

ASSESSING ARIZONA'S LEGAL
PARAPROFESSIONALS:

2024 PROGRAM SURVEY

Narrative Summary



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Introduction

On August 27, 2020, by unanimous vote, the Arizona Supreme Court adopted several changes to the regulation of the practice of law. These changes, recommended by the [2019 Task Force on the Delivery of Legal Services](#), were adopted as additions to the Arizona Code of Judicial Administration (ACJA) by the Arizona Judicial Council (AJC) on October 22, 2020. One of the ten recommendations of the Task Force adopted by the Supreme Court and the AJC was the development of a licensed Legal Paraprofessional program. These licensed, non-attorney, legal-practitioners would be able to provide legal services as defined in the ACJA in four practice areas: Civil Law, Family Law, Criminal Law, and Administrative Law. Juvenile Dependency Law was added to the list of practice areas in 2024.

Starting in 2021, the Administrative Office of the Courts' (AOC) Certification and Licensing Division issued ten Legal licenses. The program has grown incrementally and, as

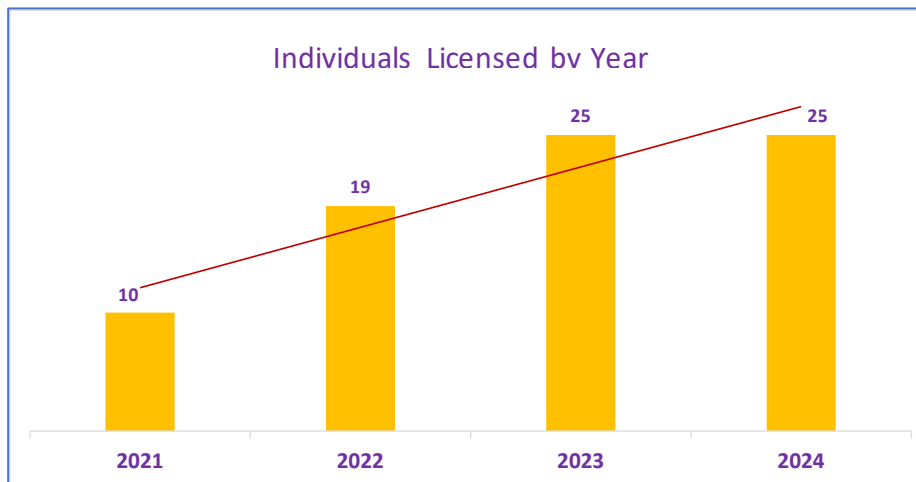


Figure 1 – Individuals Licensed by Year

of this publication, has issued 79 licenses.¹ LPs can be licensed in more than one practice area.

¹ Administrative Office of the Courts. (2025). (rep.). *Board of Nonlawyer Legal Service Professionals 2024 Annual Report to the Arizona Supreme Court* (p. 10). Phoenix, AZ.

The Task Force further recommended the development of methods for measuring the “appropriateness, effectiveness, and sustainability” of the LP program.² To date, no process has been implemented to gather data on these three measurements. In late 2024, building on questions and formats from other court offices,

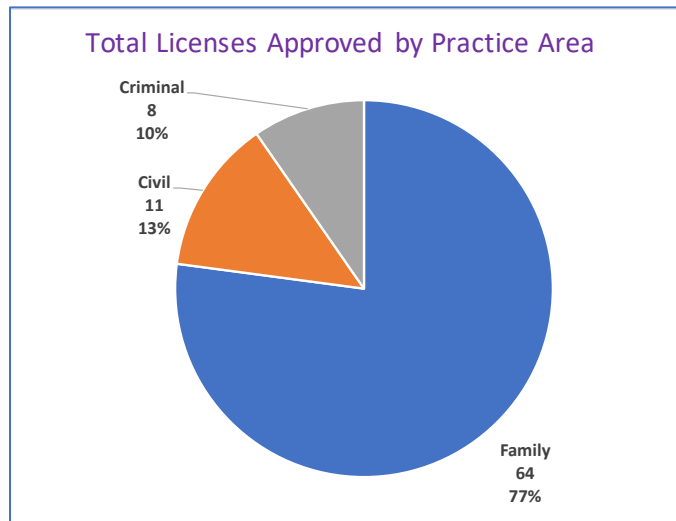


Figure 2 – Total Licenses Approved by Practice Area (as of December 2024)

including Minnesota and Ontario, Canada, the AOC’s Certification and Licensing Division (CLD) conducted the survey that resulted in this report.

A full version of this report is available that includes Appendices reflecting the survey questions and responses.

Methods

CLD staff determined it was important to gather qualitative and quantitative data regarding the program and how well it is contributing to the overarching goal of improving access to justice. The process started with an internal discussion of what was known and unknown. While CLD heard anecdotally from judicial officers, LPs, or Arizona’s law schools on how the program was working, it was quickly clear that some of the many unknowns included:

² Arizona Supreme Court. (2019). (rep). *Task Force on the Delivery of Legal Services: Report and Recommendations*. Phoenix, AZ.

- client demographics,
- the locations and types of LP practices across the state,
- costs and fees associated with LP services,
- the types of cases being represented and how they were resolved,
- the levels of courts where cases were heard, and
- the overall impressions of LPs, attorneys, clients, and judicial officers.

Similar concerns have been heard in other states. Angie Arkin, an attorney who helped develop Colorado’s Licensed Legal Paraprofessional (LLP) program says the overall reception has been positive but,

It’s like when nurse practitioners started and when physician assistants started, no one really knew what they were. It’s a new licensure, a new role. And not only is the public largely unaware of their existence, but judges, lawyers and LLPs themselves are trying to figure out and navigate the meaning of the rules and what the space is that the LLPs can practice in.³

For Arizona’s data collection, three surveys were developed, one each for LPs, judicial officers, and attorneys. A fourth survey was developed for clients along with a letter from CLD explaining the purpose of the survey and that no personally identifiable or case information would be gathered. LPs were asked to send the survey link via email to their clients. To the extent names were included in the comments, those names were redacted from the survey responses, published separately. Results were compiled directly via Microsoft Forms at CLD.

³ Bradbury, S. (2024, December 1). Non-attorneys get their day in family court to help clients. *The Denver Post*. Retrieved December 3, 2024, from <https://www.denverpost.com/2024/12/03/colorado-licensed-legal-paraprofessionals-llp-family-law/>.

Client Information

The Client survey consisted of seventeen questions, which included seven optional demographics question. Thirty-four clients responded. It is not known how many received the initial survey invitation or how many clients have been represented by a LP since 2021.

Of the thirty-four who responded, more than 75% were white females aged 25-54.⁴ Most (81%) were employed full time and 50% reported at least some college or a bachelor's degree. The highest response for annual income was \$39,000-\$59,000 (28%) with the next highest response of 22% preferring not to say. As expected, most respondents reside in Maricopa County (53%) with Yavapai, Pima, Mohave, and Santa Cruz Counties, respectively, completing the list.

Attorney Information

CLD asked the State Bar of Arizona, the Maricopa County Bar Association, and the Pima County Bar Association to assist with distributing a survey link to their membership. CLD does not have access to a list of active licensed attorneys in Arizona but these organizations published weekly e-newsletters and readily agreed to share the link several times. A link to the survey was also posted on the CLD website.

The Attorney survey consisted of twelve questions, which included one net promoter score and various questions regarding their observations and impressions of the program. Thirty-eight attorneys responded.

Forty-four percent of respondents indicated they were aware of the program either by reading or hearing about it. Only 15% indicated serving as opposing counsel on a case and 9% said they worked with a LP in their law firm. This shows the legal community is getting

⁴ Ages 25-34=28%, 35-44=22%, and 45-54 = 38% of client responses

information on the program. Additionally, as the LP data will show, most cases involving a LP are settled before trial and this supports the low number of respondents who have interacted with a LP in court. However, as the survey was open to all attorneys and most LPs indicate they work within a law firm, it is not surprising that few attorneys indicated working with the proportionally small number of LPs.

