

Press and Outreach Update: May 12, 2025

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Perspectives

The Benefits Of Aligning States On Legal Paraprofessionals

By **Michael Houlberg** | April 23, 2025, 1:23 PM EDT · [Listen to article](#)

Texas is the latest state to consider implementing an allied legal professional, or ALP, program that would allow licensed legal professionals — beyond attorneys — to provide legal advice and other services.[1]



Michael Houlberg

In October 2022, the [Texas Supreme Court](#) requested the Texas Access to Justice Commission to propose "modifications that would allow qualified non-attorney paraprofessionals to provide limited legal services directly to low-income Texans." [2] After receiving the commission's recommendations on new and amended rules that would allow for ALPs, the Texas Supreme Court in August 2024 invited public comments on the new and amended rules and [indicated](#) that the rules were expected to take effect Dec. 1, 2024.

The court has since [delayed](#) the ALP program's effective date, citing in a November 2024 administrative order the need "to give due consideration to the comments received." [3] Just one month later, however, a representative in the [Texas Legislature introduced H.B. 1528](#), which would create an ALP program with slightly different parameters.

Attorneys should be paying close attention to these updates in Texas — and across the nation — because this growing trend represents a significant shift in the legal landscape that offers both opportunities and challenges for practitioners.

This article will explore the rise of ALP programs by examining their qualifications, services, successes and challenges, and discussing what they imply for the future of the legal profession. It will argue that while uniformity isn't essential, increased standardization across state ALP programs will benefit both consumers and the professionals themselves, and that attorneys who adapt to this changing landscape will be best positioned for success.

face significant barriers to accessing legal representation, which often leads them to represent themselves or forgo legal assistance altogether.

While other states were initially slow to follow Washington's lead, momentum has [picked up considerably](#) since 2021. Currently, seven states have implemented ALP programs, and over 10 more are actively considering doing so.[4] Texas is the latest state with a developed proposal.

This recent surge in interest reflects a growing awareness by many key stakeholders — state supreme courts, state bar associations and the public at large — of the potential ALPs have to address the access-to-justice crisis and provide more affordable legal services. It also suggests a shift in attitudes within the legal profession, with more attorneys and policymakers recognizing the value of ALPs as part of a comprehensive approach to delivering legal services.

Program Variations: A State-by-State Approach

While the core goal of expanding access to justice remains consistent, ALP programs differ across states. These variations include requirements for attorney supervision, the types of permissible legal services, testing and certification processes, and educational prerequisites.

For example, while Minnesota and New Hampshire require ALPs to work under the direct supervision of an attorney, Arizona, [Colorado](#), Oregon, Utah and Washington allow for more independent practice. This variation in supervision models reflects differing philosophies on the appropriate level of oversight for ALPs and the balance between ensuring consumer protection and promoting access to justice.

Similarly, differences in permissible legal services reflect varying assessments of the competence and training of ALPs and the types of legal tasks they can effectively handle. Most states limit ALPs to working in family law, landlord-tenant disputes and consumer debt matters — three areas of the law with the highest rates of self-representation.

Arizona, on the other hand, has expanded this list to include administrative law, juvenile law and limited jurisdiction criminal matters. Arizona also allows their ALPs to represent clients in court to the same degree as attorneys, while most other states exclude ALPs from questioning and cross-examining witnesses.

These differences, while allowing states to tailor programs to their specific needs, can create complexities for both consumers and ALPs, particularly as the legal profession — and the country as a whole — are still learning who these professionals are and what they can do.

For consumers, these variations can make it difficult to understand the qualifications and scope of practice of ALPs across different states. For ALPs, the lack of uniformity can create barriers to mobility and limit their ability to serve clients across state lines.

Data-Driven Evolution: Successes and Challenges

for lower- and moderate-income individuals. The Stanford Center on the Legal Profession interviewed Washington limited license legal technicians — the title ALPs hold in Washington — who reported that "the bulk of their clients fall between 200-400% of the federal poverty level." [5]

Most LLLTs also reported that they bill on a sliding scale according to their client's income, with an average billing rate of about \$160 per hour, compared to Washington attorneys, who bill on average between \$300 to \$375 per hour. [6] This increased affordability is crucial for individuals who may not qualify for legal aid but cannot afford standard attorney fees.

