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Paralegal Core Competencies for Career Advancement

- Digital Fluency and Business Savvy

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IT'S NOT TOO LATE...

⇒ RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

[Online](#)

⇒ SIGN UP FOR A COMMITTEE

See p.4

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President's Message

Autumn Nelson, ACP



I hope each of you enjoyed a wonderful holiday season and that your new year is off to a great start. As we move into a fresh year of opportunities and growth, I'd like to share an update on what the SDPA Executive Committee has been working on this past quarter.

First, thank you for your patience as we continue working through our committee assignments. With the restructuring that took place last year, the process is taking a bit longer than usual. Please know that these assignments are a priority and will be finalized and shared with you soon (if not before this issue goes to press). We are still looking for a Chair/Co-Chairs for the Nominations and Elections Committee.

Our Education Committee Chairs have already begun planning for the June seminar, and we are excited about the direction the program is taking. More details will be announced as planning progresses. The seminar will tentatively take place in Sioux Falls on June 26th at the Sheraton Sioux Falls Hotel & Convention Center in conjunction with the State Bar of South Dakota's Annual Convention.

We are still seeking to fill one key leadership role beginning after the June meeting: NALA Liaison. If you or someone you know is interested in serving, we would be thrilled to hear from you. As a reminder, SDPA will pay for a NALA membership for the selected Liaison (if the individual is not already a member) and will cover the Liaison's expenses to attend the 2026 NALA Conference & Expo, taking place July 16–18 in Denver, Colorado. You can learn more about the conference here: <https://nala.org/nala-conference-expo/>.

Executive Committee

PRESIDENT

Autumn Nelson, ACP

1st VICE PRESIDENT

Rebecca Goeken

2nd VICE PRESIDENT

Vacant

NALA LIAISON

Grace Collum, ACP

SECRETARY

Jennifer Frederick, CP

TREASURER

Carrie Reider, CP

Finally, as we continue to grow and strengthen our organization, we encourage you to invite colleagues, coworkers, and fellow legal professionals to join SDPA. New members bring fresh ideas, diverse experiences, renewed energy, and they help us advance the paralegal profession across South Dakota. If you know someone who would benefit from being part of our community, please send them our way!

As always, please reach out to me or any member of the Executive Committee with questions, ideas, or feedback. Your engagement and support are what keep SDPA strong and moving forward.

Wishing you all a successful and rewarding year ahead!

NALA Liaison's Report

Grace Collum, ACP

CALENDAR

March

- 3/17 *FERPA & Education Records: Understanding/Streamlining Records Requests
- *Alternative Dispute Resolution: Practical Overview
- 3/18 +Law for Lunch: FinCEN Real Estate Reporting
- *Practical and Ethical AI for Paralegals
- 3/26 *Practical AI Skills for Paralegals: Research, Drafting, and Workflow

April

- 4/23 +Bankruptcy Roundtable Discussions

May

- 5/8 +Joint Family/Criminal Law
- 5/13 *Facial Recognition Tech: Double-Edged Sword in Criminal Justice

+SD State Bar Seminars and/or Webinars
* NALA Webinars



Hello everyone!

I hope the start of 2026 has been wonderful for all of you! I'd like to begin by congratulating Lori Pauline Van Pel on passing her Certified Paralegal (CP) Exam—what an incredible accomplishment!

I encourage each of you to consider following in her footsteps. Becoming a Certified Paralegal offers many benefits, including professional development opportunities, expanded networking, and increased earning potential. On average, CPs earn about \$5,000 more per year than those who are not certified.

As a reminder, the CP Exam consists of two parts:

1. The Knowledge Exam, which can be taken at any time throughout the year.
2. The Skills Exam, which is offered in February, April, July, and October.

I've already shared my Quizlet flashcards with many of you, and I recently came across my notes from when I prepared for the CP Exam as well. So if you would like access to the flashcards or notes, please let me know—I'd be more than happy to share them and help support you in your journey toward certification!

Just a reminder that the NALA Conference is coming up as well! Early bird registration ends May 13, 2026. (A little tip for you all - I use this as one of my talking points to my attorneys when I make my "speech" as to why they should cover for the conference. It has worked every time!) The conference is taking place in Denver and the agenda is already listed on NALA's website for those of you who want to see the various speakers and topics. The agenda can be viewed here: <https://nala.org/agendas-special-events/> I hope to see you all there! It's going to be a fantastic time!



