondence; completing forms; preparing reports or charts; legal research; and interviewing clients or witnesses in areas of practice in which the applicant seeks to be licensed. Substantive law-related experience does not include routine clerical or administrative duties or preparation of legal documents for an entity or member of the public engaged in self-representation.
- (H) “Accredited college or university” means a college or university approved by one of the following accrediting associations or, if not located in the United States or Canada, a college or university evaluated and approved in accordance with Sections 7 and 8(C) of this rule: Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools/Commission on Higher Education; New England Association of Schools and Colleges--Commission on Institutions of Higher Education; North Central Association of Colleges and Schools;

Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools--Commission on Colleges; Western Association of Schools and Colleges--Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges--Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada.

## **Section 2. Applicability.**

Individuals licensed under this rule may provide legal services subject to this rule, as an exception to the prohibition of the unauthorized practice of law set forth in Gov. Bar R. VII. To provide legal services under this exception, individuals must hold a valid legal paraprofessional license, perform legal services only within the scope of the practice area(s) in which they are licensed, and comply with the other requirements for licensees in this rule. No individual may claim to be a legal paraprofessional unless they hold an active license as a legal paraprofessional.

## **Section 3. Purpose.**

The Supreme Court has inherent regulatory power over all lawyers or nonlawyers providing legal services to the public. Accordingly, this rule provides for the effective administration of the legal paraprofessional licensing program.

## **Section 4. Roles and Responsibilities.**

(A) **Supreme Court.** The Supreme Court establishes and administers a legal paraprofessional fund consisting of monies received for license fees, costs, and civil penalties. The Supreme Court is authorized to expend money from the fund for the implementation, administration, and enforcement of the legal paraprofessional program. All application fees assessed under this rule shall be nonrefundable and payable to the Supreme Court of Ohio in the methods specified by the Director of Attorney Services.

(B) **The Board of Commissioners on Character and Fitness; Local and Regional Bar Association Admissions Committees.** The Board of Commissioners on Character and Fitness and the local and regional bar association admissions committees shall carry out their responsibilities in Sections 12 through 14 of Gov. Bar R. I with regard to legal paraprofessionals. Regarding legal paraprofessionals:

- (1) "Admission to the practice of law" is read as "legal paraprofessional licensure";
- (2) "Admitted to practice law" is read as "licensed as a legal paraprofessional"; and
- (3) "The practice of law" is read as "licensure."

**(C) The Board of Bar Examiners; Readers.**

- (1) The Board of Bar Examiners and readers shall carry out their responsibilities in Section 4 of Gov. Bar R. I with regard to legal paraprofessionals. Regarding legal paraprofessionals:
  - (a) “Admission to the practice of law” is read as “legal paraprofessional licensure”;
  - (b) “Applicants for bar admission” is read as “Applicants for legal paraprofessional licensure”; and
  - (c) “Ohio bar examination” is read as “Ohio legal paraprofessional examination.”
- (2) The Board of Bar Examiners shall prepare, maintain, and administer a legal paraprofessional examination, as described in Section 5(B) of this rule, for each Section 5(A) practice area.
- (3) Subject to the court’s approval, the Board of Bar Examiners shall determine and publish the score necessary to pass each legal paraprofessional examination.

**(D) The Board of Professional Conduct of the Supreme Court of Ohio.**

- (1) The Board of Professional Conduct shall have the same authority over legal paraprofessionals as it has over attorneys pursuant to Section 2 of Gov. Bar R. V.
- (2) The Board of Professional Conduct must provide the court with the following information on a quarterly basis:
  - (a) The number and nature of charges filed against legal paraprofessionals during the previous calendar quarter; and
  - (b) Discipline imposed on legal paraprofessionals during the previous calendar quarter and the nature of the conduct leading to the discipline, and the discipline imposed.
- (3) The Board of Professional Conduct must provide the court with recommendations concerning modifications or improvements to the legal paraprofessional program on or before January 31 of each year.

**(E) The Office of Attorney Services.**

- (1) The Office of Attorney Services must issue licenses to qualified applicants as provided in Section 5 (A) of this rule.

- (2) On or before January 31 of each year, the Office of Attorney Services must file a report with the Supreme Court describing the status of the legal paraprofessional program. The report must include, but is not limited to, the following:
- (a) The number of applications granted and declined during the previous calendar year;
  - (b) The number of licensed legal paraprofessionals as of December 31 of the previous calendar year; and
  - (c) Recommendations concerning modifications or improvements to the legal paraprofessional program.

