



The key role of non-lawyer practitioners

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Over the last 20 years, a variety of different states have developed efforts to try to provide for non-lawyer practitioners with varying degrees of success. The intention was simple: provide affordable legal services to those who cannot afford an attorney but need help. [With 1 out of 10 people in the United States involved in newly filed cases each year and 3 out of 5 in civil cases](#) not having a lawyer, state courts have been trying to help people who otherwise will not be able to afford access legal representation. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, several states have made changes in this area.

Colorado recently approved a preliminary report recommending allowing [Licensed legal paraprofessionals \(LLP\)](#). It will permit LLPs to assist a client only in the practice areas for which the LLP is licensed (specific family law matters, such as temporary separation, divorce, parentage, cohabitant abuse, civil stalking, custody, support, name change, forcible entry and detainer, and debt collection matters in which the dollar amount at issue does not exceed the statutory limit for small claims cases). It will require that participants meet the hours of experience, examination, and degree.

Utah's [Rule 14-802](#) created the [Licensed Paralegal Practitioner \(LPP\)](#). They require participation in a formal education program, an examination, and 1,500 hours of law-related experience to obtain a license. The program is administered by the Utah State Bar as delegated by the Utah Supreme Court, and the LPP is subject to ethical standards and completion of required continuing legal education.

In Washington, the state's supreme court in 2020 opted to sunset that state's [Limited License Legal Technician \("LLLT"\)](#) program. First developed in 2012, the program was restricted to the family law practice area. [Under the June 2020 letter from the state's supreme court](#), current legal technicians in good standing may continue to be licensed and may continue to provide services. Individuals already in the pipeline as of June 4, 2020 and who completed all the requirements to be licensed as a LLLT by July 31, 2021 may do so as well. The court cited to the overall costs of sustaining the program and the small number of interested individuals in reaching its sunset decision.

That said, there were some positive aspects of the Washington program. [The Surprising Success Of Washington State's Limited License Legal Technician Program](#) found that “the program allows assisting clients and also creates opportunities for law firms that offer the services of LLLT to their clients within the same firm as those that cannot pay the lawyers’ fees.” The National Center for State Courts also issued a [preliminary report](#) on the Washington LLLT program.

Does your state allow unrepresented litigants to utilize non-lawyer practitioners? Share your experiences with us at Knowledge@ncsc.org or call 800-616-6164. Follow the National Center for State Courts on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [Vimeo](#).

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