CERTIFIED PARALEGALS

Brooke Tilley, CP
Paya S. Toliver, CP
Anne Marie True, CP
Victoria Elizabeth Upperman, CP
Gabriela Reyes Valencia, CP
Lori Pauline Van Pelt, CP
Lenore Vitale-Sadej, CP
Kelsey Walker, CP
Taylor Edwards Walsh, CP
Daniel Wang, CP
Brandi Ward, CP
Kelly Ware, CP
Brianna Jordaya Washington, CP

Katherine White, CP
Kentay Williams, ACP
Natali Williams, CP
Lauren Wilson, CP
Joseph Witkowski, CP
Leslie Nicole Wright, CP
Laura Wyrick, CP
Amber Marie Young, CP
Jessica Whitelaw Young, CP
Kendall Young, CP
Guadalupe Melissa Zamora, CP
Emily Zeigler, CP
Koffi Venunye Zilevu, CP

Paralegal Core Competencies . . . for Career Advancement

Reprinted with the permission of Kelli Radnothy, Kristine Custodio Suero, ACP, and NALA –The Paralegal Association. This article was originally published in the Q4 2025 issue of *FACTS & FINDINGS*, the quarterly journal of NALA. For Inquiries, contact NALA at 6450 S. Lewis Avenue, Suite 250, Tulsa, OK 74136, or email nalanet@nala.org.

As legal teams rapidly adopt AI, automation, and analytics, today's paralegals are stepping into roles that require more than legal knowledge. They need digital fluency and business savvy. NALA's Paralegal Core Competencies (PCCs) continue to serve as the bedrock of paralegal education, and aligning them with today's legal workflows is the key to future-proof careers. These PCCs include effective communication, legal research and writing, legal technology, ethics, and substantive legal knowledge, all of which form the foundation of competent and ethical legal support. As legal workplaces evolve, it is increasingly essential for paralegals to upskill in emerging technologies.

These competencies are not just enhancements. They are transformative in preparing paralegals for new opportunities in legal operations, compliance, and strategic business roles. This article explores NALA's Paralegal Core Competencies and offers practical tools and career planning insights to help paralegals remain agile and prepare for the future.

MASTERING CORE LEGAL CONCEPTS

Every successful paralegal needs a strong foundation in legal knowledge. Mastering core legal concepts ensures effective collaboration with attorneys and accurate, efficient legal work. We will dive deeper into key areas of doctrinal and procedural expertise that remain central to the profession.

1. LEGAL KNOWLEDGE

- **Litigation and Transactional Law:** Proficiency in civil procedures, contracts, corporate organization, real estate, family law, and estates.
- **Legal Research and Writing:** Mastery of Westlaw or Lexis (or free platforms like Fastcase or Google Scholar) plus structured writing, such as case memos, briefs, discovery, and contracts.
- **Ethics and Compliance:** Understanding professional responsibility, confidentiality, data privacy (e.g., General Data Protection Regulation [GDPR], California Consumer Privacy Act [CCPA]), and e-billing policies.

2. AI-INFUSED LEGAL WORKFLOWS

The integration of artificial intelligence into legal workflows is reshaping how paralegals perform critical functions. From document review to contract management, AI tools are increasing efficiency and accuracy across disciplines and practice areas. Paralegals must develop fluency in these tools to stay competitive and innovate meaningfully.

- **Document Review and Analysis:** Familiarity with AI platforms (e.g., RelativityOne, Everlaw, HighQ) and using analytics and machine learning to detect privilege and inconsistencies and move toward "document triage."
- **Contract Life Cycle Management (CLM):** Training on tools like Ironclad and Agiloft to automate drafting, redlining, executive approvals, and renewals
- **eDiscovery and Automation:** Skills in workflow creation, assisted by platforms like Logikcull and DISCO.
- **AI-Powered Research Tools:** Adoption of AI-enhanced essentials like CoCounsel and free large language model (LLM) based legal research tools.

3. TECH AND DATA FLUENCY

Today's paralegals must be proficient with a variety of digital tools. From process mapping to data analytics and cybersecurity, technological literacy is now a baseline expectation in most legal environments. Here are some must-have tech competencies for modern paralegals:

- **Process Mapping and Improvement:** Using Lucidchart, Miro, or Microsoft Visio to map workflows, reduce divergence, and identify bottlenecks.
- **Project Management and Agile Methodology:** Skills in task tracking via Asana, Trello, or simpler forms; comfort with kanban or scrum (Agile); certifications like Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM), helpful but optional.
- **Basic Data Analytics and Reporting:** Competence with Excel (PivotTables, VLOOKUP), Microsoft Power BI, Tableau, and structured query language (SQL) fundamentals to produce metrics dashboards.
- **Security and Privacy Tools:** Awareness of cybersecurity basics, including multi-factor authentication (MFA), encryption, and document redaction protocols.