As with the client responses, Maricopa, Pima, and Pinal counties demonstrated the highest attorney response rate with a combined 68%. The remaining were evenly distributed across the state with no representation from Graham, Greenlee, and La Paz counties. Arizona’s vast geography helps illustrate the concern about its legal deserts. Coconino County is the second

largest county in the United States by land area with Maricopa County ranking fourth largest by population. The state’s population centers, and hence the majority of its attorney and LP representation, are located in Maricopa and Pima counties, with the remainder of the state generally sparsely populated.

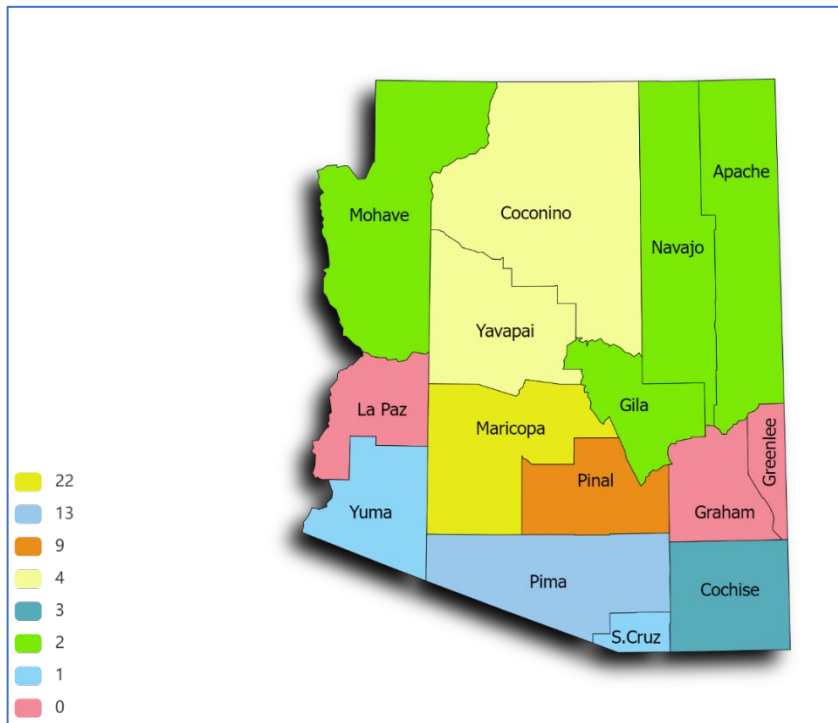


Figure 3 -- Attorney Response Rate Percentage by County

The attorneys that responded interacted with LPs most often in dissolution cases (25%), followed by child support (19%), and other family law cases (16%). 5% listed “Other” which included assisting with the completion or submission of paperwork.

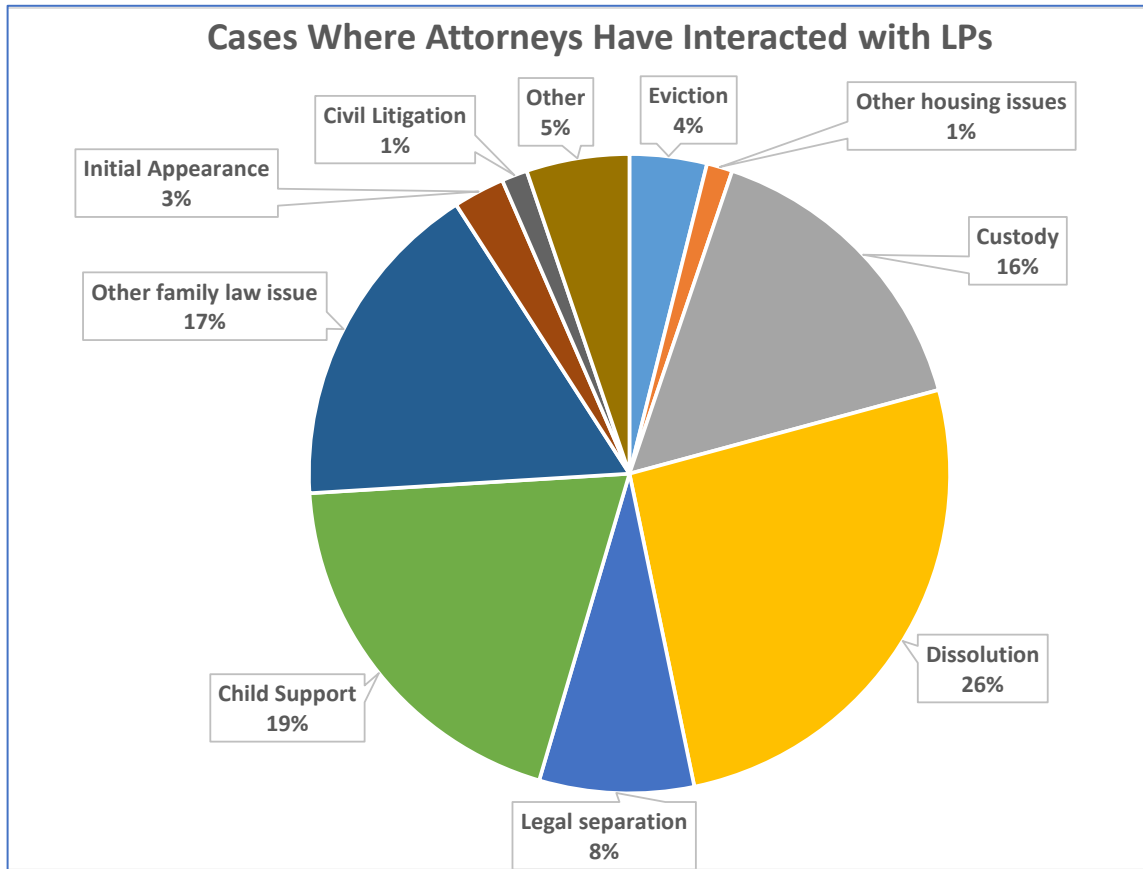


Figure 4 -- Cases Where Attorneys Have Interacted With LPs

Judicial Officer Information

CLD invited 475 judges, justices of the peace, and city magistrates to complete the judicial officer survey. A link to the survey was also posted on the CLD website. CLD received 180 responses; a rate of 38%. Most judges (69%) were from superior courts, 21% responded from

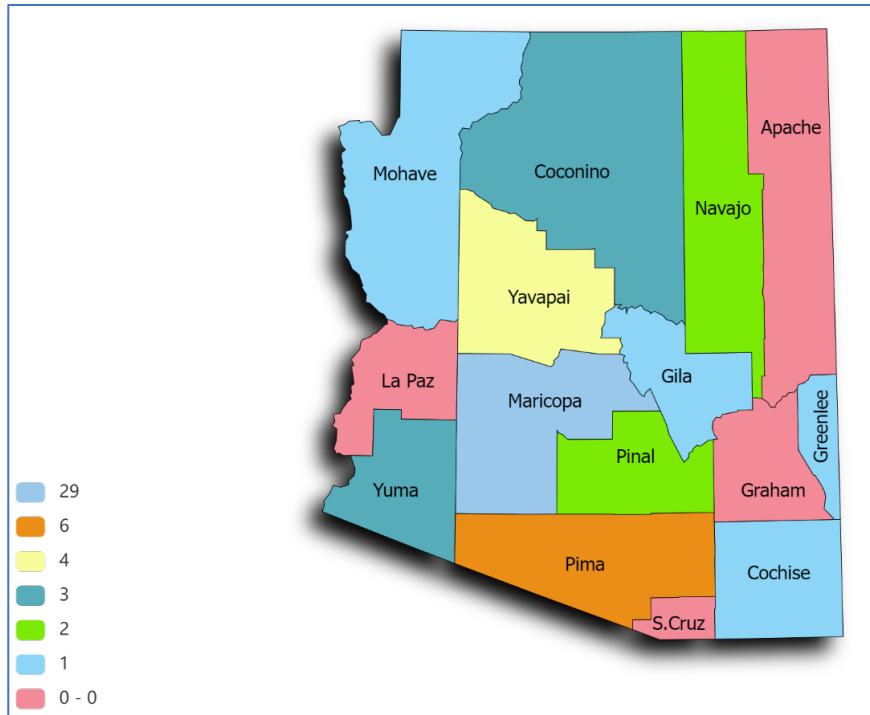


Figure 5 -- Judicial Officer Response Rate Percentage by County

municipal courts, and the remaining 10% represented limited jurisdiction or justice of the peace courts. Maricopa County judges represented the most responses (55%), and no responses were received from Apache, Graham, La Paz, or Santa Cruz counties.

