

Common Course Outline
PALG 104
Law Office Practices/Legal Ethics
4 Semester hours

The Community College of Baltimore County

Description

PALG 104 – 4 credits – Law Office Practices/Legal Ethics provides an understanding of the role of the paralegal in the American legal system. This course focuses on law office organization and management, computerized timekeeping, and file management systems. In addition, students learn communication skills and extensively explore pertinent professional codes.

Prerequisites: RDNG 052 or ESOL 054, and ENGL 052 or ESOL 052

Overall Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. identify traditional and alternative law office organization structures;
2. examine marketing and various marketing options that are available;
3. analyze communication factors that will promote effective client relationships;
4. distinguish between trust and escrow accounts and successfully complete a trust account exercise;
5. explain how files and in-house law libraries are managed;
6. distinguish between usable and rentable office space;
7. analyze the history of the paralegal in the delivery of legal services and identify issues affecting the future role of the paralegals;
8. assess the importance of specific ethical rules and their affect on the interests of clients;
9. compare situations which would constitute the unauthorized practice of law, the outcomes to the paralegal, the attorney, and the client, and determine ways to prevent those situations from occurring;
10. identify the boundaries of diligent or zealous representation of clients;
11. analyze ethical problems that arise in the work environment involving confidentiality;
12. examine fee splitting and related concepts, billing practices (especially for paralegal time and “padding” billable hours, commingling funds, and pro bono work);
13. analyze how the attorney rules on advertising and solicitation affect paralegals’ advertising practices;
14. assess options available to paralegals if they discover ethical misconduct in a fellow legal professional; and
15. compare behaviors that constitute professional conduct in the law office.

Major Topics

- I. History of the Paralegal Profession
- II. Paralegal Associations
- III. Law Office Organization
- IV. Law Office Marketing
- V. Management Techniques
- VI. Client Communication
- VII. Trust Accounts
- VIII. Filing Systems
- IX. Law Libraries
- X. Billing Practices
- XI. Advertising and Solicitation
- XII. Timekeeping
- XIII. Case Management Programs
- XIV. Ethics
- XV. Rules of Professional Conduct
- XVI. Attorney Grievance Commission

Course Requirements

Grading procedures will be determined by the individual faculty member and specific assignments and procedures for evaluating student performance will be described in the individual class syllabus, but will include the following:

Grading/exams: A minimum of one exam: a mid-term and/or a final (the final does not have to be cumulative) AND one major written project combining objective and analytical/critical thinking components such as developing a fictional law office, including marketing plans, staffing plans, and administrative plans, or a memorandum comparing and contrasting the Maryland Rules of Professional Conduct and the ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct.

Writing: A minimum of two written assignments to allow for both objective and analytical review of primary legal sources, such as case briefs or a written comparison/analysis competing timekeeping or case management systems.

Other Course Information

This course is a Paralegal Studies required course for degree and certificate students. It is taught in the classroom using a variety of instructional techniques, which are intended to meet the varied learning styles of our diverse population.