STACKABLE CAREER PATHWAY STRATEGY

Paralegal careers are no longer linear. They are stackable. With each new competency, paralegals can move into expanded roles like legal operations specialist, compliance coordinator, or business strategist. Here, we discuss a framework for long-term career mobility based on progressive skill acquisition. Paralegal roles increasingly serve as the foundation for legal operations careers, where competencies range from e-billing control and data reporting to vendor management and process optimization.

Key strategy: Build your road map by adding one competency per role every 12 to 18 months and seeking cross-functional opportunities (e.g., side projects, vendor reviews) to deepen your experience in key areas.



POSITIONING FOR BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS

As legal departments adopt business-oriented models, the paralegal role evolves into that of a strategic business professional. This shift is now evident in law firms, where paralegals are taking on expanded responsibilities as key players in business strategy. This trend requires a mastery of soft skills, business acumen, and a continuous learning mindset.

We will explore how to align your professional profile with broader business goals. It is always a good time to audit your knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) to determine which areas you may need to develop further or acquire additional education or training in. Consider the following KSAs for advanced business professional roles, coupled with paralegal education and experience:

- **Interpersonal and Communication Skills:** Operational roles require clear stakeholder communication, including metrics presentations, executive briefings, and vendor negotiations.
- **Business Acumen:** You need to understand budgeting, ROI, vendor value, contract terms, marketing's role in CLM, and cross-departmental collaboration.
- **Adaptive Learning Mindset:** As AI tools evolve, so must your fluency in prompt engineering, proof validation, and customizing templates to ecosystem needs.
- **Professional Branding:** Join NALA, the International Legal Technology Association (ILTA), the Association of Certified E-Discovery Specialists (ACEDS), or the Association of Legal Administrators (ALA). Network at conferences. Share insights via presentations or articles.

AFFORDABLE AND HIGH-CALIBER RESOURCES

Professional development does not have to be expensive. Accessible and cost-effective resources are available for building legal and tech skills. The following is a curated list of high-impact tools and platforms to support your upskilling journey:

- **Legal Research:** Fastcase, Google Scholar.
- **AI Tools:** Logikcull, Everlaw (free trials).
- **Process Mapping:** Lucidchart, Miro.
- **Analytics:** Microsoft Learn, Coursera Excel courses.
- **Project Management:** Trello, Asana.
- **Vendor Management:** ALA webinars, Corporate Legal Operations Consortium (CLOC) resources.
- **Certifications:** NALA Certified Paralegal (CP®), Certified E-Discovery Specialist (CEDS).

5-YEAR ACTION PLAN

Strategic career growth requires intentional planning. By layering skills and experiences over time, paralegals can set a course toward senior roles in legal ops, compliance, and more. This five-year road map offers a guide for steady, achievable progress.

Year 1: Build a strong legal foundation in research, document prep, ethics, and case management.

Year 2: Integrate tech such as eDiscovery, CLM tools, and Excel basics.

Year 3: Focus on process mapping and data reporting, and complete a CEDS or CP® certification.

Year 4: Volunteer for vendor requests for proposals (RFPs), subscription renewals, and AI tool proofs of concept. Begin cross-functional operations work.

Year 5: Position yourself for Legal Operations Specialist roles. Emphasize your experience with metrics dashboards and vendor management, and highlight projects with high ROI.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As legal services lean into automation and data-driven decision making, the modern paralegal is as much a technologist and process strategist as a legal knowledge master. By intentionally stacking legal, technical, analytical, and operational competencies, today's paralegals can seamlessly transition into legal operations roles and beyond, positioning themselves as indispensable business professionals.

The Duke Center on Law & Technology's Responsible AI in Legal Services (RAILS) program is creating a collaborative framework for the ethical development and deployment of artificial intelligence in law. With a focus on transparency, fairness, and accountability, RAILS explores how AI tools can support, not supplant, legal professionals, particularly in high-stakes areas like civil justice and regulatory compliance. Paralegals who engage with the RAILS initiative can gain a strong foundation in the responsible use of AI, which is essential for those working with or evaluating emerging legal technology solutions. This training prepares paralegals to serve as informed advocates and implementers of AI policy and practice within their organizations.