The Judicial Officer survey consisted of thirteen questions, which included one net promoter score and various questions regarding their observations and impressions of the program.

Twenty-three percent of respondents indicated seeing a LP appear before them for a case. This

represents 9% of all possible judicial officers in the state.

This low number is also expected as LPs

indicated on their survey that over

70% of their cases settle.

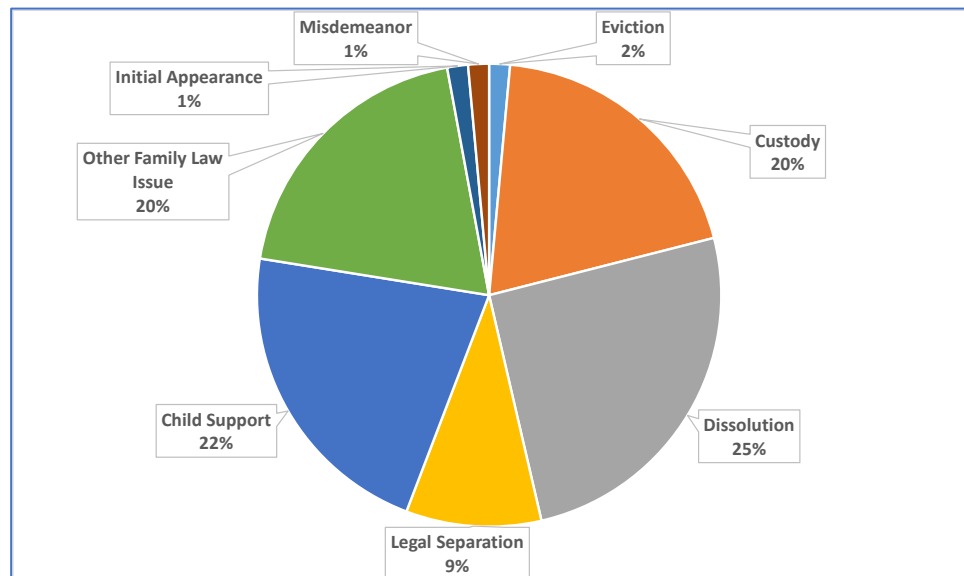


Figure 6 -- LP Represented Cases in Arizona Courts

Like the attorney responses, judges are seeing LPs mostly handle dissolution cases (25%), followed by child support (22%), and other family law cases (20%).

Legal Paraprofessional Information

When the survey was created in October 2024, there were 72 licensed Legal Paraprofessionals. After LPs are approved for licensure, the State Bar of Arizona issues license numbers and monitors LPs' licensure and discipline status. As of December 11, 2024, there were 79 licensed LPs.

CLD emailed a survey link to the 66 then-active LPs in October and received 47 responses (71%). A link to the survey was also posted on the CLD website.

The LP survey consisted of 53 questions, which included one net promoter score and various questions regarding their client demographics, their caseload, rates and fees charged,

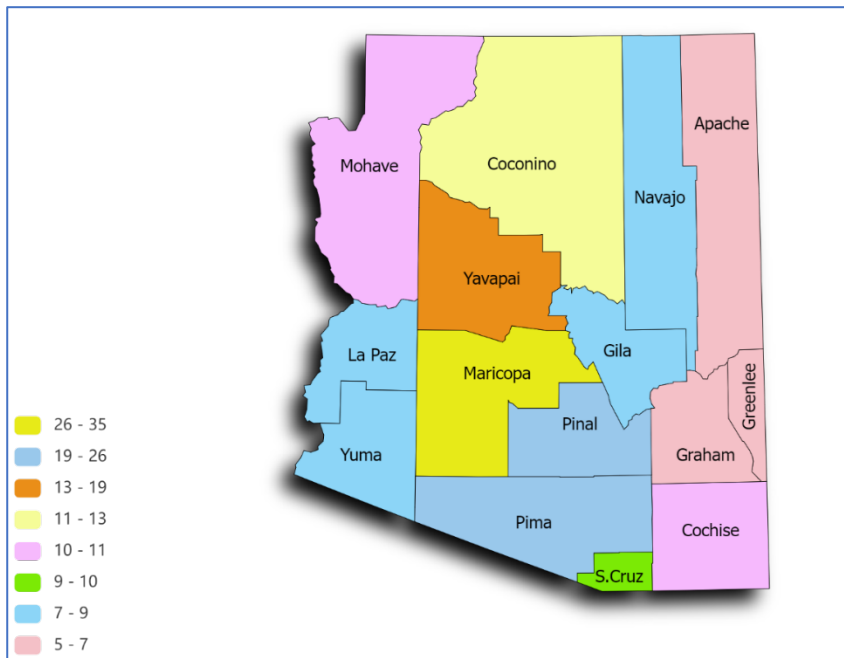


Figure 7 -- LP Availability by County

training opportunities and various observations and impressions of the program and the profession. LPs were asked questions regarding CLD's exam and application processes and about the Division's customer service and communication.

While their clients generally are located in the

main population centers of the Phoenix and Tucson metro areas, LPs indicate availability across the state and may be more accessible than private practice attorneys.

Legal Paraprofessionals in Practice: What Do We Know?

Experience, Education, and Knowledge of the Program

Arizona licenses its LPs through one of two tracks: Education or Experience. 68% were approved based on experience which requires the completion of seven years of full-time, substantive, law-related experience in each practice area, within the ten years prior to applying for licensure.⁵ Many LPs have prior experience as a paralegal or Legal Document Preparer.

	HS Only	Paralegal Certificate	Associate with Paralegal	Other Associate	Bachelor of Law	Other Bachelor	Master of Legal Studies	Other Masters	JD	EdD/ PhD
■ Arizona State University						1	4		1	
■ Everest College						1				
■ Lamson College			1							
■ Hamline School of Law									1	
■ Phoenix College			2							
■ Pima Community College		2								
■ Summit Law									1	
■ University of Arizona							4		1	1
■ Other	3	1	5	1		10		1		

Table 1 -- Degrees by Institution

For all LPs, fifty-six percent of all LPs attended either Arizona State University or the University of Arizona, 20% attended a community college in Arizona, and the remaining 24% have degrees from other institutions. The type of degree varies widely. An Associate's degree in

⁵ Arizona Code of Judicial Administration, [§§ 7-210\(E\)\(6\)\(f\) and 7-210\(E\)\(7\)](#)

combination with a Paralegal Certificate, and a Master of Legal Studies each individually represent 19%. Additionally, 31% have a Bachelor's degree that was not law-related.

LPs learned about the licensure in a variety of ways: 27% were referred by colleagues and 24% were referred by their employer. 18% saw the information on the AZ Courts website and 14% discovered the profession through their university or paralegal training. One LP said, "I managed my attorney's emails and saw an email come through about the possibility of the license."

Caseloads and Work Locations

When asked about their current work situation, 69% of LPs are part of law firms with 2-50 attorneys or other LPs. Twenty-two percent said they owned their own private practice, with the remainder serving in the Office of the Public Defender or another government agency. While not required, 77% of LPs carry liability or malpractice insurance between \$100,000 and \$3 million. For the majority of LPs, the insurance is carried by their firm (67%).

Clients are finding LPs in a variety of ways including referrals from attorneys (29%) or from other LPs (20%), and social media advertising (11%). Clients reported positive and continual communication with their LP, as 95% were in daily or at least weekly contact with them.

Most of the work provided by LPs is legal advice (30%), representation in court (27%), and document preparation (20%). Colorado's Subcommittee on Paraprofessionals and Legal Services suggested in 2021 that this level of work has a positive impact for clients:

Even basic legal advice and completion and filing of standard pleadings could be significantly helpful to litigants, court staff, judges, and even opposing counsel. Assistance in mediation also could help parties save time and legal costs.⁶

Access to Justice: Are LPs Greening the Desert?

