

HISTORY OF THE PARALEGAL DIVISION OF THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS

1984 - 1985

The Board participated with the Legal Assistants Committee of the Bar and paralegal educators in Texas Forum III held in Corpus Christi. The group discussed school placement of legal assistants, ethics courses, certification, uniform standards for education and training of legal assistants, and internships.

The second survey inquiring about specifics of implementing voluntary certification was published in the February and May issues of the Division newsletter and mailed to 1,300 legal assistants; 294 responses, or 22.6 percent, were returned.

Two proposals for voluntary certification were adopted for consideration at public hearings over the State, and sites were selected for such hearings. The two proposals were basically (1) a Division-developed certification examination to be administered by a certifying board to be created by the Division, and (2) participation in the Adjunct Program of the National Association of Legal Assistants, Inc. (NALA) using the NALA general examination and the addition of a Texas substantive law examination designed by Division consultants. The public hearings were planned in the Spring of 1985 and were authorized by the Board in June of 1985.

Total membership of 1,588 was reported at the Annual Meeting in Dallas. The primary program for the convention was a seminar on "Unauthorized Practice of Law - The Gray Areas." The Division, with the assistance of local/national associations, again sponsored an exhibit booth stocked with information about each of the participating Texas and national legal assistant associations and the legal assistant profession in general. The Award of Excellence was presented to Sandy Hardin of the Bar staff in appreciation for her many hours of time devoted to the Division.

The Board approved a motion that the Bar continue to receive and disburse Division funds, but that the Division Treasurer handle the bookkeeping services of the Division and terminate its agreement with the Bar for such services. Membership subcommittees assumed responsibility for processing membership applications and an Elections Committee was created as a Standing Committee to assume responsibility for handling elections. These functions were previously performed by Bar staff.

A special committee worked to produce a definition of a legal assistant and after much research concluded that defining the profession at this time might limit its scope in the future. Mock grievance procedures were enacted by the Ethics Committee in various Districts. The first attorney/legal assistant dinner, a project of the Public Relations Committee, was held in Houston.

Legal Assistants Division Board of Directors 1984 - 1985

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