



Arizona Legal Paraprofessional 2025 Annual Report

ARIZONA ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS -
CERTIFICATION AND LICENSING DIVISION

1501 W WASHINGTON STREET, SUITE 104, PHOENIX, AZ
85007 | <https://www.azcourts.gov/cld/Legal-Paraprofessional>

Board Membership as of December 31, 2025

Don Bivens, Chair, Attorney Member

Paul Friedman, Vice Chair, Additional Member

Hon. Michael Herrod, Judge Member

Melissa Moy, Certified Legal Document Preparer Member

Ryan Coffelt, Public Member

Shauntia White, Public Member

Hon. Valerie Wyant, Clerk of the Superior Court Member

Donna Owen, Legal Paraprofessional Member

Chelsea Woodworth, Legal Paraprofessional Member

Billie Tarascio, Additional Member

[Vacant], Certified Legal Document Preparer Member

Court Staff Supporting Legal Paraprofessionals:

Abigail Raddatz, Division Director

Mark McCall, Legal Service Innovations Manager

Ainslee Marcus, Investigator

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Board Update

The Board met seven times in 2025 to conduct regular business. Don Bivens continued as Chair and attorney Paul Friedman remained as Vice Chair. The Board took action on multiple items including:

- Review and resolution of 10 Legal Document Preparer complaints
- Review and approval of 31 Legal Paraprofessional applications
- Review and approval of 59 Legal Document Preparer new applications
- Review and approval of 302 Legal Document Preparer renewals
- Accepted 7 voluntary surrenders of Legal Document Preparer licenses
- Accepted 3 inactive status requests from Legal Paraprofessionals
- Review and approval of 12 Legal Paraprofessional applicants to retake a practice area exam

In September, the Board voted in favor of updates to ACJA § 7-210 to support the addition of a probate law license for Legal Paraprofessionals and to expand the list of accepted Master of Law degrees. The Board further voted in favor of updates to §§ 7-202 through 7-211 to add a vendor imposed convenience fee of \$25 per exam for proctoring the Division's exams online.

Regulatory Updates

In March, § 7-211 was added to the Arizona Code of Judicial Administration. This codified the existing Community Justice Worker (CJW) model administrative orders and created two tiers of community justice workers: [Certified Community Legal Advocates](#) and [Authorized Community Justice Workers](#). Organizations participating in this project are certified by the Certification and Licensing Division (CLD). The Board will have authority to discipline or revoke CJW certification, pursuant to ACJA § 7-201.

The Division's Rule 39 petition to allow Legal Paraprofessional students in Arizona law schools to participate in clinicals alongside law students was rejected by the Supreme Court on procedural grounds. The petition was referred to a Rules Committee that is working to reform the rules process. The petition is expected to be revised and heard by the committee, then the Court in 2026.

In October, the Arizona Judicial Council approved revisions to §§ 7-202 through 7-211, adding a \$25 online exam proctoring fee. This fee is assessed by CLD's contracted exam vendor and now enables the Division to offer licensure exams in a secure online format.

Also in October, the Council approved three revisions to § 7-210 for Legal Paraprofessionals:

- Adding a Probate Law endorsement,
- Expanding the list of accepted Master of Law degrees from accredited law schools, and
- The ability to draft Orders of Protection in Family Law matters.

These changes were adopted by the Court and the certification exam for Probate is in development with a planned release of January 2026.

Outreach and Education

Division staff continued to be a resource to several states considering programs similar to Arizona's LP program. Each month staff join a Multi-jurisdictional Roundtable. On March 18, staff presented an update on Arizona's programs and participated in a question and answer session.

Other notable outreach activities included:

January

- Division staff hosted a table at Arizona State University's Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law and networked with 1L students regarding internship opportunities at the courts.
- Division staff presented data and statistics from the 2024 program survey to the Arizona Department of Economic Security Division of Aging and Adult Services Legal Assistance Task Force.

February

- Division staff joined Chief Justice Ann A. Scott Timmer, incoming Justice Maria Elena Cruz, and Judge Brian Furuya to present LP program information, answer questions, and provide a networking opportunity to current and prospective LPs and the Legal Paraprofessionals Summit, hosted at the University of Arizona's James E. Rogers College of Law. Chief Justice Timmer provided program updates and history. Justice Cruz and Judge Furuya presented a session on courtroom decorum.
- Division staff presented program statistics and answered questions at the West Valley Bar Association monthly meeting.