Much has been written about the mounting issue of access to justice for many Americans. The concept of legal deserts, where there is reportedly one lawyer (or less) for every 1,000 residents, is receiving increased scrutiny. A 2017 study by the Legal Services Corporation indicated low income Americans received inadequate or no legal help for 86% of their civil legal problems.⁷ The American Bar Association ranks Arizona 49th on its quantity and distribution of attorneys.⁸ As a relative newcomer to the practice of law, LPs and other Allied Legal Professionals, as they are referred to collectively by organizations like the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System (IAALS), are often compared to Nurse Practitioners (NP) and Physician Assistants (PA) in the medical profession. Nurse Practitioners are highly trained medical professionals with limited scope of practice whose profession was created to fill in for a shortage of pediatric doctors and have since provided a low-cost, accessible alternative to seeing a physician for routine care. A report from the Josiah Macy, Jr Foundation says,

⁶ Paraprofessionals and Legal Services Subcommittee. (2021). (rep.). *Preliminary Report Outlining Proposed Components of Program for Licensed Legal Paraprofessionals*. Denver, CO: Colorado Supreme Court.

⁷ Legal Serv. Corp., *The Justice Gap: Measuring the Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Americans* 6 (2017).

⁸ American Bar Association. (2020). (issue brief). *Profile of the Legal Profession*. Retrieved January 3, 2025, from <https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/news/2020/07/potlp2020.pdf>.

Nurse practitioners have been providing primary care for over 45 years, and there is strong evidence that this care is cost effective, of high quality, and of great service in increasing access to care for vulnerable populations.⁹

Even though NPs, PAs, and other medical professionals are now the accepted norm in medical facilities across the nation providing greater access to care at lower cost, LPs are facing tougher scrutiny from the legal community and not everyone has fully accepted them. Objections included reference to LPs' hourly rates.

While it is true, according to the survey data that LPs charge on average \$225 an hour or more, it is also true that those rates are often set by the law firm employing the LP and that attorneys in many cases charge more than \$400 per hour. LPs note that many have years of subject matter expertise before licensure and are well educated with many having Masters degrees or higher. This report will later present the competence exam and application process designed to protect the public and ensure that LPs work within their scopes of practice.

One Superior Court Judge offered this positive comment,

- ❖ Opening up a path to representation for nonlawyers is making extremely quality representation available. Various persons with vast legal experience and understanding are now permitted to give the advice and appear in court after years of working in legal professions. Allowing nonlawyers to work within a legal arena they are qualified in is a huge benefit to the areas that are lacking in lawyers.

Arizona's LPs report serving a range of 1-190 clients each since becoming licensed. The average LP has represented at least 44 clients. This is an estimated 3,000 total clients since the program's inception. Approximately 48% of all clients would have been self-represented and 70%

⁹ Pohl, J. M., Hanson, C. M., & Newland, J. A. (2010). "Who Will Provide Primary Care and How Will They Be Trained?" (pp. 167-214). Durham, NC; Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation.

of all cases were resolved through settlement. This represents a significant benefit to LPs' clients and efficiencies for court calendars. This assessment is further supported by 58% of judges and 59% of attorneys agreeing that hearings with a LP take less time than hearings with self-represented litigants. Unfortunately, 65-67% of both groups also suggest LPs take longer in hearings than an attorney. Courtroom advocacy training may benefit LPs and is addressed later in this report.

Despite areas for improvement, 81% of clients indicate satisfaction with the resolution of their LP-handled case. The other 19% indicated their case was still progressing.

Costs Associated with Legal Services

One of the arguments presented is that LPs charge the same rate as attorneys and are therefore no assistance to low-income individuals and others without access to legal services. The data shows this may be both incorrect and contrary to public opinion.

In 2020, the Arizona Supreme Court surveyed the general public as the LP program was being designed. Sixty-two percent agreed “the costs of hiring a lawyer in Arizona are too high (and) we need to find ways to make legal assistance more affordable” and 58% believed “most people living in poverty and the majority of moderate-income individuals do not receive the legal help they need.”¹⁰ In the 2024 survey, more than 96% of LPs agreed the costs of hiring a lawyer are too high and that a majority of moderate-income individuals do not receive needed legal

¹⁰ Arizona Supreme Court, Task Force on the Delivery of Legal Services: *State of Arizona Public Opinion Survey* (2020). Phoenix, AZ.

assistance. These may be statistical reasons why LPs choose to get licensed. Clients were not asked these questions on this survey, an oversight to be corrected on future surveys,

Most LPs (74%) charge by the hour for their services. Thirteen percent charge a flat fee. The remaining 13% indicate providing pro bono services or that they work as part of a government agency or an indigent defense service. One LP said, “Most of my work in personal injury is contingency based.” The average hourly rate was \$239 and flat fees ranged from \$600 to \$3000, depending on the service provided. The average hourly rate for an Arizona attorney in 2023 was \$266, not including retainer or subscription fees.¹¹ While these fees seem comparable, LPs are licensed to practice in matters that may be resolved more quickly, resulting in fewer billable hours. According to Indeed.com, the average annual salary for an attorney in Arizona is \$107,869.¹² Most LPs (70%) indicated earning less than that, although six (14%) indicated earning more, and seven (16%) elected not to respond.

They survey indicated 94% of clients indicated being satisfied or very satisfied with the fees charged by their LP. Two clients specifically discussed fees in their comments:

The legal fees were expensive, and I [sic] today's world I don't know how anyone could get an attorney. I had to barrow [sic] money to obtain mine.

Overall, my experience with having a Legal Paraprofessional was exceptional and I felt I got more communication than I had with my prior attorney about the status of my case. Not only did she advocate for me and my children with the Court, but she handled issues with my spouse quickly with his attorney. The Legal Paraprofessional's hourly billing rate was lower than my attorney's rate and I definitely believe I got more for my money with her without going through my whole savings account.

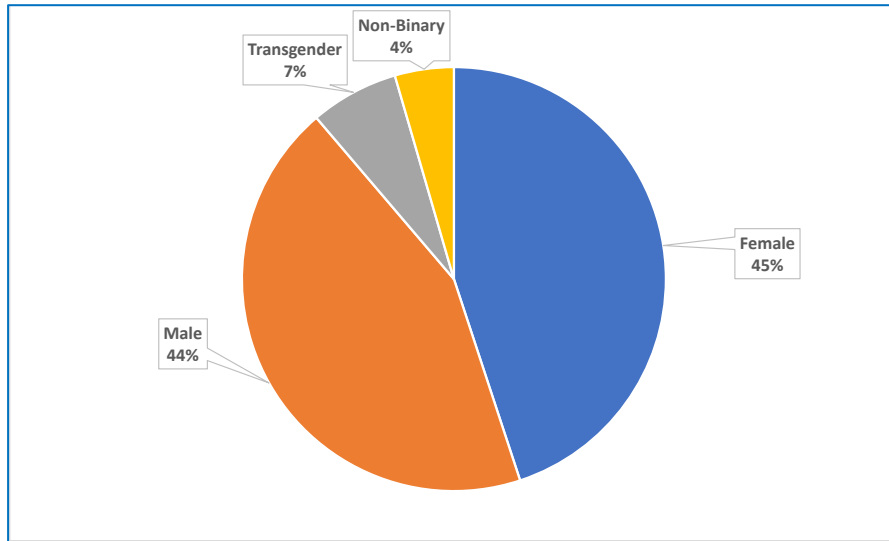
¹¹ *Average attorney fees by state 2024*. (n.d.). <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/average-attorney-fees-by-state>

¹² *Attorney salary in Arizona*. (2024, December 29). <https://www.indeed.com/career/attorney/salaries/AZ>

The financial benefits of LPs and their ability to provide access to legal services for low-income individuals are supported in reports across the country and Canada. In 2012, the Attorney General for Ontario, Canada, concluded a five-year study of their program, where they are known as Paralegals and widely regarded as the first in North America, that demonstrated 74% of clients surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with the services they received from a LP and 68% agreed the services received were of good value.¹³ A LP participating in Minnesota’s pilot program said in 2023, “This case was a perfect example of how the project works. I was able to save [the client] a significant amount of money, for a small fee.”¹⁴

Whom Do LPs Represent?