## **Section 5. Licensure.**

- (A) **License Required.** A person must not represent that the person is a legal paraprofessional or is authorized to provide legal services, unless licensed as an attorney, without holding a valid license issued in compliance with this rule in one or more of the following practice areas:

- (1) Family law.
- (2) Civil law.
- (3) Criminal law.
- (4) Administrative law.
- (5) Juvenile law.

(B) **Examination.**

- (1) The legal paraprofessional examination, prepared with the assistance of subject matter experts, must test:
  - (a) Legal terminology, substantive law, client communication, data gathering, document preparation, the ethical code for legal paraprofessionals, and professional and administrative responsibilities pertaining to the provision of legal services; and
  - (b) Substantive knowledge of the law in each Section 5(A) practice area in which the applicant seeks to be licensed, including questions specific to Ohio law.
- (2) The Ohio legal paraprofessional examination shall be administered twice yearly, concurrent with the Ohio bar examination.

## **Section 6. General Requirements.**

To be licensed as a legal paraprofessional in Ohio, an applicant shall, in addition to the education or experience requirements in Section 7 of this rule, satisfy all of the following requirements:

- (A) Is at least twenty-one years of age;
- (B) Has not been denied admission to the practice of law in Ohio or any other jurisdiction;
- (C) Has not been disbarred or suspended from the practice of law in Ohio or any other jurisdiction unless the applicant requests an exception that is approved by the Supreme Court;
- (D) Prior to taking the Ohio legal paraprofessional examination, have demonstrated that the applicant possesses the requisite character, fitness, and moral qualifications for licensure and have been approved as to character, fitness, and moral qualifications under procedures provided in Gov. Bar R. I;
- (E) Complies with the laws, court rules, and orders adopted by the Supreme Court governing legal paraprofessionals in this state;
- (F) Has achieved a passing score on the legal paraprofessional examination, including a substantive law examination in each Section 5 (A) practice area in which the applicant seeks to be licensed; and
- (G) Has taken the oath of office as provided in Section 9 of Gov. Bar R. I. Regarding legal paraprofessionals:
  - (1) “Admission to the practice of law” is read as “legal paraprofessional licensure”;
  - (2) “Attorney” is read as “legal paraprofessional”; and
  - (3) “Certificate of admission” is read as “Certificate of licensure.”

## **Section 7. Education or Experience Requirement.**

The applicant must have one of the following:

- (A) An associate-level degree in paralegal studies or an associate-level, bachelor’s, or advanced degree in any subject plus a certificate in paralegal studies approved by the American Bar Association or offered by an institution that is accredited by an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and that requires successful completion of a minimum of 24 semester units, or the clock hour equivalent, in legal specialization courses including a minimum of:

- (1) For family law: 3 credit hours in family law, 6 credit hours in civil procedure, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
  - (2) For civil law: 6 credit hours in civil procedure, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
  - (3) For criminal law: 3 credit hours in criminal law, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
  - (4) For administrative law: 3 credit hours in administrative law, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
  - (5) For juvenile law: 3 credit hours in dependency law, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
  - (6) For all practice areas:
    - (a) A minimum of 3 credit hours in professional responsibility;
    - (b) A minimum of 120 hours or 3 credit hours of experiential learning, supervised by a licensed attorney or legal paraprofessional, that includes content on advocacy; and
    - (c) One (1) year of substantive law-related experience under the supervision of a lawyer or legal paraprofessional in the area of practice in which licensure is sought.
- (B) A bachelor's degree in law from an accredited college or university, including a minimum of:
- (1) For family law: 3 credit hours in family law, 6 credit hours in civil procedure, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
  - (2) For civil law: 6 credit hours in civil procedure, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
  - (3) For criminal law: 3 credit hours in criminal law, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
  - (4) For administrative law: 3 credit hours in administrative law, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
  - (5) For juvenile law: 3 credit hours in dependency law, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.