April

- Legal Paraprofessional data was the cover story in [*Arizona Attorney Magazine*](#).
- Division staff presented data and statistics from the 2024 program survey at the National Federation of Paralegal Associations conference.
- Division staff presented data and other information regarding LPs, Alternative Business Structures, and the Arizona Lawyer Apprentice Program at the Arizona Courts Association conference.

June

- Division staff met to discuss the survey development process of the 2024 "Assessing Arizona's Legal Paraprofessionals" survey with the State Bar of Colorado's Education Committee.
- Division staff met Frontline Justice to discuss Arizona's continued efforts to increase access to justice.
- "Scopes and Benefits of Arizona's Legal Paraprofessionals" was presented by Division staff and LPs Candace Thude and Nitasha Miller at the State Bar of Arizona Convention.
- "Reducing Arizona's Legal Deserts" was presented by Division staff and Judge Ronda Fisk, Maricopa County Superior Court, Family Division at the Arizona Judicial Conference.

August - October

- Mark McCall met with representatives of the Indiana Supreme Court to assist in developing non-lawyer legal professional and community justice worker programs in Indiana. These conversations were later joined by Arizona Court of Appeals Judge Samuel Thumma.

November

- Division staff were joined by LPs Staci Maret, Joel Wresh, and Jason Halper in a presentation to a paralegal class at Villanova University.
- Mark McCall and Antonio Coronado (Innovation for Justice) presented to the Arizona Commission on Access to Justice.
- Mark McCall and Abigail Raddatz participated in a conversation regarding Allied Legal Professionals at a national convening called by the Institute for Advancement of the American Legal System (IAALS).

Community Justice Workers in Arizona

The community-justice worker movement gained traction nationwide in 2025. Originally considered “pilot programs” when recommended by the [Task Force on the Delivery of Legal Services](#) in 2019, Arizona’s programs were codified as ACJA § 7-211 in March 2025.

Authorized Community Justice Workers

Authorized Community Justice Workers (ACJWs) are nonlawyer legal service providers who assist individuals under the supervision of an attorney at an approved legal services organization. ACJWs, after receiving training by the legal service organization and certified by CLD, may provide free legal assistance related to housing, public benefits, consumer issues, debt relief, unemployment law, and domestic violence. The current approved legal service organizations in Arizona are Community Legal Services (CLS), DNA People’s Services (DNA), and Southern Arizona Legal Aid (SALA).

In 2025, CLS created and recorded eleven training modules on unemployment insurance and debt relief. These modules include pre-assessments, practice exercises, and final assessment quizzes. Additionally, CLS assisted Frontline Justice in creating a statewide training module for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits in Arizona.

At the end of 2025, at least fifteen staff members with CLS and DNA are beginning the training modules for ACJW certification.

Moving forward, the three legal service organization programs plan to have statewide cohorts trained together and then supervised by each program. A goal is to complete staff training in February 2026 then open to public volunteers in March and every six months thereafter.

Certified Community Legal Advocates

Certified Community Legal Advocates (CCLA) are nonlawyer legal service providers who assist individuals under the mentorship of an attorney at an approved non-profit community-based organization. CCLAs, after receiving training by [Innovation for Justice](#) and passing a certification exam administered by CLD, may provide free legal assistance related to housing and domestic violence. There are currently twenty-six approved community organizations supporting twenty-nine advocates across Arizona. Ten of those organizations and sixteen of the advocates were added in 2025.

Organization	Year Approved	Legal Support	Number of Advocates
A New Leaf	2024	Housing	1
Arizona Association of Manufactured Home Owners	2025	Housing	1
Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	2025	Domestic Violence	0
Arizona Justice Center	2024	Housing and Domestic Violence	1
AZCEND	2024	Housing	1
Bloom365	2025	Domestic Violence	0
CARE 7	2024	Domestic Violence	1
Chicanos Por La Causa	2024	Housing and Domestic Violence	3
Child and Family Resources, Inc.	2024	Housing	0