Arizona’s LP clients predominately reside in Maricopa and Pima Counties. In addition to



Maricopa and Pima Counties, LPs reside in Coconino, Cochise, Mohave, Yavapai, and Yuma Counties. LP services have been provided in the rural growing communities of

Figure 8 -- Client Identification by Gender

¹³ Law Society of Upper Canada. (2012). (rep.). *Report to the Attorney General of Ontario*. Toronto, Ontario, CN.

¹⁴ Minnesota Supreme Court Standing Committee for Legal Paraprofessional Pilot Project. (2024). *Final Report and Recommendations*. Saint Paul, MN.

Flagstaff, Prescott/Prescott Valley, and Yuma. There is still a coverage gap in coverage for Arizona's other eight more rural counties which largely include the Navajo, Hopi, and Apache

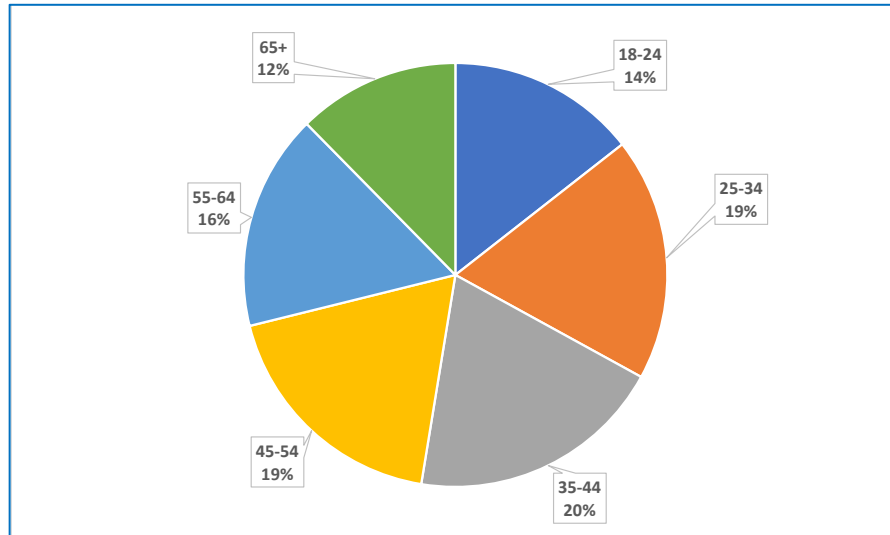


Figure 9 -- Client Identification by Age

nations along with wider open ranch and agricultural land. LP distribution is in line with the state's distribution of attorneys.

Clients are equally representative of men and women. While evenly distributed among age brackets, the largest representation at 20% is aged 35-44.

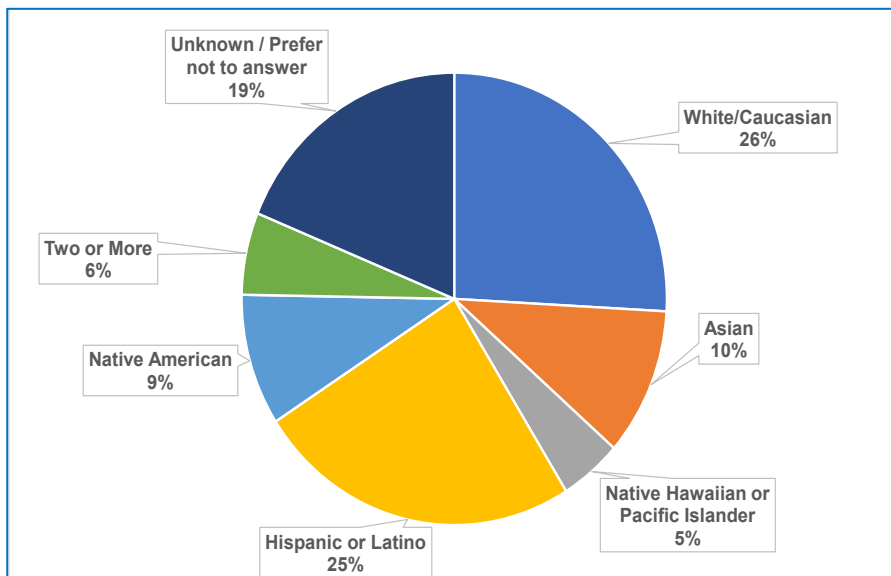
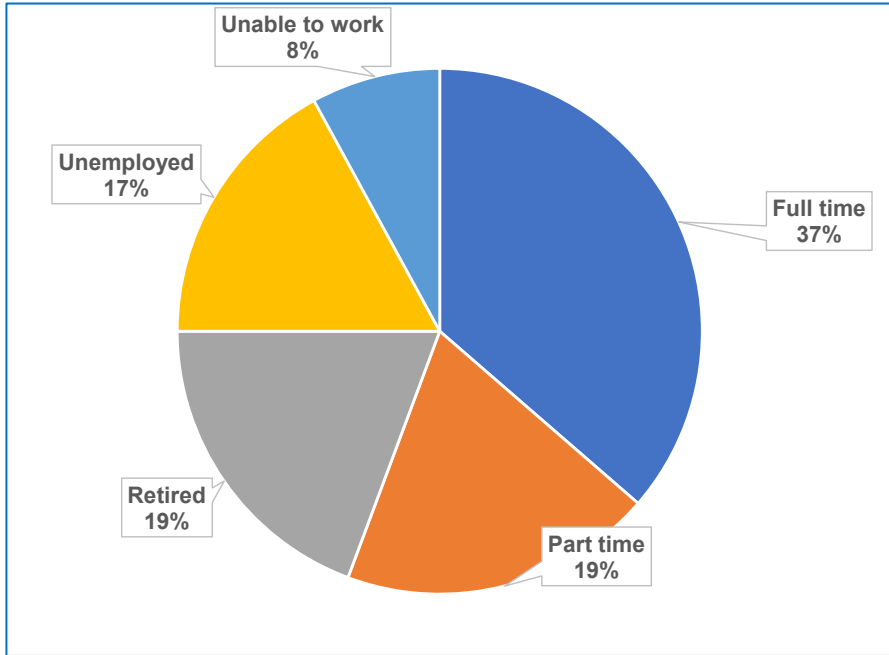


Figure 10 -- Client Identification by Ethnicity

LPs reported diverse ethnicities for their clients as well: White/Caucasian (29%), Hispanic or Latino (25%), or Native

American (9%). The majority of clients have at least a high school education or G.E.D. while 41% have at least some college, an Associate's degree, or a Bachelor's degree. Nearly half of all clients



(49%) are employed full or part time with 22% reporting as unemployed or unable to work. Most clients (63%) earn less than \$89,000 per year, putting them in a low-middle income bracket.

Figure 11 -- Client Reported Employment Status

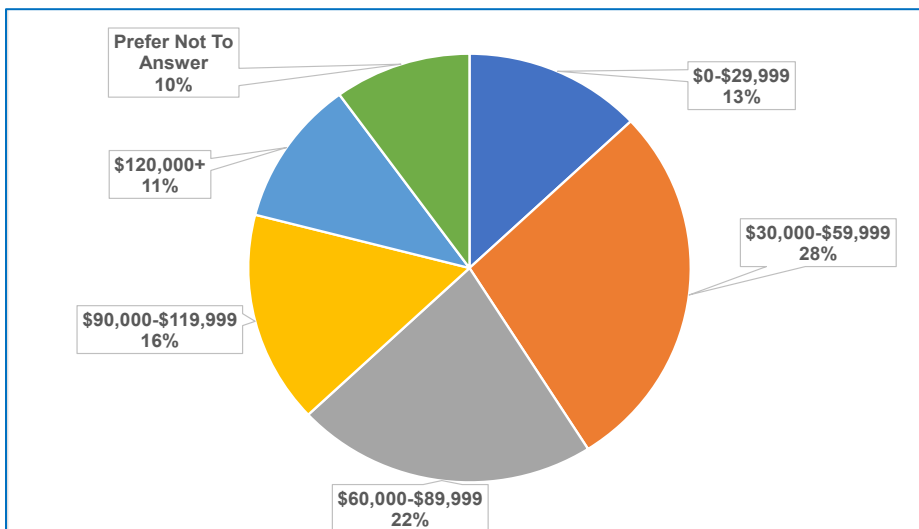


Figure 12 -- Client Reported Annual Income

Courtroom Response and Training

Since the program was developed, there has been much said about the training LPs receive. While in most cases they are not law school graduates, LPs do have experience in the legal community, as many have a paralegal background. Others have post-graduate degrees in Legal