- (6) For all practice areas, a minimum of 3 credit hours in professional responsibility and a minimum of 120 hours or 3 credit hours of experiential learning, supervised by a licensed attorney or legal paraprofessional, that includes content on advocacy.
- (C) Attended a certification program, for credit or non-credit, for legal paraprofessionals approved by the court; offered through an educational institution that is at least regionally accredited; and, while attending the certification program, the applicant must have completed:
- (1) The credit hours, or equivalent clock hours, in courses required under division (A) of this section for the practice area in which licensure is sought; and
  - (2) The supervised hours of substantive law-related experience and experiential learning required under division (A) of this section.
- (D) A Master of Legal Studies (MLS) degree from an American Bar Association accredited law school including completion of at least:
- (1) For family law: 3 credit hours in family law, 6 credit hours in civil procedure, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
  - (2) For civil law: 6 credit hours in civil procedure, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
  - (3) For criminal law: 3 credit hours in criminal law, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
  - (4) For administrative law: 3 credit hours in administrative law, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
  - (5) For juvenile law: 3 credit hours in dependency law, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
  - (6) For all practice areas, a minimum of 3 credit hours in professional responsibility and a minimum of 120 hours or 3 credit hours of experiential learning, supervised by a licensed attorney or legal paraprofessional, that includes content on advocacy.
- (E) A Juris Doctor (JD) degree from a law school accredited by the American Bar Association, or the foreign equivalent of a JD from a degree granting institution and a Master of Laws (LLM) degree from a law school accredited by the American Bar Association, that in either case included:
- (1) For family law: 3 credit hours in family law, 6 credit hours in civil procedure, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.

- (2) For civil law: 6 credit hours in civil procedure, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
- (3) For criminal law: 3 credit hours in criminal law, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
- (4) For administrative law: 3 credit hours in administrative law, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
- (5) For juvenile law: 3 credit hours in dependency law, 3 credit hours in evidence, and 3 credit hours of legal research and writing.
- (6) For all practice areas, a minimum of 3 credit hours in professional responsibility.
- (F) In lieu of the educational requirements in (A) through (E) of this section, has spent at least one thousand hours per year engaged in substantive, law-related experience each year for 5 out of the 7 years preceding application in at least one practice area in which the applicant seeks licensure, and has spent at least one thousand hours per year engaged in substantive, law-related experience each year for 3 out of the 5 years preceding application in each additional practice area in which the applicant seeks licensure.
- (G) Establishing substantive law-related experience requires written certification by a supervising attorney or legal paraprofessional. The certification must include:
  - (1) The name and Bar number of all supervising lawyers or legal paraprofessionals;
  - (2) A statement that the work experience meets the requirement for substantive law-related experience, as defined in Section 1 of this rule, in the practice area in which the applicant seeks licensure; and
  - (3) The dates of the applicant's employment by or service with all supervising lawyers or legal paraprofessionals.

## **Section 8. Preliminary Registration Requirements.**

- (A) Every applicant who intends to take an Ohio legal paraprofessional examination shall file with the Office of Bar Admissions of the Supreme Court an Application to Register as a Candidate for Legal Paraprofessional Licensure in Ohio. The applicant shall file the registration application by the date determined by the Office of Bar Admissions and approved by the court.
- (B) The registration application shall be on forms furnished by the Office of Bar Admissions and shall include all of the following:

- (1) A properly authenticated transcript of college credits showing the applicant has earned a degree in compliance with Section 7 of this rule, if required, and a certificate from the supervising attorney or legal paraprofessional in compliance with Section 7(G) of this rule;
  - (2) Fingerprint identification taken by a sheriff, deputy sheriff, municipal police officer, or state highway patrol officer;
  - (3) A registration fee of an amount determined by the Office of Bar Admissions and approved by the court;
  - (4) A fee in the amount charged by the National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) for its character investigation and report;
  - (5) A typed and completed character questionnaire, in duplicate, in the form prescribed by the Board of Commissioners on Character and Fitness, which shall include a selection of the Section 5(A) practice areas the candidate wishes to become licensed in; and
  - (6) Authorization and release forms in the number required by the Office of Bar Admissions.
- (C) If an applicant's undergraduate or legal education was not received in the United States, an additional fee of one hundred fifty dollars shall accompany the application for the evaluation of the applicant's education. The Supreme Court shall review the applicant's education and determine whether the education is equivalent to the education required of applicants educated in the United States. In order to receive a review of education received outside of the United States, an applicant must submit the documents outlined in Section 2(C) of Gov. Bar R. I with the registration application.
- (D) If an applicant does not file a complete registration application on or before the day prescribed by the Office of Bar Admissions in division (A) of this section, the applicant shall pay an additional late fee as determined by the Office of Bar Admissions and approved by the court.
- (E) An applicant may not apply to take the February Ohio legal paraprofessional examination unless the applicant has filed a complete registration application by the fifteenth day of August immediately preceding the February examination. An applicant may not apply to take the July Ohio legal paraprofessional examination unless the applicant has filed a complete registration application by the fifteenth day of January immediately preceding the July examination.
- (F) Until licensed as a legal paraprofessional in Ohio, the applicant is under a continuing duty to update the information contained in the registration application, including the

character questionnaire, and to report promptly to the Office of Bar Admissions all changes or additions to information in the application.