Paralegals also play a critical role in advancing access to justice by supporting underserved populations, streamlining legal processes, and expanding the reach of legal services. One pathway for meaningful engagement is through the Justice Technology Association, a nonprofit organization that supports professionals working at the intersection of law and technology to improve legal system accessibility. Paralegals can contribute by participating in open-source projects, joining policy discussions, or assisting with usability testing of justice tech platforms. This kind of involvement helps shape legal innovation with real-world impact and affirms the essential role of paralegals in building equitable legal solutions.

Paralegal Core Competencies . . . for Career Advancement

Continued from p. 5



Meet the Authors



Kelli Radnothy is a litigation paralegal with over 20 years of legal experience. She runs a legal solutions company, contracting with law firms and nonprofit organizations to enhance legal services. Kelli is a Legal Researcher for the Nevada Attorney General's Office and a course developer and instructor for the University of Washington's Paralegal Program. Kelli serves as Treasurer for the Paralegal Division of the State Bar of Nevada and as Second Vice President of the Sierra Nevada Association of Paralegals (SNAP). Kelli holds a BS in criminal justice, a paralegal certificate from an ABA-approved program, and an eDiscovery & Litigation Technology Certificate. email: kelli@klrparalegal.com

Kristine Custodio Suero, ACP, is an award-winning legal professional, author, coveted speaker, and servant leader. She has led the San Diego Paralegal Association and California Alliance of Paralegal Associations as President. Kristine teaches legal courses for a local San Diego paralegal program and sits on the program's advisory board. Kristine serves on the NALA Board of Directors as Area 3 Director. She has served NALA as Chair of the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee, Ethics Chair, and as a member of the Professional Development Committee and Continuing Education Council. Kristine is a Senior Paralegal/Business Development Director for Schechter Benefits Law Group LLP. email: kristine.custodio@gmail.com

Resources

AAfPE Legal Luminaries S 2 Ep 1, "The Paralegal Edition: Featuring eDiscovery Technologist Monica Harris," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xogj6KLUJpw>

ABA Formal Opinion 512: https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/professional_responsibility/ethics-opinions/aba-formal-opinion-512.pdf

Duke Center on Law & Technology: <https://law.duke.edu/dclt>

- Research on Justice Tech: <https://law.duke.edu/dclt/research>
- Work in AI and A2J: <https://law.duke.edu/dclt/AIandA2J>
- RAILS Website: <https://rails.legal/>
- RAILS Resources: <https://rails.legal/resources/>

Justice Tech Association: <https://justicetechassociation.org/>

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National Society for Legal Technology (NSLT), AI For Legal Professionals course, <https://www.legaltechcert.org/products/courses/ai-for-legalprofessionals>

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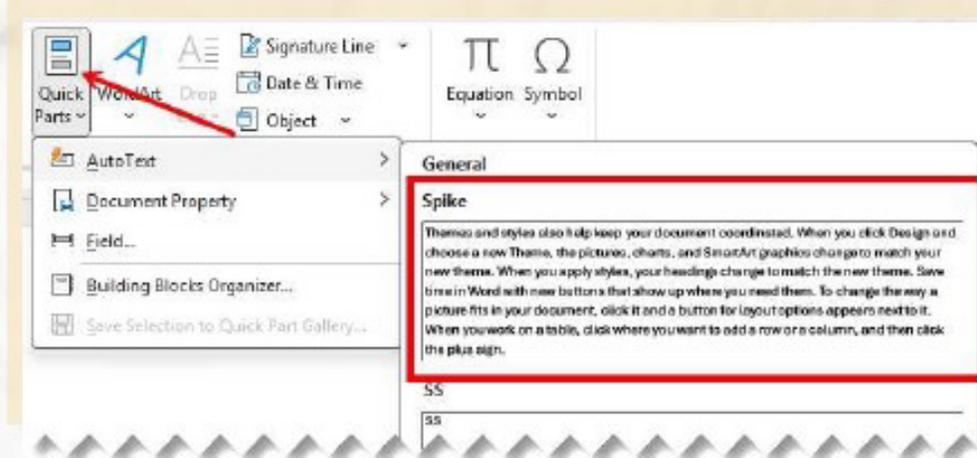
The State Bar of California Standing Committee on Professional Responsibility and Conduct, Practical Guidance for the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in the Practice of Law, <https://www.calbar.ca.gov/Portals/o/documents/ethics/Generative-AI-Practical-Guidance.pdf>

World Economic Forum, The Future of Jobs Report 2025, <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/digest/>

Word Tech Tip: Don't Cut and Paste—Spike It!

