

CAPA HISTORY

By Delaina Finch

One of the benefits of VCPA is being a member of the California Alliance of Paralegal Associations (CAPA). VCPA receives information on the growth and development of the paralegal profession in California through VCPA's CAPA Primary and Secondary Representatives.

There are a total of 13 paralegal associations that are members of CAPA. Through the alliance of these associations, we have a statewide networking system for our members. We reciprocate with salary surveys, newsletters, substantive issues, educational conferences, legislative matters and statewide benefits.

Through our busy schedules, we tend to forget some of the major events that have been accomplished through CAPA. I thought that this would be the perfect time to go back through the history of CAPA and capture some of the highlights of what CAPA learned and accomplished from the past to develop and improve the paralegal profession as it is today.

On November 20, 1976, four paralegal associations joined together to establish a statewide paralegal organization. The founders were San Francisco, East Bay (Alameda County), Los Angeles and the California Public Sector. The purpose was to promote:

- Communication
- Cooperation
- Mutual assistance throughout the state while allowing each organization to remain individually autonomous

Based upon this purpose, they agreed upon the name of this new statewide organization: California Alliance of Paralegal Associations. Their first major project was to research and develop accreditation and certification programs.

From 1977 through 1980, CAPA focused on the organization and adopted bylaws and articles of association. CAPA also approved the applications of San Diego and Sacramento for membership in CAPA. During this time period, the California Public Sector terminated, thus bringing the number of membership to five associations.

In 1981 the following projects were developed:

- Procedures manual
- Outreach program to aid in finding paralegal associations
- Monitor statewide issues and research potential grants
- Focus on enhancing the visibility of the Alliance through greater publicity efforts

- Write and maintain a history of the Alliance

Based upon the efforts of the ongoing Outreach Committee, membership has increased to 13 associations, which provides a good representation of the paralegals throughout California. The area covers as far north as Sacramento and as far south as San Diego.

In 1982, the Law Office Management Section (now LPMT) of the California State Bar invited a member of CAPA to serve on their advisory board. This was a milestone for the paralegal profession because this was the first Section of the State Bar that opened its doors to recognize and include paralegals. The CAPA liaison actively participates in educational workshops, marketing strategies, and other State Bar events of each section. Currently, four Sections of the California State Bar have graciously welcomed CAPA directors to serve as liaisons: Law Practice Management & Technology Section, Public Law Section, Litigation Section, and Solo & Small Firm Section.

In 1983, CAPA established a quarterly newsletter, *RECAP*, which was limited to one page of deadlines and goals. Today the *RECAP* covers articles on various areas of substantive law, reports from the CAPA Liaisons on the four Sections of the California State Bar, and reports on the activity of various paralegal associations and other articles relating to the paralegal profession.

In 1984, CAPA was incorporated. Effective January 1, 1985, CAPA's fiscal year was established as the calendar year, January 1 through December 31. Meetings were expanded to three meetings a year: February, June and November.

In 1986, CAPA participated in the State Bar Convention for the first time, and also presented a computer-related workshop, which was well attended. In 1987, CAPA presented a seminar at the State Bar Convention entitled, "Paralegals + Productivity = Profitability." The seminar was favorably received by more than 45 attorneys. CAPA has been committed to annually participate in the State Bar Convention as an exhibitor and seminar participant to encourage and inform attorneys of paralegal utilization and the awareness of the paralegal profession.

In 1988, a facilitator was invited at a meeting to assist CAPA in setting goals for 1988 and in the future. This was another milestone for CAPA, because the goals became realistic by recognizing short term and long term commitments and setting deadlines for accomplished goals. Thus, on June 24, 1988, CAPA had its first proclamation recognizing "Paralegal Day;" a CAPA Administrative Manual was created, which is known as "Big Blue" today; a Task Force on Certification was formed; and in 1989 CAPA had its first annual educational conference, hosted by LAPA.

During CAPA weekend meetings, the hosting association has a reception on Friday to socialize and welcome all the association primary and secondary representatives. These social events are also great for brainstorming ideas. Which brings to mind in 1988, the groups' creativity in fundraising ideas. CAPA members decided on a sweatshirt sale and

proceeded to come up with paralegal slogans to be printed on the back of the sweatshirts, such as: “Paralegals Support the Bar,” “Behind Every Good Paralegal is a Successful Attorney,” “Paralegals Make \$ense,” “Born to Bill,” “Behind Every Successful Attorney is an Exhausted Paralegal.” The following was the winning slogan that was printed on the sweatshirts:

Para what?

Paramedic

Parakeet

Paralegal

CAPA sold over 177 slogan sweatshirts.

In 1992, CAPA published the *Handbook on Paralegal Utilization*. This is a valuable resource tool that provides a brief history of the paralegal profession; various paralegal job descriptions; flowchart on utilizing litigation professionals; how to locate, hire and retain qualified paralegals; list of California and national cases on recovery of paralegal fees; and other resources on the paralegal profession. The last update was in February, 2002 and can be purchased through CAPA for \$15.

1992 marked another milestone for CAPA. The Task Force on Certification presented a statewide certification survey and found that the majority of paralegals favored a specialty exam with the highest requested specialty in litigation. CAPA kept its focus on this theory, and in 1994, CAPA and the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) worked together to develop the CAPA specialty exam. In 1995, CAPA appointed the first certification committee, known today, as the Commission for Advanced California Paralegal Specialization, Inc. (CACPS). In December 1996 CACPS offered the first advanced specialty exam in litigation. Currently, there are five California advanced specialty exams: civil litigation, business organizations, real estate, trusts and estates, and family law.

In 1997, CAPA launched its website, which is www.caparalegal.org.

In November 1997, CAPA held its first Leadership Conference in Palm Springs, hosted by the Inland Counties Association of Paralegals ("ICAP.") CAPA continues with Leadership Conferences every other year. These Leadership Conferences assist the paralegal associations in board leadership, enhancement of newsletters, increasing memberships, following corporate responsibilities, fund raising ideas, etc.

In 1997, LPMT and Fresno County sponsored CAPA’s paralegal definition at the State Bar Conference of Delegates in Long Beach, which was defeated. The CAPA Legislative Committee began to explore other avenues to obtain a statutory paralegal definition.

In 1999, CAPA approved one scholarship per association to attend the annual June Conference. This was a marketing strategy to get more paralegals involved with CAPA and to experience the educational programs and opportunity to network with other paralegals throughout the state.

2000 was another milestone for CAPA. On September 10, 2000, Governor Gray Davis signed Assembly Bill 1761 into law – paralegal definition. After many years of drafting and consensus of CAPA’s affiliated association members, the paralegal definition was adopted in the Business & Professions Code Section 6450, et seq. This project required many years of determination and fortitude of CAPA’s Legislative Committee.

In 2001, CAPA provided a Resource Directory, which was provided to all members of each association. The Resource Directory provides a valuable resource tool of vendors throughout the state.

In 2003, CAPA was approved as an MCLE Provider. Thus, all of CAPA’s educational conferences are MCLE approved. If paralegal associations are not MCLE providers, the associations can have CAPA co-sponsor the association’s general meeting program to offer an MCLE approved program.

These are only a few highlights of CAPA’s accomplishments. Today, CAPA continues to improve and enhance its many projects in the growth and development of the paralegal profession. CAPA’s ongoing and future goals are to continue with excellent educational MCLE approved conferences, leadership conferences, *RECAP* newsletter, review state and federal legislation, enhance the advanced specialty paralegal certifications, continuous development of the CAPA website, and on-going public relations with the California State Bar, NALA, NFPA, AAFPE and other affiliated organizations.