(G) Unless the Board of Commissioners on Character and Fitness grants an extension to the applicant, a registration application shall be deemed withdrawn, and the applicant shall no longer be considered a candidate for licensure, if either of the following occurs:

- (1) The applicant fails to take the Ohio legal paraprofessional examination within four years after filing the registration application; or
- (2) The applicant takes but fails the Ohio legal paraprofessional examination and does not retake one of the four immediately ensuing legal paraprofessional examinations.

**Section 9. Application for Ohio Legal Paraprofessional Examination; Updating Character and Fitness Information after the Examination.**

(A) An applicant who has filed a registration application pursuant to Section 8 of this rule and who seeks to take the Ohio legal paraprofessional examination shall file with the Office of Bar Admissions of the Supreme Court an Application to Take the Legal Paraprofessional Examination. An application to take the February examination shall be filed by the first day of November immediately preceding the examination. An application to take the July examination shall be filed by the first day of April immediately preceding the examination.

(B) The examination application shall be on forms furnished by the Office of Bar Admissions and shall include all of the following:

- (1) An affidavit that the applicant has read and studied the Rules for the Government of the Bar of Ohio, the Ohio Rules of Professional Conduct, and the Code of Judicial Conduct adopted by the Court;
- (2) An affidavit attesting that the applicant has not engaged in the unauthorized practice of law;
- (3) A typed and completed supplemental character questionnaire, in duplicate, in the form prescribed by the Board of Commissioners on Character and Fitness, updating the information on the applicant's character, fitness, and moral qualifications furnished on the applicant's registration application pursuant to Section 8 of this rule;
- (4) A fee determined by the Office of Bar Admissions and approved by the court if the examination application is filed on or before the dates set forth in division (A) of this section. The fee shall be increased by one hundred dollars if either of the following applies:
  - (a) An examination application for the February examination is filed after the first day of November but on or before the tenth day of December;

- (b) An examination application for the July examination is filed after the first day of April but on or before the tenth day of May.
- (C) The Office of Bar Admissions shall refer the examination application to the regional or local bar association admissions committee in accordance with Section 13 of Gov. Bar R. I. The admissions committee shall review the examination application, conduct further investigation and interviews under Section 13 of Gov. Bar R. I if appropriate or necessary, and report its final recommendation regarding the applicant's character, fitness, and moral qualifications to the Board of Commissioners on Character and Fitness on a form prescribed by the Board. The Board shall make a final determination regarding the applicant's character, fitness, and moral qualifications to be licensed. The Board shall make its final determination no later than three weeks before the date of the examination for which the applicant has applied, or the final approval shall be deemed issued.
- (D) The applicant is under a continuing duty to update the information contained in the examination application, including the supplemental character questionnaire, and to report promptly to the Office of Bar Admissions all changes or additions to information in the application that occur prior to the applicant's licensure.

#### **Section 10. Application for Reexamination.**

- (A) An applicant who has failed and seeks to retake an Ohio legal paraprofessional examination, or an applicant who has passed and seeks to retake an Ohio legal paraprofessional examination for a different practice area, shall file with the Office of Bar Admissions an Application for Reexamination. A reexamination application for the February examination shall be filed by the first day of November immediately preceding the examination. A reexamination application for the July examination shall be filed by the first day of April immediately preceding the examination. The secretary of the Board of Bar Examiners may set a later filing deadline for applicants for reexamination who have taken a legal paraprofessional examination, the results of which have not been released prior to the filing deadlines established in this division.
- (B) The reexamination application shall be on forms furnished by the Office of Bar Admissions and shall include all of the following:
- (1) An affidavit attesting that the applicant has not engaged in the unauthorized practice of law;
  - (2) A typed and completed supplemental reexamination character questionnaire, in duplicate, in the form prescribed by the Board of Commissioners on Character and Fitness, updating the previously furnished information on the applicant's character, fitness, and moral qualifications, and, if applicable, the new area of practice in which the applicant wishes to be licensed;

(3) A fee determined by the Office of Bar Admissions and approved by the court if the examination application is filed on or before the dates set forth in division (A) of this section. The fee shall be increased by one hundred dollars if either of the following applies:

(a) A reexamination application for the February examination is filed after the first day of November or any later filing deadline set by the secretary of the Board of Bar Examiners, but on or before the tenth day of December;

(b) A reexamination application for the July examination is filed after the first day of April but on or before the tenth day of May.