This data should also ease one of the main concerns coming from attorneys: that ALPs are going to take their clientele. In fact, some attorneys have recognized that utilizing ALPs within their firms allows them to serve moderate-income clients they previously couldn't reach, expanding their market and freeing up their own time for more complex legal work, such as trial preparation. [7] This suggests that ALPs can be a valuable asset for attorneys, allowing them to better allocate their resources and serve a broader client base.

Furthermore, there is no evidence to support the initial fear that ALPs would provide inadequate or incompetent legal services.

In 2023, Washington and Arizona had the two largest ALP programs. That year, Washington had 81 active LLLTs, who received 5 grievances, compared to 33,661 active lawyers, who received 1,759 grievances. [8] The ratios of practitioners to grievances are roughly the same; however, no disciplinary actions were imposed on LLLTs, while 47 were imposed on lawyers. [9]

Arizona's ALPs — known as legal paraprofessionals — also received a similar ratio of grievances in 2023 as Arizona lawyers. No Arizona legal paraprofessional was disciplined, and 62 lawyers were either reprimanded, suspended or disbarred. [10]

These findings are significant and should soothe attorneys' doubts that ALPs cannot provide competent legal assistance or maintain ethical standards.

Challenges

Some remaining challenges include educating both consumers and legal professionals about the role and scope of ALPs, and ensuring consistent quality of service across different ALP programs.

Educating consumers and legal professionals about ALPs is crucial for promoting understanding and acceptance of this new role in the legal system, in addition to ensuring ALPs are able to help as many people as possible.

Ensuring consistent quality among ALP programs is clearly vital, but it requires states to become more unified in their licensing process, including educational, training and testing requirements, as well as their ongoing monitoring and evaluation procedures.

The variations in state programs also pose a challenge for ALPs seeking to practice in multiple

Allowing ALPs to practice to the full extent of their training and competence will maximize their impact on access to justice. Arizona is a great example of this, as it permits ALPs to work in family law, civil law, criminal law, administrative law and juvenile law, and to work cases from start to finish including full in-court representation.

Restricting the ALP scope of practice, on the other hand, can limit ALPs' ability to address the diverse legal needs of their clients and prevent them from fully using their skills and knowledge.

Clarity and Marketability

A more uniform approach would provide greater clarity for consumers about the qualifications of and services offered by ALPs. It would also make it easier to market these professionals nationwide, increasing their visibility and accessibility.

Increased clarity would empower consumers to make informed choices about their legal representation and facilitate the growth of the ALP profession.

Reciprocity

Standardization, particularly regarding whether ALPs are licensed to practice more independently or required to be directly supervised by attorneys, would facilitate reciprocity between states, which would allow ALPs to move and practice more easily. This is crucial for ensuring that ALPs can serve clients across state lines and promoting the growth of the profession.

Many attorneys have expanded their reach by obtaining reciprocity in multiple states, thereby creating a more national practice without having to sit for the bar exam in each state. Reciprocity among ALP programs would create similar advantages for ALPs.

Expanded reach for ALPs would also promote greater access to legal services, as there would be more ALPs available beyond those living in a particular state.

Without reciprocity, ALPs are limited in their ability to serve only clients who reside in the same state, which hinders their reach in this ever-advancing technological world.

The Future of ALPs: Adapt or Be Left Behind

As Texas looks to create an ALP program, it is the latest state to highlight that these programs are not just a passing trend. They are steadily growing, and their impact on the legal profession will only increase in the coming years.

As more data becomes available, it is likely that state programs will begin to converge, adopting best practices and refining their approaches. This convergence through standardization will also foster a clearer understanding among legal professionals of the ALP role and how it integrates into existing structures, while empowering consumers with better access to information about diverse representation options beyond the often-daunting prospect of self-representation.

expertise will be better equipped to meet the changing needs of their clients and remain competitive in the legal market.

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"Perspectives" is a regular feature written by guest authors on access to justice issues. To pitch article ideas, email expertanalysis@law360.com.

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[1] IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System at the University of Denver, uses the term "allied legal professionals" to refer to a newer category of legal professionals who are authorized to provide specific legal services in particular areas of the law, often independently without attorney supervision and at a lower cost than the market rate for attorneys.

[2] https://www.texasattj.org/sites/default/files/2022_10%20ATJC%20Referral%20Letter%20%281%29.pdf

[3] <https://www.txcourts.gov/media/1459458/249095.pdf>.

[4] IAALS has developed a knowledge center on ALP programs, which includes a map that shows where each state is in its process of developing an ALP program:

<https://iaals.du.edu/projects/allied-legal-professionals/knowledge-center>.