Studies from institutions accredited by the American Bar Association. In 2020, 67.5% of the public who were surveyed agreed LPs would need extensive training, testing, and certification processes, including “significant academic credits on legal ethics,” to ensure they are held to a high standard.¹⁵

Judges and attorneys were asked to consider the LPs they have seen in court. Most judges (88%) and 55% of attorneys agreed or strongly agreed that LPs were aware of applicable court rules. Further, 90% of judges and 59% of attorneys believed LPs displayed appropriate courtroom decorum. Despite these positive perceptions, some survey comments from judges and attorneys asserted that nonlawyers should never be allowed to represent clients in court. At least once survey respondent acknowledged that the quality of representation was in the individual, not their credentials.

Judges and attorneys agreed that LPs could benefit from additional training and support.

Recommended topics from both groups included:

- Rules of procedure
- Forms
- Knowledge of court rules
- Training on filing pleadings
- Rules of evidence

Multiple attorneys wrote what is missing most from LP training is law school. Many judges and attorneys recommended that LPs be required to obtain Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credits, as attorneys are required to obtain, that LPs be trained on legal research, rules of ethics, and a formal degree program “specifically designed to teach them the skills they will need.” These responses can be attributed to limited knowledge in the profession of the LP training requirements and scopes of practice. LPs must earn the same 15 CLEs per year required of

¹⁵ Arizona Supreme Court, *State of Arizona Public Opinion Survey*.

attorneys, are required to complete coursework on legal research and ethics, and, although not a required track, degree programs focusing on the specific training needs of LPs are available at Arizona's two law schools and through several community colleges. These survey responses are an opportunity to provide the bench and bar with additional training and awareness of the LP program.

LPs agree with the importance of training and awareness in the legal community. LPs report attending regular CLE opportunities, subscribing to case law updates and journals like *Arizona Attorney* and *Maricopa Lawyer*, participating with membership options in their local bar association, and building connections with attorneys and other professionals.

When asked about recent workshops, conferences, or other trainings, LPs report attending the State Bar of Arizona Convention, CLEs from the Maricopa County Bar Association, a seminar on real estate in divorces, the Family Law Institute's "For Better or Worse", seminars on ethics, the Maricopa County Public Defender's 2024 Mental Health Conference, and several family law institutes.

Training requests from LPs differ from the suggestions from attorneys and judges, including:

- Criminal law
- Practical and procedural trainings for new LPs
- Mentorships
- Research tools and technology
- Improved training for judges to understand what services LPs can provide
- Parenting plans and divorce settlements
- Retirement plans
- Trial and hearing preparation and how to litigate in front of a judge
- Personal injury
- More training in Yavapai County

In addition to training and resources, LPs asked for more respect from others in the legal community. When asked about their most significant challenges, LPs responded:

- ❖ Not all attorneys give the same respect to LPs as they would other attorneys.
- ❖ Dealing with rude and unprofessional opposing counsel
- ❖ Recently, the Court referred to me as a document preparer in the middle of a trial. It emboldens the other side while making my client feel they are not being fully represented. Recently a Court greatly minimized my client's claim for legal fees because 'you hired a paralegal and you were overcharged'.
- ❖ The lack of respect from attorneys. Many treat you as though you are ignorant and easily bullied. They tend to fail to adhere to the rules of procedure while demanding that you do.
- ❖ Knowledge of the public of our existence.

There is still much to do to inform the legal community and the public of the LPs' scopes of practice and the option of hiring a LP instead of hiring an attorney or being self-represented for certain cases. CLD will continue to work with its partners at bar associations, colleges, and universities to assist with developing training opportunities and conference presentations.

The survey results indicate that, to the extent attorneys fear LPs will "steal clients" or take away cases, those concerns are misplaced. LPs reported referring cases and clients to attorneys 28% of the time. Examples of when LPs refer cases included when the work is beyond the scope of their license, when a matter is complicated and additional assistance is needed (e.g. for an appeal), when a business is involved with a divorce case, and when a matter requires a qualified domestic relations order (QDRO). The 2019 Task Force report further illustrates the important division between LPs and attorneys,

Evidence exists that licensing nonlawyers to provide limited legal services will not undermine the employment of lawyers. The legal needs targeted for (LPs) involve routine, relatively straight-forward, high-volume but low-paying work that lawyers rarely perform, if ever.

Moreover, to date no jurisdiction that allows certified nonlawyers to provide limited legal services has reported any diminution in lawyer employment. The task force acknowledges that some lawyers may prove instinctive skeptics on this

issue, but the task force can find no empirical evidence that lawyers risk economic harm from (LPs) who provide limited legal services to clients with unmet legal needs.¹⁶

General Program Satisfaction

Opinions vary regarding the effectiveness of LP representation and whether the program has improved access to justice.

When the public was asked in 2020 about the Court’s proposal to license trained and tested non-lawyers to provide defined-scope legal services at a lower cost, 80.3% reacted favorably.¹⁷

When actual LP clients were asked in 2024 about their satisfaction with the services they received, the response was even stronger:

- 100% of clients were satisfied or highly satisfied with the LP services received.
- 97% were satisfied or highly satisfied with their LP’s communication skills.
- 100% were satisfied or highly satisfied with how their LP responded to their case and their needs.
- On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest recommendation, clients responded with a score of 9.88 for how likely they would be to recommend a LP to a friend or family member. 91% rated a 10.

- ❖ I would use a Paraprofessional again, specifically mine and have recommended her to others. I think it’s an affordable alternative for single mothers (and fathers alike) to get the representation they need without going into excessive debt.

- ❖ My legal paraprofessional was outstanding, responsive, knowledgeable, tough, organized, transparent, empathetic, this type of resource is special and should be maintained and expanded. I am deeply grateful to have been able to connect And be represented by my paraprofessional.

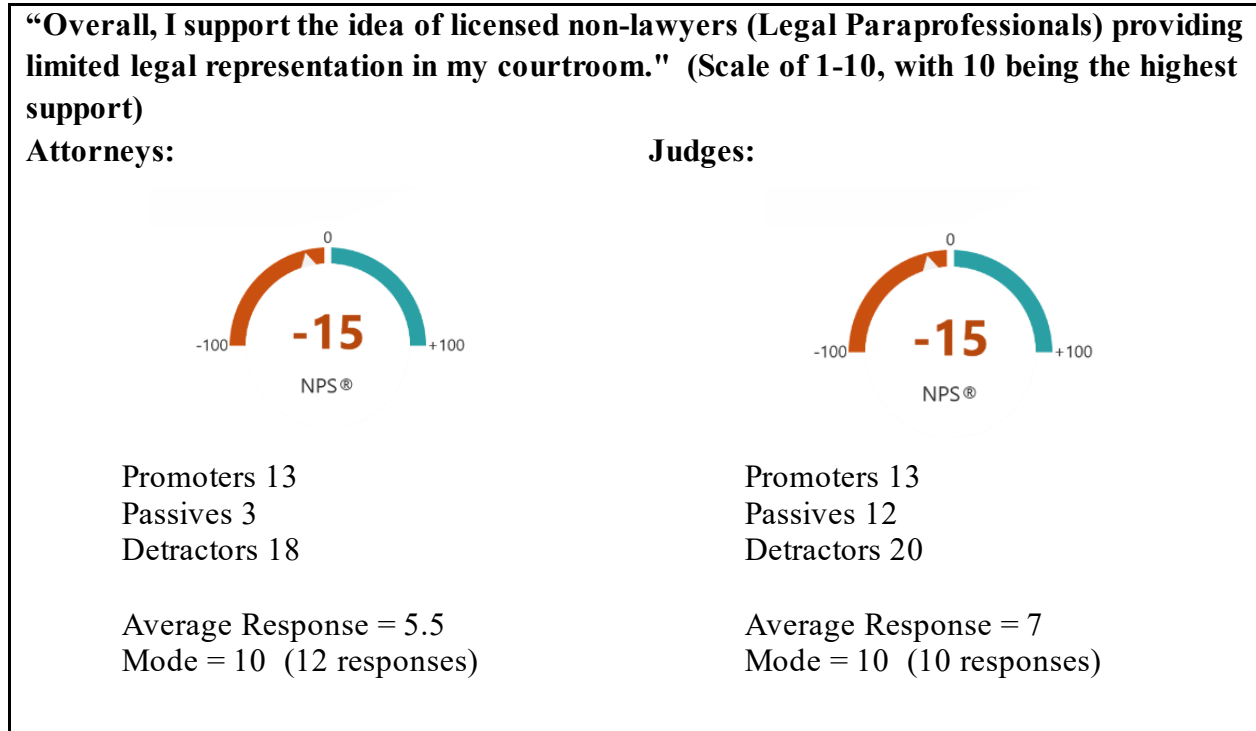
- ❖ I initially was assigned a Sr. Lawyer then downgraded to a legal paraprofessional within the same legal team and I must say it has been an awesome experience since then. The legal paraprofessional that I have been assigned is very down to earth, listens very well, has an acute attention to detail and most importantly comes across like she genuinely cares.