Microsoft Word offers a quick and easy way to cut multiple parts of one or more Word documents and paste them, all at once, into a new location or document in the order that they were selected. This process is called Spike.

1. Select the part of an existing Word document that you would like to cut.
2. Press the CTRL and F3 buttons simultaneously.
3. Continue this process until you have cut all selections that you wish to paste. Remember that Word will paste them in the order that they were selected, regardless of their place on the original document.
4. When you are ready to paste, click where you would like the content to appear on the document.
5. Paste the content using one of three methods:
 - a. Press the CTRL, Shift, and F3 keys simultaneously. After using this method the content will clear from Spike and not be available to reuse.
 - b. Type the word **spike**, add a space, and then press the F3 key. This method will keep the content available in Spike if you wish to paste it in another location.
 - c. On the Insert tab click on the Quick Parts icon, select Auto Text, and click Spike. (See image above). This method will also keep the content available in Spike if you wish to reuse it.



Note that if you use a method that keeps the content, any additional Spike selections you make will append to what is already held in Spike. If you wish to clear what is in Spike, go to the Insert toolbar and, under Quick Parts, select Building Blocks Organizer. Find Spike in the list and select it, then click the Delete button.

Can I Use "Spike" with PDF Documents?

If you would like to select content from a PDF document, remember that Word will open PDFs and convert them to Word format.

In Word, go to File > Open and search for your PDF document.

After selecting it, you will get a message that the document is being converted. Click OK.

Your document will be ready to Spike!

SOURCE

Reprinted with permission from the U.S. Courts Library, Eighth Circuit.
Original publication: *Eighth Circuit Library Newsletter*, November 2025 issue.

Mexican Street Corn Soup

Serves 6 | by Jessica Huyck, ACP

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 small red onion
- 1 small jalapeño
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 (12 oz.) skinless, boneless chicken breast
- 1 (12 oz.) package fire roasted frozen corn
- 1 (4 oz.) can diced green chiles
- 1 tbsp. Tajín seasoning
- 2 tsps. ground cumin
- 2 tsps. chili powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- 4 cups (32 oz.) chicken stock
- 2 cups sour cream or Greek yogurt (full fat)
- ½ cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- Juice of one lime
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro
- ½ cup crumbled queso fresco

Instructions:

1. Heat the oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion and jalapeño, cooking until the onions soften, about 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in the garlic and cook for another 30 seconds.
2. Add the chicken, fire-roasted corn, and green chiles to the pot. Season with Tajín, cumin, chili powder, salt, and pepper.
3. Pour in the chicken stock and bring it to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer, cover, and let the soup cook for 25 minutes.
4. Remove the chicken and shred it into bite-sized pieces, then return it to the pot.
5. Stir in the sour cream, Monterey Jack cheese, lime juice, and cilantro, and simmer on low for another 3 minutes.
6. Serve the soup topped with queso fresco crumbles and chopped cilantro.



Did You Know

News From U.S. District Court

February 13, 2026

Motion to Seal Documents. Previously, all motions to seal document(s) had to be submitted to the Clerk's Office for manual filing. Recently, we modified the events in CM/ECF so that attorneys and pro se filers can electronically file these motions. Pursuant to D.S.D. Civ. LR 7.1(A) and D.S.D. Crim. LR 47.1(B), a motion to seal must include (1) proposed reasons supported by specific factual representations to justify the sealing, and (2) an explanation why alternatives to seal will not provide sufficient protection.

A motion to seal that has not already been filed or is a placeholder for a document in CM/ECF can be electronically filed by an attorney or pro se filer by using the Motion to Seal Document(s) event.

A motion to seal a document that has already been filed in CM/ECF can be electronically filed by an attorney or a pro se filer using the Motion to Seal Existing Document event. The previously filed document, which is the subject of the motion, will not be sealed unless or until the court grants the motion to seal.

The motion to seal should also include the proposed sealed document(s). The proposed sealed document(s) will be attached to the motion as a sealed document.

SDPA Committee Updates

A description of SDPA's new and combined committees are below. A list of the new committee members will be available [here](#).