[5] <https://law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/LLLT-White-Paper-Final-5-4-21.pdf> (pg. 16).

[6] <https://law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/LLLT-White-Paper-Final-5-4-21.pdf> (pg. 20).

[7] <https://law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/LLLT-White-Paper-Final-5-4-21.pdf> (pg. 19).

[8] https://www.wsba.org/docs/default-source/licensing/discipline/2023-wa-discipline-system-annual-report.pdf?sfvrsn=44f81ef1_9 (pgs. 8, 26).

[9] https://www.wsba.org/docs/default-source/licensing/discipline/2023-wa-discipline-system-annual-report.pdf?sfvrsn=44f81ef1_9 (pgs. 8, 26).

[10] <https://www.azcourts.gov/arc/Annual-Reports> (pg. 8):

THE SUPREME COURT OF WASHINGTON

ORDER ON THE JOINT)
ADMINISTRATION POLICY BETWEEN)
THE WASHINGTON STATE BAR)
ASSOCIATION AND THE SUPREME)
COURT BOARDS)
_____)

ORDER
NO. 25700-B-731

The Washington Supreme Court has plenary authority over the practice of law in Washington. The Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) serves under the delegated authority of the Court in regulating and administering licenses to practice law in Washington and effectuating other purposes and functions as set forth in General Rule (GR) 12 and 12.1 – 12.5.

On April 2, 2025, the Court reviewed a proposed Joint Administration Policy Between the Washington State Bar Association and the Supreme Court Boards approved by the Board of Governors at its July 19, 2024, meeting.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

That the Joint Administration Policy Between the Washington State Bar Association and the Supreme Court Boards, as described above and as provided in the attached copy of the policy, is approved by this Court and shall be given full force and effect.

DATED at Olympia, Washington this 4th day of April, 2025.

For the court


CHIEF JUSTICE

Joint Administration Policy Between the Washington State Bar Association and the Supreme Court Boards

1.0 Introduction

Under Washington State Court [General Rule 12.3](#), the Supreme Court (Court) delegates to the Washington State Bar Association (WSBA),

“[t]he authority and responsibility to administer certain boards and committees established by court rule or order. This delegation of authority includes providing and managing staff, overseeing the boards and committees to monitor their compliance with the rules and orders that authorize and regulate them, paying expenses reasonably and necessarily incurred pursuant to a budget approved by the Board of Governors, performing other functions and taking other actions as provided in court rule or order or delegated by the Supreme Court, or taking other actions as are necessary and proper to enable the board or committee to carry out its duties or functions.”

Supreme Court Boards (Boards) report directly to the Court. The duties and functions these Boards perform on behalf of the Court are important to the public, the Court, and WSBA and its members.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all current and future Supreme Court Boards administered by WSBA.

3.0 Board Independence

Supreme Court Boards are created by and derive their authority from the Washington Supreme Court. Boards set their own priorities and goals and determine how to carry out their duties and functions as authorized by the Supreme Court. Boards' independence does not limit WSBA's authority or responsibilities under GR 12.3 or to direct its own activities, including taking action to protect the WSBA from liability.

3.1 Effect of Court Rules and Statutes on Board or Committee Independence

Boards are subject to Washington Statutes, and Washington court rules and orders, including such court orders or rules that authorized the Board, and which regulate each Board's duties and functions. This specifically includes GR 12.4 governing records and public access to records.

3.2 WSBA's Administration of Boards

WSBA recognizes that GR 12.3 provides each Board independence in terms of carrying out its activities consistent with any Court order or rule authorizing its existence. WSBA and the Boards will work cooperatively and maintain respect for the Boards' independence as needed to ensure that the Boards can carry out

their duties and functions as authorized by the Supreme Court and that the WSBA can fulfill its duties under GR 12.3.

3.3 Communication with the Public

WSBA acknowledges that Boards have the authority to communicate with the public. Boards will not state that any communication is being made on behalf of WSBA. Boards will not use WSBA letterhead for any public communication. Boards will not knowingly engage in any communications that would subject the WSBA to liability. If there is a reasonable question as to the risk a communication might pose, Boards will seek input from the Executive Director prior to publishing or distributing the communication. The prohibition on using WSBA letterhead does not apply to communications related to regulatory matters.