¹⁶ Arizona Supreme Court, *Task Force on the Delivery of Legal Services: Report and Recommendations*.

¹⁷ Arizona Supreme Court, *State of Arizona Public Opinion Survey*.

Attorneys and judges were asked to provide a net promoter score and then support their rating with comments. A net promoter score is placed on a scale of -100 to 100, where the percentage of Detractors (those rating 0-6) is subtracted from the percentage of Promoters (ratings of 9-10) and is one measure of the opinion of success and potential growth.

Table 2 -- Attorney and Judicial Officer Net Promoter Scores



Six Superior Court judges commented as follows:

- ❖ I've been extremely impressed with the LPs in my courtroom. They are better than many of the attorneys.
- ❖ Generally, the Legal Paraprofessionals that have appeared before me have been prepared. I find that they are not as effective as attorneys, but I expect that given the difference in education and, in many cases, in experience.
- ❖ varies greatly between practitioner, just like lawyers. access to justice is good, more training re court procedures and decorum would be helpful
- ❖ Most do a terrific job; some do not. But that is no different than attorneys who appear before me.

- ❖ The quality varies significantly from paraprofessional to paraprofessional. Overall, they can be helpful, but I would prefer if there was some oversight from a licensed attorney (somewhat like a physician's assistant in the medical field). I have concerns that in some cases, the litigant is unaware of the difference between attorney and paraprofessional representation.
- ❖ I believe Legal Paraprofessionals serve an important role in the legal profession, but need more training and should be licensed.

Challenges notwithstanding, the LPs remain positive about the work they do. When asked what they felt was most rewarding about their work, most LPs shared that they are able to help people when they need it most.

- ❖ I absolutely love people. I enjoy being able to shed some light in their life as much as possible during the hardest time in their life.
- ❖ Helping people who otherwise could not afford good legal representation or may have tried to represent themselves.
- ❖ Seeing cases all the way through as counsel, providing thorough representation with empathy and care, something people don't get much anymore as seasoned attorneys seem to get cold to things after years, helping Fathers receive proper representation and obtain recognition for the importance of their role in children's lives
- ❖ Helping our government agency get child support for children. As an LP, I fill a growing gap of being able to fill a position that we have struggled in hiring an attorney in the public sector
- ❖ Being able to help clients during one of the most difficult times in their lives and giving them a voice before the Court.

The positive comments from both LPs and clients indicate there is a perception of improved communication and access to legal assistance that more easily guides a client through the legal system than what might have happened if they were self-represented. This survey did not compare LP, self-represented, and attorney-represented cases for the number and resolution of cases that went to court along with the length of time and expense of those cases.

Although critical comments can inform and improve the LP program, the Court has committed to LPs as one avenue to promote access to justice. The oft-compared Nurse Practitioner field has been “providing primary care for 45 years, and there is strong evidence that this care is cost effective, of high quality, and of great service in increasing access to care for vulnerable populations.”¹⁸ Arizona anticipates the same will be true for LPs.

AOC Certification and Licensing: Getting it Done

A key part of the Legal Paraprofessional program is its licensing process but data points about the process and the staff had not been measured. It is important to include this performance in a discussion of the program’s effectiveness and responsiveness.

A main component of the application process for prospective LPs are the Core and Practice Area exams. An applicant must pass the Core exam, which focuses on general legal practices, procedures, and ethics. They must also pass an exam for each licensed area of practice. Some LPs are licensed in more than one area. Few pass the exam on their first attempt. In 2024, all exams were reviewed to ensure accuracy with applicable authorities, including statutes, court rules, and the administrative code. CLD continues to revise LP resource materials. Those materials are posted to the program [website](#).

¹⁸ Pohl, J. M., “Who Will Provide Primary Care and How Will They Be Trained?” (pp. 167–214).

Table 3 -- Exam Passing Rate as of December 11, 2024

	Core	Family Law	Civil Law	Criminal Law	Administrative Law	Juvenile Law
Total Attempts 2021-2024	310	192	64	30	7	1
Total Passing 2021-2024	139 45%	81 42%	16 25%	12 49%	0	1 100%
Average Passing Score	77.25	77.22	75.73	77.42	N/A	74.00