Chrysalis	2025	Domestic Violence	2
City of Tucson: Community, Health, Wellness, and Safety	2024	Housing	0
Emerge (Center Against Domestic Abuse)	2020	Domestic Violence	3
Gervonni Cares, LLC	2024	Housing	2
International Rescue Committee	2024	Domestic Violence	1
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Phoenix Metro	2025	Housing	1
Pima County Community Workforce Development	2024	Housing	2
Poder Casas Moviles	2024	Housing	2
Primavera Foundation	2024	Housing	1
Santa Cruz County Justice Project	2025	Housing and Domestic Violence	0
Southwest Fair Housing Council	2024	Housing	1
Tempe Community Action Agency	2024	Housing	2
The Society of St. Vincent de Paul	2025	Housing	0

From the annual reports received by January 15, 2026 as required in § 7-211, community-based organizations reported:

- 459 clients served
- 700+ hours of free legal assistance provided
- 108 Evictions prevented
- Trainings provided on tenants rights for families and to court staff
- A facilitated town hall on Race and Eviction
- \$62,000 provided in emergency housing and utility grants
- Connected with Attorney General Kris Mayes to address utility overbilling in Tucson manufactured home parks.

Arizona CCLAs also serve clients in Gila, LaPaz, Maricopa, Mohave, Pima, Pinal, and Yavapai Counties. A program to serve Santa Cruz County was launched at the end of 2025 and will begin in 2026.

Legal Paraprofessionals in Arizona

Arizona Supreme Court Strategic Plan

The Supreme 2024-2029 Strategic Agenda, *...and Justice for all*, lists several items specifically for the Legal Paraprofessional program to help achieve the Agenda's five overall goals:

- Along with the Arizona Commission on Access to Justice, expand representation services to self-represented litigants in the areas of family law, probate, housing, and consumer law (1.2A);
- Authorize LPs to assist in the preparation of documents for filing with appellate courts (1.4A);
- Authorize services for LPs in probate and housing (1.4C);
- Complete the requirements standards for LPs to prepare Qualified Domestic Relations Orders (1.4C);
- Improve the quality of representation in juvenile dependency cases (3.2A);
- Extend educational outreach (5.3C); and
- Establish an employee assistance program for judges, lawyers, LPs, and law students (5.4A).

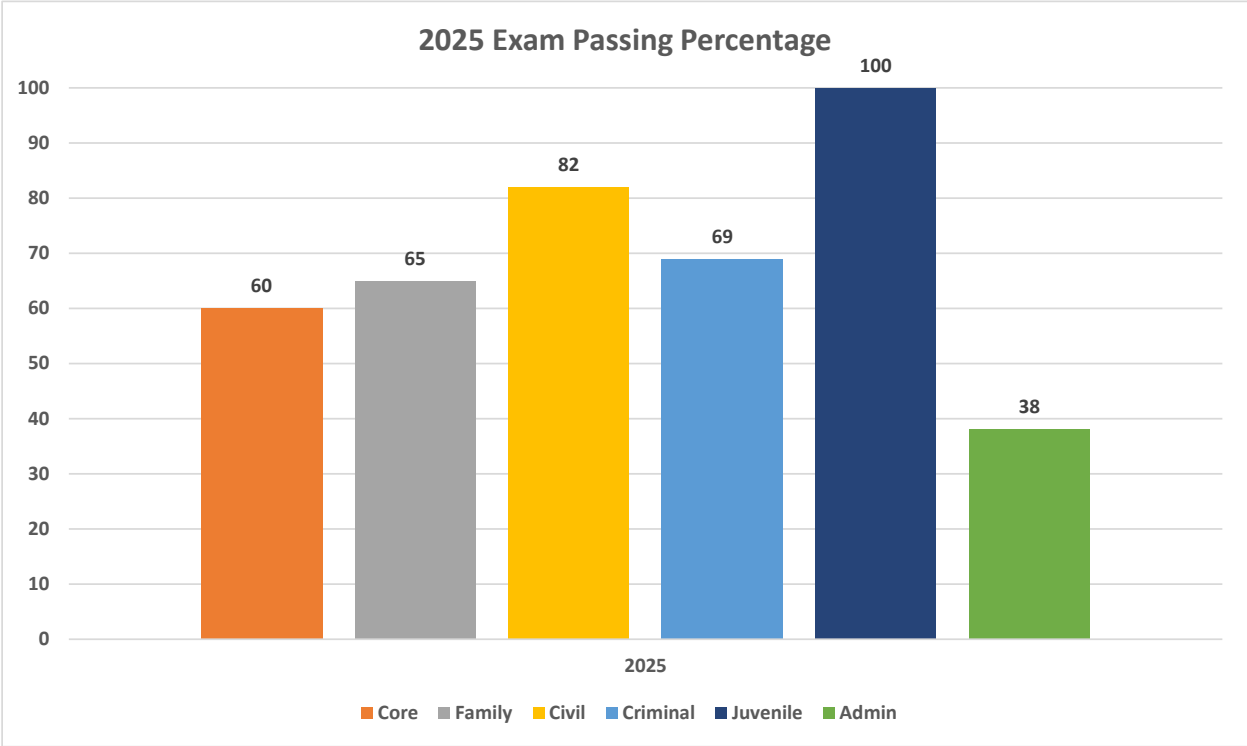
In 2025, CLD partially completed 1.4C with the addition of a sixth licensure practice area in Probate Law. Utilizing the experience of a team of probate attorneys as subject matter experts, CLD contracted with Ergometrics to develop the licensure exam. The exam published at the end of January 2026 and the Division has received a large number of inquiries expressing interest in this practice area.

