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## Licensure & regulation

- The Law Society of Ontario licenses and regulates all Ontario paralegals and lawyers in the public interest.
- In order to work as a paralegal in Ontario, an individual must graduate from an [accredited paralegal education program in Ontario](#), including the field placement requirement, and pass the paralegal licensing examination.
  - This is explained in greater detail here: [How do I become a paralegal in Ontario?](#)
- Once licensed, paralegals are required to complete continuing professional development programming annually, carry professional liability insurance, submit to occasional practice audits, pay annual fees and file annual reports.
- Paralegals must adhere to professional conduct rules, which regulate conduct and competence, as well as adhering to by-laws related to topics like the management of trust accounts. Failure to comply may result in complaints and potentially the Law Society's disciplinary process.

## Paralegal scope of practice

- Paralegals independently provide representation and advice in:
  - Small Claims Court
  - Certain criminal and quasi-criminal matters before the provincial court
  - Administrative tribunals, such as the Landlord and Tenant Board
- Paralegals can also draft documents and negotiate on a party's behalf in relation to any of those kinds of proceedings.

## Expansions to scope of practice

- Since paralegals began being licensed in Ontario in 2007, the Law Society has consistently addressed any proposed scope expansions by looking at the evidence, starting with environmental scans, maps of practice activities, skills competencies and analyses of legal needs.
- As the regulator, the Law Society has been mindful of the twin objectives of regulation — consumer protection and enhanced access to justice — and the reality of unrepresented litigants and the difficulty of accessing capable legal assistance at reasonable cost.
- Expansion of scope can address some gaps in service with appropriate education, training, and other supports



- In 2011, a legislative change by the federal government combined with a Law Society regulation meant paralegals could represent clients appearing before the Immigration and Refugee Board.
- In the past decade, the Law Society has successfully advocated for the following service expansions:
  - In Ontario, lawyers automatically become commissioners for taking affidavits by virtue of their licence. In 2013, the government extended this automatic designation to all licensed paralegals.
  - In 2018, a legislative change designated paralegals as “officers of the court,” alongside lawyers, recognizing that they play an important role in the effective administration of justice and are bound by certain duties which the court can enforce.
  - Since 2019, paralegals have been authorized to represent individual defendants in some summary conviction matters that carry a penalty of up to two years less a day.
  - In 2020, the *Notaries Act* was amended to allow paralegals to be appointed as notaries in the same manner as lawyers. Paralegals can now apply to be appointed a notary public upon becoming licensed by the Law Society. This is a non-restrictive life-time appointment.
- Currently, the Law Society's Access to Justice Committee is considering the submissions received from a 2020 Call for Comment and engaging in additional research to assess the proposed model of a Family Legal Services Provider (FLSP) Licence, where paralegals would be licensed to provide certain services in family law. When the committee has concluded its assessment, it will make recommendations to the Board of Directors (also known as Convocation).

*The Law Society regulates [lawyers and paralegals](#) in Ontario in the public interest. The Law Society has a mandate to protect the public interest, to maintain and to advance the cause of justice and the rule of law, to facilitate access to justice for the people of Ontario and to act in a timely, open and efficient manner.*

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