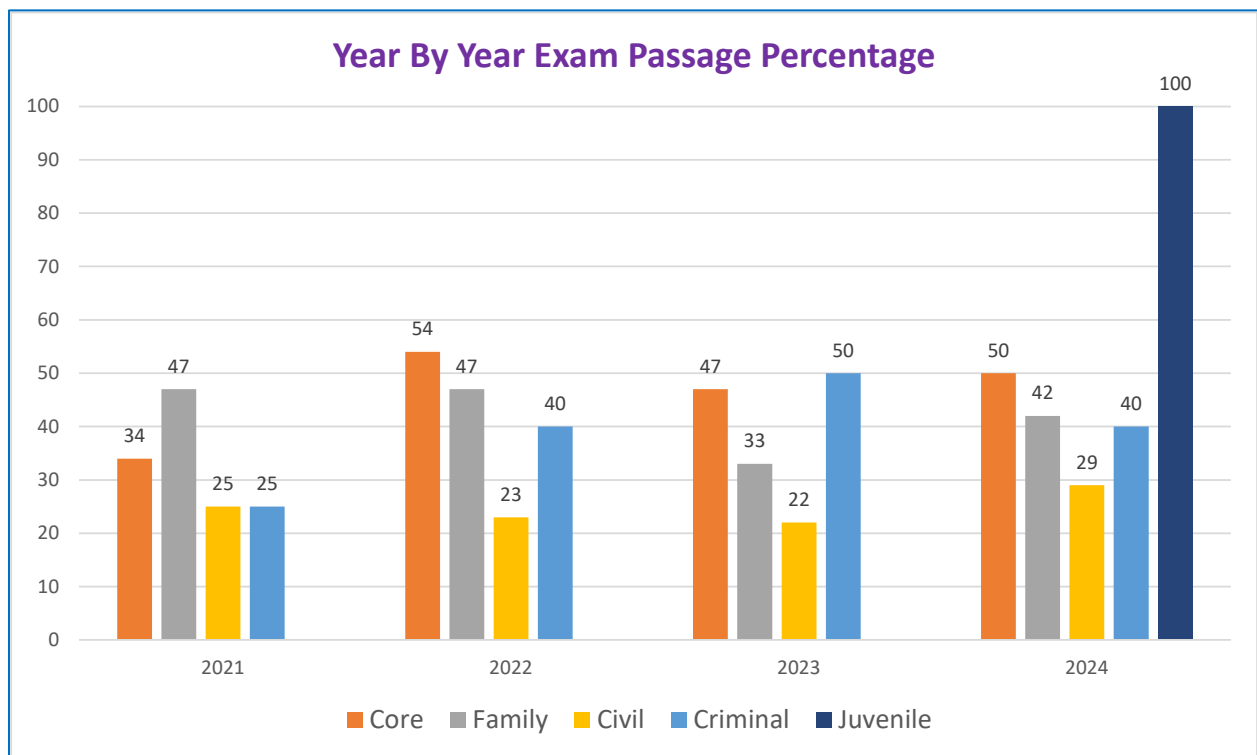


Figure 13 -- Exam Year by Year Passing Percentage

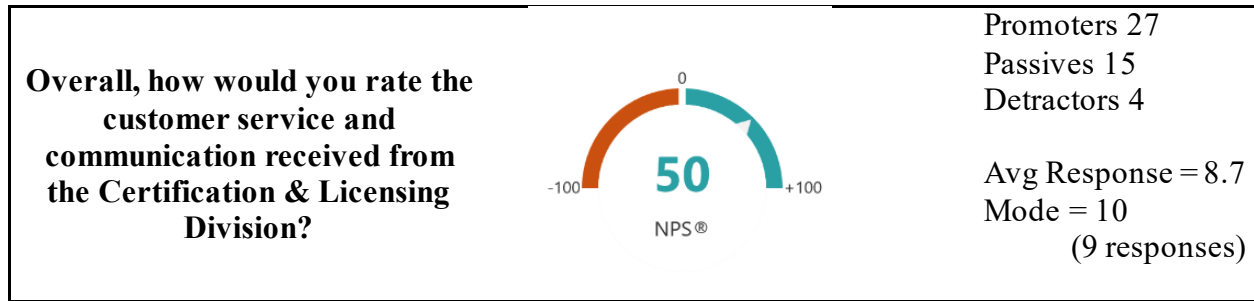
Regarding the exam and application process, 78% of LPs were satisfied or very satisfied with the application process. Areas for improvement included making the application process less complicated and the online registration more user friendly. Most respondents (77%) were satisfied

with the exam process. For those not fully satisfied with the exam process, the top two reasons were that study materials were inadequate (36%) and travel to Phoenix, where the exams are conducted, was inconvenient (27%). CLD is pursuing ways to improve the application and exam processes which may eventually include online/virtual exam proctoring.

The LP program was initially supported in 2020 by one manager with limited administrative help and ran alongside another new program launched at the same time – Alternative Business Structures (ABS). Since then, the LP and ABS programs split, and the LP program is currently supported by limited administrative help and 2.5 full time staff equivalents, including one manager who reports to the Division Director. This team is responsible for all communications with current and prospective LPs, exam review and development, resource materials development, website management, data collection, application review, background reviews, fingerprint checks, fee payment collections, and preparing all LP materials for the LPs’ regulatory board, the Board of Nonlawyer Legal Service Providers. The regulatory board makes final licensure decisions based on CLD’s recommendations.

There are many wheels in motion in the LP program and, while some are automated, most require a personal touch and clear communication. In 2024, the team established informal performance measures designed to increase the speed of background investigations and improve the timeliness of email and phone responses to inquiries. The team also focused on strengthening their customer service visibility. LPs were asked to provide a Net Promoter score of their perception of CLD’s level of customer service and communication, then explain their rating.

Table 4 -- LP Net Promoter Score of CLD



- ❖ The current LP director is amazing and I was lucky that he was the LP director while I finalized the remaining stages of my application.
- ❖ The investigator assigned to my application was extremely helpful.
- ❖ communication with the LP staff was always prompt and efficient
- ❖ I am incredibly grateful for the Certification & Licensing Division. Their prompt, professional responses and guidance have been invaluable. Managing this division is no small task, and I truly appreciate having their support.
- ❖ It is extremely difficult to reach a staff member. However, I do understand that during the time my application was submitted, they were short staffed. That issue was resolved after hiring an investigator.
- ❖ [The manager] and his staff are great, keep it up.

Lessons Learned

Recommendations

CLD reviewed the survey responses and determined several action items, some of which have already been implemented:

- Improve study guide and resources. Add a focus on rules of procedures and evidence.
- Communicate with training institutions the need to provide additional resources and training on rules of procedures and evidence.
- Potentially update ACJA 7-210 to include increased CLE requirements for evidence and procedures.
- Update ACJA 7-210 address qualifications for practice in probate, QDROs, and adoptions.
- Establish a mentorship network.
- Develop CLE and conference presentations for judges and attorneys to increase awareness of LPs and their scopes of practice.
- Submit articles to Bar Association publications. Discuss training, evaluation, and ethical review standards.
- Offer exams online.
- Develop LP networking opportunities and communication/e-news.
- Name change to Legal Practitioner (a rule petition was filed to change the name and was denied by the Supreme Court in 2024).
- Add additional questions on child support guidelines and case law to the Family Law exam.
- Training on retirements and investments.
- Involve current LPs in the application review process.

Questions for the Future

Some questions still need to be asked to fully rate the effectiveness of the LP program and whether it is improving access to justice. These questions, some borrowed from surveys completed in Minnesota; Oregon; Colorado; and Ontario, Canada, may be asked on future surveys to ensure the program continues to evolve as an asset to the legal process.

Table 5 -- Potential Future Survey Questions

Question	Data Source or Group to Ask					
	CIS	General Public	Clients	LPs	Attorneys	Judges
How many cases statewide involve Legal Paraprofessionals and what types?	X					
What is/were the resolution of those cases?	X					
Why was a LP selected rather than an attorney or self-representation?			X			
How were the LP and their services selected?			X			
How easy was it to locate a LP?			X			
How was the LP's experience level determined?	X		X	X		X
What was the cost of legal representation?			X			
How beneficial has the LP program been for Arizonans?		X	X	X	X	X
How well has the LP program improved access to justice?	X	X	X	X	X	X
Did the LP degree program, or job experience, adequately prepare you?				X		
How fair is the justice system in Arizona?			X	X	X	X
Do you feel the Supreme Court's LP program improves fairness and access to justice?		X	X			

Summary

Arizona’s Legal Paraprofessional program is a key contributor to achieving the goals in *...and Justice for All*, Supreme Court Chief Justice Ann A. Scott Timmer’s 2024-2029 strategic agenda for the Arizona Judicial Branch.

LPs, and other non-lawyer practitioners across the nation, are often compared to Nurse Practitioners as an easy way to understand where they fit in the legal community. The field of Nurse Practitioners (NPs) came about in the mid-1960s as a response to a physician shortage, particularly in pediatrics. Nursing programs today graduate more than 7,000 NPs annually.¹⁹ Similarly, Legal Paraprofessionals were established as a way to address the attorney shortage in Arizona and its national ranking of 49th in access to legal services.

The LP program started small, in 2021, with licensure in three practice areas. The LP program further expanded from its Family, Civil, and Criminal Law foundation to add Administrative Law and Juvenile Dependency Law. In 2025 the program will continue to expand with the potential addition of qualifications for preparing QDROs and licensure for a Probate scope of practice. Educational opportunities and outreach activities will also continue to grow.

This 2024 survey provided valuable data to understand the reach of the LP program, and there is more to learn. The survey confirmed that clients are satisfied with the service they receive and appreciate connecting with the legal system at a lower cost and with more satisfactory outcomes. The survey also revealed that many attorneys and judges are not fully informed of the program’s reach which causes confusion and, for some, a negative impression. As with NPs and their relationships with medical doctors more than 40 years ago, Arizona

¹⁹ Pohl, J. M., “Who Will Provide Primary Care and How Will They Be Trained?” (pp. 167–214).

anticipates that with time and further education and resources, LPs will gain the similar respect from their legal colleagues and recognition from the public.

The CLD staff will focus on improving the LP program with a focus on revising and improving the exam study guides, promoting the development of continuing education opportunities, and implementing online exams with virtual proctoring. LP program staff will also be involved with ongoing access to justice pilot programs and initiatives, such as implementing community-based justice worker models. Lastly, the program anticipates licensing its 100th Legal Paraprofessional and surpassing that number in 2025.

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