(C) The Office of Bar Admissions shall refer the reexamination application to the regional or local bar association admissions committee in accordance with Section 13 of Gov. Bar R. I. The admissions committee shall review the reexamination application, conduct further investigation and interviews under Section 13 of Gov. Bar R. I if appropriate or necessary, and report its recommendation regarding the applicant's character, fitness, and moral qualifications to the Board on a form prescribed by the Board. The Board shall make its final determination no later than three weeks before the date of the examination for which the applicant has applied, or the final approval shall be deemed issued.

(D) Applicants for reexamination shall be admitted to the February examination only, provided, however, that applicants for reexamination may be admitted to the July examination if the physical limitations of the examination hall permit after all applicants for the bar and legal paraprofessional examination have been admitted. If all applicants for reexamination cannot be admitted to the July examination because of the physical limitations of the examination hall, the reexamination applicants shall be admitted in the order in which their reexamination applications were received by the Office of Bar Admissions.

(E) The applicant is under a continuing duty to update the information contained in the reexamination application, including the supplemental reexamination character questionnaire, and to report promptly to the Office of Bar Admissions all changes or additions to the information in the application that occur prior to the applicant's admission to practice.

### **Section 11. Confidentiality of Character and Fitness Matters.**

The confidentiality provisions of Section 15 of Gov. Bar R. I shall apply to character and fitness matters regarding legal paraprofessionals.

### **Section 12. Publication of List of Applicants for Admission.**

At least twice yearly, the court shall publish in the *Ohio Official Reports Advance Sheets* a list of the names, cities, and counties or states of residence of those persons who have applied for a legal

paraprofessional license since the list was last published. The court shall distribute copies of the list to all regional and local bar association admissions committees.

### **Section 13. Conduct of Licensees.**

(A) **Authorized Services.** A licensed legal paraprofessional may provide the following legal services without the supervision of an attorney in the area(s) of practice for which they are licensed as follows:

- (1) Prepare and sign legal documents;
- (2) Provide specific advice, opinions, or recommendations about possible legal rights, remedies, defenses, options, or strategies;
- (3) Draft and file documents, including initiating and responding to actions, related motions, discovery, interim and final orders, and modification of orders, and arrange for service of legal documents;
- (4) Appear before a court or tribunal on behalf of a party, including mediation, arbitration, and settlement conferences where not prohibited by the rules and procedures of the forum; and
- (5) Negotiate legal rights or responsibilities for a specific person or entity.

(B) **Scope of Practice.** A legal paraprofessional's authorization to provide legal services in a practice area is as follows:

- (1) **Family Law.** Legal paraprofessionals licensed in family law may render authorized services in:
  - (a) Domestic relations, except that they may not provide services in the following areas unless the legal paraprofessional has met additional qualifications as established by the Supreme Court for:
    - (i) Preparation of a Qualified Domestic Relations Order (QDRO) and supplemental orders dividing retirement assets.
    - (ii) Division or conveyance of formal business entities or commercial property.
    - (iii) An appeal to the court of appeals or Supreme Court.
  - (b) Adoption, to assist clients in all aspects of the adoption process, if the legal paraprofessional has met additional qualifications as established by the Supreme Court.



- (2) **Civil Law.** Legal paraprofessionals licensed to practice in civil law may provide authorized services in any civil matter that is or could be in a municipal or common pleas court of this state other than matters in which a licensed attorney is not permitted to appear.
- (3) **Criminal Law.** Legal paraprofessionals licensed in criminal law may render authorized services:
  - (a) At any initial appearance or, when the defendant is not represented by counsel in subsequent criminal proceedings, for the limited purpose of advocating for release of a defendant from pretrial detention.
  - (b) For criminal misdemeanor matters in a municipal or common pleas court of this state that is not subject to a penalty of incarceration upon conviction, whether by law or by agreement of the prosecuting authority and trial court.
- (4) **Administrative Law.** Legal paraprofessionals licensed in administrative law may engage in providing authorized services before any Ohio administrative agency that does not preclude practice by legal paraprofessionals. Legal paraprofessionals licensed in administrative law are not authorized to:
  - (a) Represent any party in an appeal of an administrative agency's decision to a court of common pleas, the court of appeals, or the Supreme Court except for filing an application or notice of appeal.
  - (b) Represent any lawyer or legal paraprofessional before the Supreme Court, presiding disciplinary judge, or any board, committee, or hearing panel.
- (5) **Juvenile Law.** Legal paraprofessionals licensed in juvenile law may render authorized services in:
  - (a) Juvenile dependency proceedings for any party, except that they may not:
    - (i) Conduct a contested dependency adjudication; or
    - (ii) Conduct a contested termination adjudication proceeding.
  - (b) Adoption, to assist clients in all aspects of the adoption process, if the legal paraprofessional has met additional qualifications as established by the Supreme Court.