Work progressed through 2025 on the addition of Qualified Domestic Relation Orders (QDRO). However, the subject matter experts brought together to discuss this plan were not able

to finalize the scope of practice for LPs by the deadline for submitting to the October Arizona Judicial Council meeting. CLD will reform this committee in 2026 to continue the work.

Practice Area Examinations

	Core	Family	Civil	Criminal	Admin	Juvenile
2025 Attempts	76	49	26	19	17	2
2025 Passing Overall	38	22	18	9	3	2
Attempts 2021-2025 Total	304	241	90	49	24	3
Passing 2021-2025 Overall	177	103	34	21	3	3
Average Passing Score	77.50	77.07	75.63	77.11	71.67	78.75



In October, CLD began to offer all licensure exams online through a contracted vendor, MonitorEDU. An in-person option is still available. By the end of 2025, eight LPs and seven CCLAs completed their exams in this new format. Moving to 2026, there are twenty LPs in the online exam queue. One question arose regarding exam integrity for this method. The passing rate for those completing the exam in-person for October through December is 56%, while the online passing rate is 55%.

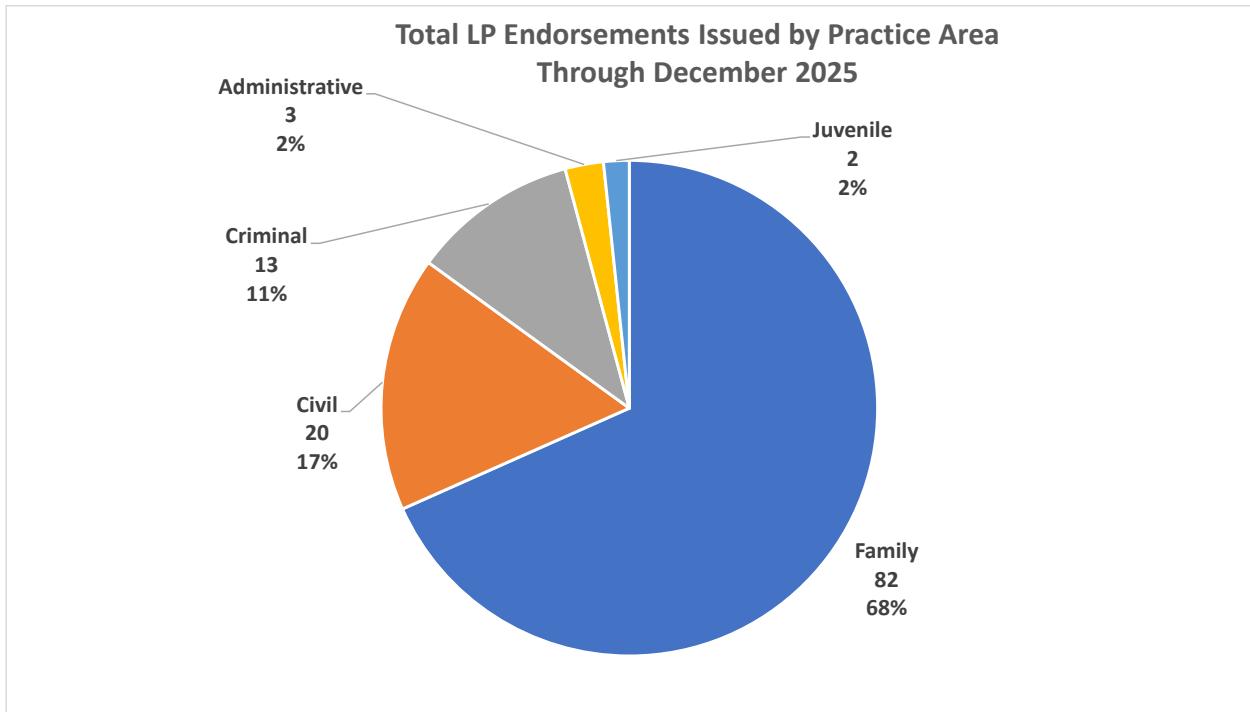
Applications and Licenses

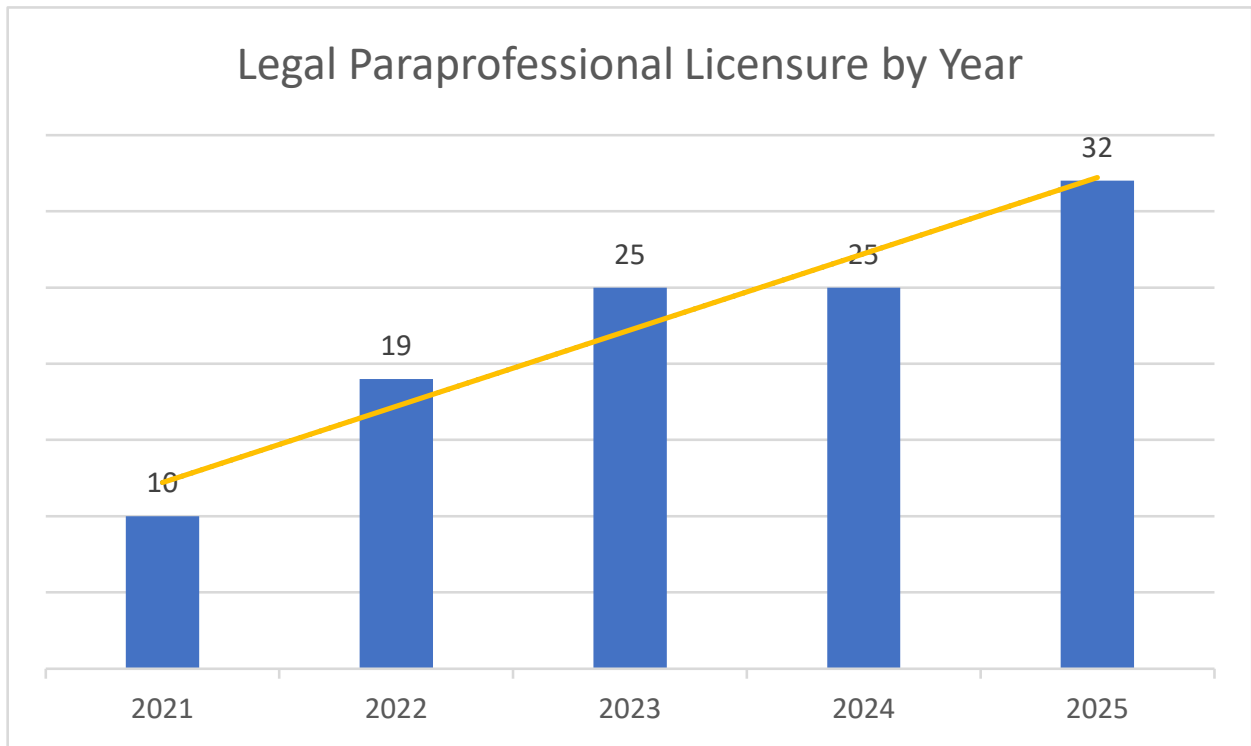
In 2025, the Division received thirty-seven initial applications from candidates who successfully passed both the core and one or more subject matter examinations. The Board reviewed and approved thirty-one applications which included two of the applications carried over from 2024. The remaining 2025 applications were submitted too late for approval at the

November Board meeting and will carry over to 2026. Some applicants obtained licensure in more than one practice area. Three LPs requested and were approved for inactive status.