- Ethics and Oversight Committee. Audits the Treasurer's books annually, investigates potential ethical or legal violations, reports findings to the Executive Committee for possible disciplinary action, and provides members with updates on paralegal ethics and professional conduct standards.
- Education Committee. Responsible for planning and managing the association's educational programs, including annual and semi-annual seminars and webinars, in collaboration with NALA and other organizations; tracks attendance, reports activities, and ensures a diverse range of educational opportunities for members.
- Membership Committee. Promotes and manages membership growth, processes new applications and renewals, maintains an up-to-date membership roster, and coordinates with other committees on outreach and reports any misuse of membership information to the Ethics and Oversight Committee.
- Media Committee. Publishes the association's quarterly newsletter, manages social media and the website, assists with promotional materials, and posts job opportunities and updates the Member Portal with relevant information.
- Nominations and Elections Committee. Oversees the nomination and election process for SDPA officers.
- Professional Development Committee. Tracks and reports developments in case law and professional standards affecting paralegals, promotes community engagement, and collaborates with other committees to enhance the visibility and professional reputation of SDPA through education and outreach.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Job Bank

There are currently 9 openings in the job bank. A complete list with descriptions, is available on our [website](#). Employers seeking paralegals and/or legal staff, can contact any of our committee members.

Paralegal – Pierre Office of Atty General
Legal Assistant/Secretary – Rapid Atty Robert Rohl
U.S. District Court Deputy Clerk – Pierre U.S. District Court
U.S. District Court Supervisory Deputy Clerk – Pierre U.S. District Court
Paralegal/Legal Assistant – Sioux Falls Johnson, Janklow & Abdallah, LLP
Executive Assistant – Rapid City Sanford Black Hills Ortho & Spine Center
Paralegal/Legal Assistant – Sioux Falls Redstone Law Firm
Paralegal/Legal Assistant – Belle Fourche Butte Co. State's Attorney Office
Paralegal – Sioux Falls Davenport, Evans, Hurwitz & Smith.

Members: Laura Stewart, Chair
✉: lstewart@fullerandwilliamson.com
Kayne Larimer
✉: kayne.larimer@amatteroflaw.com



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South Dakota Supreme Court DECISIONS

Estate of Webb

2026 S.D. 2 * January 14, 2026
Contracts, Family Law, Trusts & Estates

State v. Huante

2026 S.D. 6 * February 4, 2026
Criminal Law

Kaiser Trucking, Inc. v. Liberty Mutual

2026 S.D. 5 * February 4, 2026
Insurance Law

Hamer v. Duffy

2026 S.D. 4 * February 4, 2026
Personal Injury, Transportation Law

Wells Fargo v. Myers

2026 S.D. 10 * February 18, 2026
Civil Procedure, Consumer Law, Legal Ethics, Professional Malpractice & Ethics

State v. Janes

2026 S.D. 9 * February 18, 2026
Criminal Law

Read the full decisions [here](#).

SOUTH DAKOTA SUPREME COURT ADOPTS NEW RULES

Check them out [here](#).

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA
In the Supreme Court
I, Shirley A. Jensen-Fergal, Clerk of the Supreme Court of
South Dakota, hereby certify that the within instrument is a true
and correct copy of the original filed on the same appears
on record in my office. In witness whereof, I have hereunto set
my hand and affixed the seal of said Court at Pierre, South
Dakota, this 25th day of FEB 2026.

IN THE SUPREME COURT SUPREME COURT
STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA
OF THE FILED
STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA FEB 25 2026

Shirley A. Jensen-Fergal
Clerk

IN THE MATTER OF THE ADOPTION OF)
A NEW RULE TO PROVIDE FOR THE)
DISCHARGE OF FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS) RULE 26-05
THREE YEARS FOLLOWING NOTICE OF)
DEATH OF A DEFENDANT)

A hearing was held on February 11, 2026, at Pierre, South Dakota, relating to the adoption of a new rule to provide for the discharge of financial obligations three years following notice of death of a defendant, and the Court having considered the proposed adoption and oral presentation relating thereto, now, therefore, it is

ORDERED that a new rule be adopted to read in its entirety as follows:

Any court-ordered financial obligation due and owing in a criminal proceeding, habeas corpus or abuse and neglect case, must be terminated three years following notice of death of the party owing the court-ordered financial obligation unless the court orders otherwise upon motion of the parties or victim. The Unified Judicial System shall provide the state's attorney, county auditor and victim, if applicable, notice of the date of death when that information is received.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this rule shall become effective July 1, 2026.

DATED at Pierre, South Dakota, this 25th day of February, 2026.