## **Section 16. Code of Conduct.**

All legal paraprofessionals in Ohio must abide by the following code of conduct establishing the rules of professional conduct and minimum standards for performance by legal paraprofessionals.

(A) **Ethics.** A legal paraprofessional is bound by Ohio Rules of Professional Conduct as follows:

- (1) “Legal paraprofessional(s)” is substituted for “lawyer(s)”;
- (2) “licensed” is substituted for “admitted”;
- (3) “Legal paraprofessional licensure application” is substituted for “bar admission application”; and
- (4) “Licensed as a legal paraprofessional” is substituted for “admitted to practice.”

(B) **Performance in Accordance with Law.** A legal paraprofessional must:

- (1) Perform all duties and discharge all obligations in accordance with applicable laws, rules, or court orders.
- (2) Not represent that the legal paraprofessional is authorized to provide legal services that are not authorized by this rule or are not within the scope of practice in the areas in which they are licensed.
- (3) Not use the designations “lawyer,” “attorney at law,” “counselor at law,” “Esq.,” or other equivalent words, the use of which is reasonably likely to induce others to believe the legal paraprofessional is authorized to engage in the practice of law beyond that allowed by a license issued under this rule. Any communications by a licensed legal paraprofessional in connection with providing services must clearly identify the licensee as a licensed legal paraprofessional.
- (4) Not provide any kind of advice, opinion or recommendation about possible legal rights, remedies, defenses, options, or strategies unless the legal paraprofessional is licensed in the practice area and doing so is within the scope of the practice area.
- (5) Inform the client in writing that a legal paraprofessional is not a lawyer and cannot provide any kind of advice, opinion or recommendation to a client about possible legal rights, remedies, defenses, options, or strategies, or authorized legal services that are not within the scope of a practice area in which they are licensed.
- (6) Comply with the Ohio Rules of Procedure governing the scope of the legal paraprofessional’s authorized practice area, but, where “lawyer,” “attorney,” or other

equivalent words are used, substitute “legal paraprofessional” for any procedural rule governing conduct within the legal paraprofessional’s scope of practice in Section 5 (A) of this rule.

(C) **Identification.** Legal paraprofessionals must include their name, the title “Ohio Legal Paraprofessional” or the abbreviation “LP,” and their legal paraprofessional license number on all documents they prepare, unless expressly prohibited by a non-judicial agency or entity. Legal paraprofessionals must also provide their name, title, and license number to any person upon request.

(D) **Notification of Discipline.** A licensed legal paraprofessional whose license to practice law is revoked, suspended, or disbarred in any jurisdiction must provide notice of and information about the revocation, suspension or disbarment to the Board of Professional Conduct of the Supreme Court of Ohio within 30 days of service of the notice of the revocation, suspension, or disbarment.

(E) **Notification of Denial of Admission.** A licensed legal paraprofessional who is denied admission to the practice of law in any jurisdiction must provide notice of and information about the denial to the board and the Board of Professional Conduct of the Supreme Court of Ohio within 30 days of service of the notice of the denial.

(F) **Continuing Legal Education Policy.**

(1) **Purpose.** Ongoing continuing legal education is one method to ensure legal paraprofessionals maintain competence in the field after licensure. Continuing education also provides opportunities for legal paraprofessionals to keep abreast of changes in the legal profession and the Ohio judicial system.

(2) **Applicability.** All legal paraprofessionals must comply with the continuing education requirements of Gov. Bar R. X as follows:

(a) “Legal paraprofessional(s)” is substituted for “attorney(s)”;

(b) Section 3(A) shall require fifteen credit hours of continuing legal education for each biennial compliance period; and

(c) Continuing education must relate to the practice area or areas in which the legal paraprofessional is licensed to practice.

(G) **Annual Fees.** A licensed legal paraprofessional shall pay a biannual fee determined by the court. The biannual fee shall be deposited into the legal paraprofessional fund.