The thirty-one licenses were approved by the Board in the following practice areas for 2025: 17 in family law, 9 in civil law, 3 in criminal law, 3 in administrative, and 2 in juvenile dependency law. Legal paraprofessionals may be licensed in multiple practice areas.

As of December 31, 2025, 111 Legal Paraprofessional licenses have been issued with 121 practice areas endorsements. The State Bar of Arizona lists 104 active Legal Paraprofessionals.





Complaints or Discipline

The State Bar of Arizona reported nine allegations against Legal Paraprofessionals in 2025. The set of allegations referenced Ethics Rules 1.1 (Competence), 1.3 (Diligence), 1.4 (Communication), 1.5 (Fees), 3.1 (Meritorious Claims and Contentions), 3.3 (Candor Toward the Tribunal), 3.4 (Fairness to Opposing Party and Counsel), 4.4 (Respect for Rights of Others), 8.1 (Conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice), 8.4 (Misconduct), and Rule 41 (Avoid engaging in unprofessional conduct). Four allegations were dismissed, one was closed after the request for information, one is in Diversion, and one is pending.

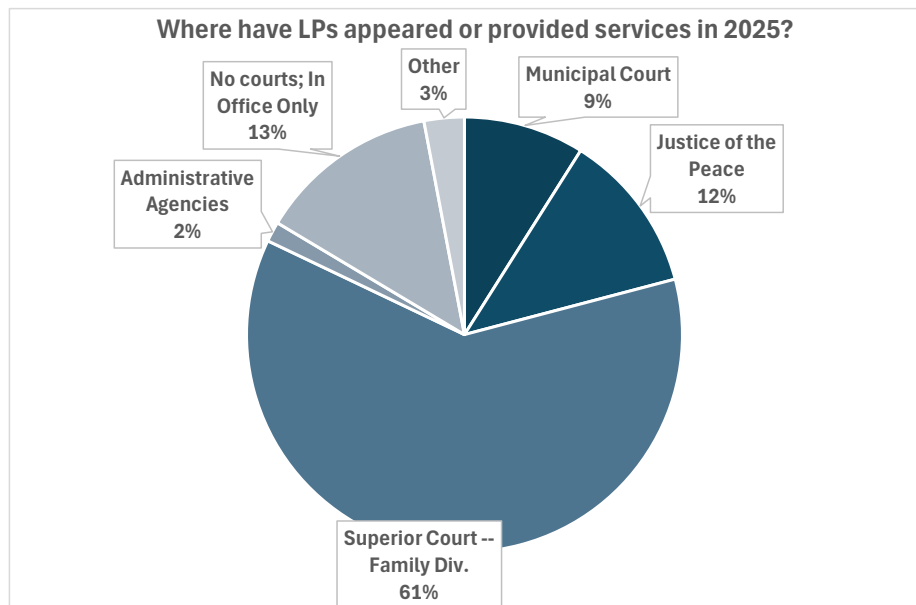
No complaints were filed or discipline imposed against a Legal Paraprofessional by the State Bar in 2025.

Legal Paraprofessionals in Practice: 2025

In early December, active LPs were invited to complete a survey of their practice and client demographics. Sixty-three LPs responded (61%). The survey contained 24 questions which included one open ended opportunity to provide feedback on the program.

Twenty-three percent of LPs indicated they are able to serve all fifteen counties in Arizona. The remaining 77% may have selected multiple counties but mainly serve Maricopa (26%), Pima (15%), Pinal (13%), Yavapai (10%), Coconino (7%), Cochise (6%) Yuma (5%), and the remaining 8 counties at 3% or less. However, clients served are primarily in the three main population centers of Maricopa (67%), Pima (16%), and Yavapai (10%). Clearly more work is needed to provide legal representation to the more rural areas of Arizona.