BY THE COURT:
Steven R. Jensen
Steven R. Jensen, Chief Justice

ATTEST
[Signature]
Clerk of the Supreme Court
(SEAL)

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA
In the Supreme Court
I, Shirley A. Jensen-Fergal, Clerk of the Supreme Court of
South Dakota, hereby certify that the within instrument is a true
and correct copy of the original filed on the same appears
on record in my office. In witness whereof, I have hereunto set
my hand and affixed the seal of said Court at Pierre, South
Dakota, this 25th day of FEB 2026.

SUPREME COURT
STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA
FILED
FEB 25 2026

Shirley A. Jensen-Fergal
Clerk

IN THE MATTER OF THE ADOPTION OF A)
NEW RULE TO PROVIDE REMOTE ACCESS) RULE 26-05
TO TRUST DOCUMENTS FOR ATTORNEYS)
OF RECORD)

A hearing was held on February 11, 2026, at Pierre, South Dakota, relating to the adoption of a new rule to provide remote access to trust documents for attorneys of record, and the Court having considered the proposed adoption and oral presentation relating thereto, now, therefore, it is

ORDERED that a new rule to be placed in SDCL chapter 21-22 be adopted in its entirety as follows:

The Unified Judicial System shall provide remote online access to the court file to the attorney of record for a court trust or other trust, as indicated in the court record, through a secured online portal.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this rule shall become effective March 31, 2026.

DATED at Pierre, South Dakota, this 25th day of February, 2026.

BY THE COURT:
Steven R. Jensen
Steven R. Jensen, Chief Justice

ATTEST
[Signature]
Clerk of the Supreme Court
(SEAL)

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA
In the Supreme Court
I, Shirley A. Jensen-Fergal, Clerk of the Supreme Court of
South Dakota, hereby certify that the within instrument is a true
and correct copy of the original filed on the same appears
on record in my office. In witness whereof, I have hereunto set
my hand and affixed the seal of said Court at Pierre, South
Dakota, this 25th day of FEB 2026.

IN THE SUPREME COURT
OF THE
STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA

IN THE MATTER OF THE PROPOSED) RULE 26-08
AMENDMENT TO THE APPENDIX TO)
SDCL CH. 25-4A CUSTODY AND)
VISITATION RIGHTS)

A hearing was held on February 11, 2026, at Pierre, South Dakota, relating to the amendments to the Appendix of SDCL Ch. 25-4A, and the Court having considered the proposed amendments and oral and written presentation relating thereto, now, therefore, it is

ORDERED that the amendments to the Appendix of SDCL Ch. 25-4A be adopted to read in its entirety as follows:

Enforcement
These guidelines are required to be served with the Summons and Complaint in a divorce, paternity action, or any other custody action or proceeding.
See <https://ujs.sd.gov/self-help/family-law-help/> under divorce or paternity actions for instructions on how to initiate an action (service of summons).

If the parents are able to agree to a schedule other than the guidelines, these guidelines should be used as a **minimum** direction in creating the parenting time plan. Parents should agree to parenting times that they find reasonable and in the best interest of their children and the Parenting Guidelines are not intended to prevent such agreements.

Parental Agreements Encouraged:
Parents are both allowed and encouraged to work together and create a parenting plan for their child(ren) after giving meaningful consideration of the needs and abilities of the child(ren) and parents involved in their specific situation. These guidelines are intended to provide guidance regarding the **minimum** parenting time children should have with parents in order to ensure meaningful contact and allow for the parent/child relationship. Parents should agree to parenting time they find reasonable and in the best interests of their children. These Parenting Guidelines are intended to provide guidance and fill in the gaps when parents are unable to reach an agreement and are not intended to prevent agreements.

IN THE SUPREME COURT
OF THE
STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA

IN THE MATTER OF THE ADOPTION OF A)
NEW RULE ESTABLISHING MINIMUM) RULE 26-07
QUALIFICATIONS OF CHILD CUSTODY)
EVALUATORS AND MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS)
OF REPORTS SETTING FORTH EVALUATOR'S)
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO)
COURTS TO BE ADDED TO SDCL CHAPTER)
25-4A CUSTODY AND VISITATION RIGHTS)

A hearing was held on February 11, 2026, at Pierre, South Dakota, relating to the adoption of a new rule establishing minimum qualifications of child custody evaluators and minimum requirements of reports setting forth evaluator's findings and recommendations to courts to be added to SDCL chapter 25-4A Custody and Visitation Rights, and the Court having considered the proposed adoption and oral presentation relating thereto, now, therefore, it is

