Law careers, particularly in arbitration/mediation, are growing steadily, save for within niche positions like judge or hearing officer. Legal professionals can be within private company legal/compliance departments, law firms, or the state/federal government. Positions require at least a Bachelor’s Degree (a Juris Doctorate often required to be an attorney/judge) and solid research, analytical, problem-solving and communications skills.

**Attorneys** advise and represent individuals, businesses, and state/federal government legislators and agencies on legal issues and disputes. They work in a huge number of areas, from criminal and family law to commercial and intellectual property law. Job growth is in line with other professions in the economy, but as there are more law school graduates than entry-level positions available, competition for places is fierce.

**Judges/hearing officers** apply the law and oversee the legal process in courts. They also conduct pre-trial hearings, help with administrative disputes and issue legal decisions. As the number of openings are limited, growth is much slower than in the other positions above.

**Mediators/Arbitrators/Conciliators** oversee negotiation between in-dispute parties, guiding them toward an agreed settlement (e.g. between businesses in a contract dispute). Whereas arbitrators can make binding decisions (that can be appealed in some cases), mediators and conciliators facilitate discussion and steer the parties towards a mutually acceptable solution. Growth in this field is strong, but not many people are employed in these professions.

**FACTS & STATS**

Employment in the legal sector is projected to grow by an average of 5% from 2014-2024, adding about 64,600 new jobs by 2024. Within those statistics, paralegal/legal assistant roles are growing by 8%, whilst growth in attorney roles is at 6%, as fast as the average.

The median annual wage in 2015 for paralegals/legal assistants was $48,810, whilst for arbitrators/mediators it was $58,020. Due in part to their graduate degrees and experience, the median wage for attorneys was $115,820, whilst judges and hearing officers earned a median of $109,010. The median annual wage for all occupations was 36,200.

**TRENDS & INDUSTRY INFO**

There is a broad range of careers within the legal field, with differing trends associated with each:

**Paralegals/legal assistants** perform a variety of tasks to support attorneys, including administrative tasks, conducting legal research and drafting legal documents. If working for an accredited immigration firm or organization, they may represent clients before immigration hearings. Though job growth is strong, entry into these professions is very competitive, especially in government and large, reputable law firms.

**WORK ENVIRONMENT**

Most professionals working in the legal field are full-time, but time commitment varies by firm size, position seniority, and whether one is in the private or state sector. Many legal professionals can expect to work in excess of 40 hours per week, and, particularly on high-profile/high-value cases, more than that.
A Career in LAW

SKILLS & EXPERIENCE NEEDED

Resume
The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) and law school applications have firm deadlines. Law schools ranked in the top 10 have stiff competition for entry.

Skills Required
- Associate’s or Bachelor’s Degrees for paralegal, legal assistant and some mediator roles (which may require specific industry experience as well).
- Although many companies do not require professional certifications for paralegals/legal assistants at this time, there is a trend toward law firms looking for paralegals to have completed a Paralegal Studies Program and obtained a Paralegal Certificate.
- For the Accredited Immigration Representatives, the firm that a paralegal/legal assistant works for must be recognized by the Board of Immigration Appeals and sponsor the paralegal’s application, which will be lost if the paralegal moves from the firm.
- Juris Doctorate (J.D.) for attorneys as well as for judges, who will also have to have significant experience.
- Demonstrable analytical, critical thinking & decision-making skills, good interpersonal skills and persuasive communication skills.

Experience
Most internships in this industry are paid, particularly within a large firm. In nonprofit organizations or public defenders, internships are not paid. A mix of full and part-time internships are available.

Hiring Process and Timelines
The legal sector hires on a rolling basis, although entry-level state and federal government positions are rare, and so candidates should regularly check relevant career sites such as USA jobs. The process can be very competitive. For applications to legal roles, be prepared to discuss your motivation for applying, what you are looking for and to articulate your skills and values.

SAMPLE JOB TITLES

Not requiring a J.D.:
- Paralegal
- Legal Assistant
- Legal Secretary
- Accredited Immigration Representative

Requiring Graduate Degree and passing State Bar Exam:
- Attorney
- Solicitor (in South Carolina)
- Law Clerk (in a firm or to a state/federal judge)
- Judge
- Hearing Officer

UMD CAMPUS RESOURCES
- Pre-Law Advising Office (within Letters & Sciences)
- Phi Alpha Delta Pre-Law Fraternity

WHERE ARE UMD ALUMS?

GEORGETOWN LAW

DUKE LAW

NASA

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL

WASHINGTON COLLEGE OF LAW

ub

Penn Law

University of Pennsylvania Law School

SCHOOL OF LAW