For the LPs that indicating appearing before Administrative boards or hearings, we asked which ones they have appeared at to gain an understanding of the agencies that are most supportive of the program. The response was varied but included Arizona Departments of



Health Services, Developmental Disabilities, Economic Security, and Education, the Boards of Cosmetology, Massage Therapy, and Fingerprinting, the Registrar of Contractors, and Arizona Public Service.

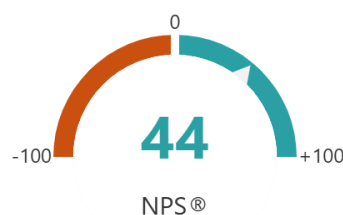
The 63 responding LPs reported a total number of 2087 clients served in 2025. This is an average of 36 per LP. Of those clients, 55% would be considered low to moderate income (less than 80% of the area median income as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban

Development) and 54% would have been self-represented litigants without the Legal Paraprofessional assistance.

Most cases handled by LPs (60%) are resolved through settlement with approximately 11% going to trial.

With the national debate regarding a uniform professional name for legal service providers with similar scopes of practice as Arizona's Legal Paraprofessionals, 81% favor calling themselves Legal Practitioner, 13% favor no change to their professional title, and the remaining 6% had other suggestions.

Finally, the LPs responding to the survey were asked to provide a Net Promoter score rating the overall effectiveness of the Legal Paraprofessional licensure. With 35 Promoters, 15 Passives, and 9 Detractors, the overall score received was 44.



Comments from Legal Paraprofessionals

There are a LOT of very overpriced LPs, that's for sure. Defeating the original purpose of the license, I believe. Maybe make the fees and requirements lighter and LPs can be satisfied charging their potential clients less.

A lot more offerings for LPs and a lot more recognition in the industry.

While I have only received my license in May of 2025, the program has been extremely helpful to myself and promoting affordable services to the public.

I think that the program needs to be better explained to both Judges and Attorneys. I still get called a Paralegal in Court.

The program is being more widely known and accepted.

I love the work that I do. I will never have a lot of money because I help people who don't have money. The sheer joy I see on their face when they realize that they are going to get legal help even though they are poor is such an incredible feeling. They deserve it, they feel important, and they are getting the access to justice they deserve. It is so worth it. Thank you Arizona for allowing me to serve these people through this program.

I believe the Legal Paraprofessional program is headed in the right direction. Many more communities in Arizona seem to be educated on what Legal Paraprofessionals are

doing for clients and in the court system. Thank you for all of your efforts in assisting with making this happen!!

I think it is a great program and I appreciate the Supreme Court, the board. CLD staff working so hard to implement and establish the program. CLD staff has done a great job and are very professional. I also appreciate CLD staff's efforts to establish new endorsement areas for LPs, such as the new probate LP license.

My license is current but I have not worked as an LP at all. The program only seems to work for those with prior paralegal experience. I have been unable to find work or make any meaningful connections as someone who came through the education pathway. I also have experienced significant gatekeeping by other LPs who started as paralegals, which is hugely disappointing. Not enough is being done to offer entry-level training or career development to those who are licensed through education, which is a missed opportunity. I can't imagine the program being on the right path in these circumstances. I hope it can be turned around because I believe in the mission, but I think a paradigm shift needs to occur with the AOC, attorneys, firms, and experienced LPs.

I was part of the first 10 licensed, approved by the Board in November 2021. Much has been done to steer the program in the right direction, but there is always room for improvement.

I don't know what all the future plans are but I do like the addition of the probate LP. Improving every day!

I am excited and proud to be a part of the program and its future development. I have experienced some hurdles along the way and am still figuring out just what the future may hold, but I look forward to being a part of its evolution and development.

Summary

The LP program further expanded its practice areas with probate law in 2025 and will continue to expand in 2026 with the potential addition of QDROs and other legal service opportunities outlined in the Chief Justice's Strategic Agenda. CLD will continue to identify educational opportunities and outreach activities including presenting at state and national conferences.

In calendar year 2026, the LP program will focus on finalizing the probate exam and study guide, developing continuing education opportunities, supporting applicants through an improved application portal and the online exam process, and continuing to assist the regulatory oversight of the community-based justice worker models. Most importantly,

through the work of Arizona's Legal Paraprofessionals and Community-based Justice Workers, the Certification & Licensing Division will continue to promote greater Access to Justice across the state.