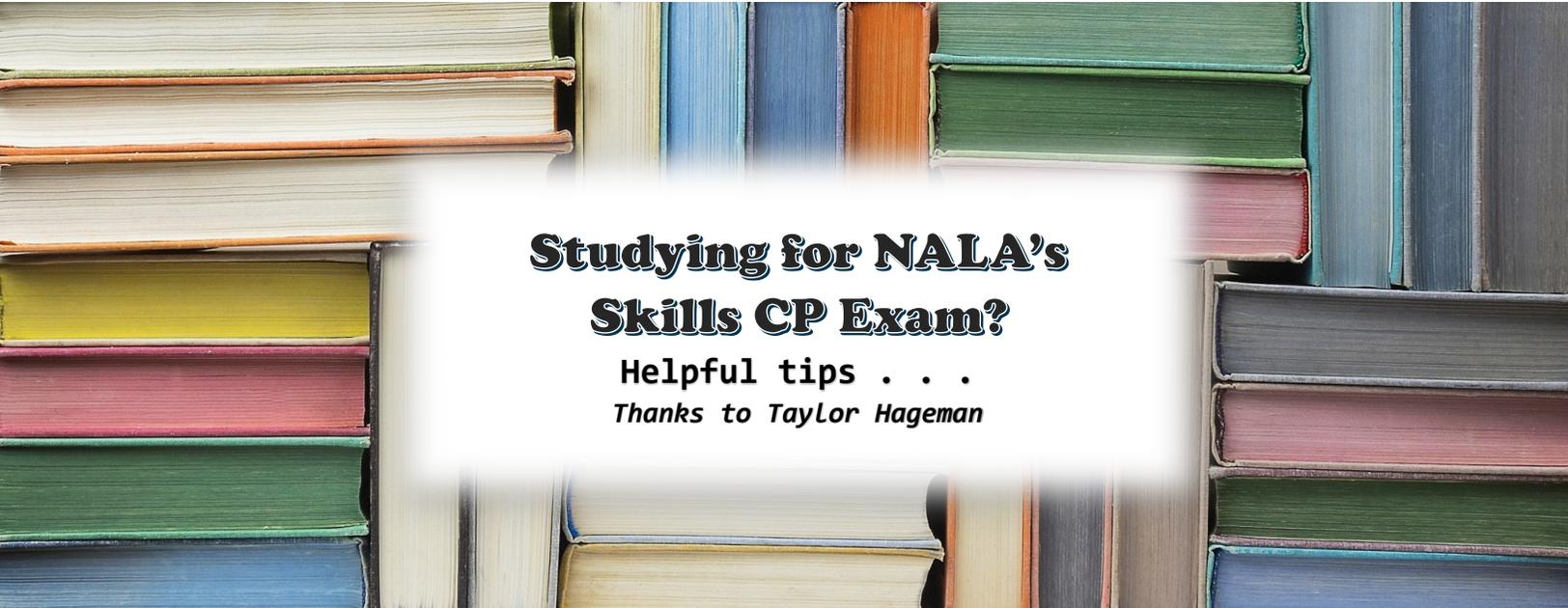
ORDERED that a new rule to be placed in SDCL chapter 25-4A be adopted in its entirety as follows:

Section 1. Custody and Parenting Time Disputes - Appointment of Custody Evaluator.

In any custody or visitation dispute between parents, the court may appoint a custody evaluator to assist the court in determining the best interests of the child.

Section 2. Custody Evaluator Appointment at Party Request or on Court's Own Motion.

At the request of either party, or on the court's own motion, a custody evaluator may be appointed in any custody or parenting time proceeding. The parties may agree to use a custody evaluator, subject to approval by the court, or the court may designate a custody evaluator for the parties to use.



Studying for NALA's Skills CP Exam?

Helpful tips . . .
Thanks to Taylor Hageman

1. Read statutes or law given.
2. Take notes on possible issues from law given.
3. Read facts section, categorize facts with potential issues.
4. Determine and write Issues--number based on priority.
5. Determine answer for each issue.
6. Write Discussion using IRAC: Issue, Rule, Analysis, Conclusion for each issue.
7. Write Conclusion using conclusion sentences in Discussion.
8. Write Facts based on Issues - only use facts given.
9. Set up Memorandum with Introduction.
10. Proofread.

In addition to NALA's Study Manual, there are many Facebook groups, study videos online, and SDPA has a set of Leadership materials available if members want to start a study group. Don't miss out on opportunities to advance your personal and career skills.



Shake off those winter blues . . .
SPRING is on the horizon.

Happy SPRING SDPA!