3.4 Lobbying Activities

WSBA acknowledges that Boards, in order to carry out their mission, may take positions on matters of public interest. These positions may include communicating with federal, state, and local governmental and community leaders. Constitutional limitation on the use of compelled license fees apply to the Boards' activities to the extent that they are funded by license fees.

3.5 WSBA Policy Changes

When there is proposed change to a WSBA policy, a proposed adoption of a new WSBA policy, or a WSBA proposal to change a Court rule, that the Executive Director believes will directly affect a Board's activities or functions, The Executive Director or their designee will notify the potentially affected Board(s) of the proposal as soon as is practicable and prior to final action, so each Board shall have the opportunity for comment with the Board of Governors, the Executive Director, and the Court.

3.6 Board Action

When a Board is considering taking action that it believes may expose the WSBA to liability, the Board chair will take steps to ensure that the WSBA Executive Director receives notice of the proposed action. The notice will be given so that the WSBA will have adequate time to provide input into the Board's decision-making process.

4.0 Staffing

The Executive Director provides and manages staff for each Board.

4.1 Staff Liaison

The Executive Director shall assign a staff member to serve as a Staff Liaison to each Board. The Staff Liaison shall serve as the primary contact between the Board and WSBA. The Executive Director shall allocate additional staff time to

support each Board in carrying out its duties and functions based on the projected workload for the Board and overall WSBA capacity.

4.2 Staff Liaison Responsibilities and Duties

The WSBA Staff Liaison will work with the Board and make available other WSBA resources as needed and available given WSBA's overall capacity.

The Staff Liaison is not a member of the Board. The Staff Liaison will not vote on matters before a Board that requires Board approval. The presence or absence of the Staff Liaison at any meeting does not affect the quorum for a meeting.

Although a Staff Liaison represents WSBA to the Board it is not the responsibility of the Staff Liaison to direct how the Board proceeds.

4.3 Staff Liaison and Support Personnel are WSBA Employees

Staff Liaisons supporting a Board are WSBA employees and will be hired and have their job performance evaluated per the WSBA Employee Handbook and other WSBA personnel policies.

When evaluating the performance of WSBA staff, the Executive Director, through their representative, should solicit feedback from each Board regarding the performance of the Staff Liaison and any supporting staff working with that Board.

The Board is not involved in the hiring of WSBA staff. However, with any employee whose primary or exclusive role is to support the duties and functions of a Board, WSBA should seek and may receive input from the Board as to skills and experience required for the role.

4.4 Board or Committee Membership

Each Board or Committee will add members to the Board and Committee per the Court rule or order that authorized and regulates the Board or Committee.

4.5 Board of Governors Liaison

The WSBA President may appoint a liaison between the Board of Governors and a Board.

The Board of Governor Liaison is not a member of the Board. They will not vote on matters before a Board that require Board approval. The presence or absence of the Board of Governors Liaison does not affect the quorum for a meeting.

4.6 Internal Structure of a Board

Unless otherwise defined by the court order or rule which authorizes and regulates a Board, the internal structure, such as the creation of subcommittees and appointment of members to such subcommittees, designating a chair or sub-chairs, and other decisions about how the Board conducts its duties and functions, is the sole province of each Board.

5.0 Oversight and Compliance Monitoring

Consistent with GR 12.3, WSBA shall oversee and monitor the compliance of Court Boards with the court rules and orders which authorize and regulate it. This includes GR 12.4 and First Amendment limitations relating to use of compelled license fees.

5.1 Reporting to the Court and WSBA

Boards shall submit an annual report to the Court and submit a copy of the report to the Executive Director and the Board of Governors. Boards shall submit other reports as stated in the court rules and orders authorizing them.

If the court rule or order which authorizes or regulates each Board is silent on the structure of an annual report the Board shall decide the format of the report.

5.2 Resolving Compliance Issues

5.2.1 Good Faith Standard—First Attempt to Resolve

If the Staff Liaison has a good faith belief that a Board is not complying with the court rules or orders which authorize and regulate the Board, the Staff Liaison shall first attempt to resolve the matter with the Board.

5.2.2 Escalation to Executive Director

If resolution fails and/or if the Staff Liaison is unable to address the matter directly, the Staff Liaison shall report any perceived non-compliance issue to the WSBA Executive Director who should attempt to work directly with the Board to resolve the issue.

5.2.3 Escalation to the Court

If these parties cannot resolve the matter, it may be presented to the Court for resolution.

6.0 Budget and Expenditures

6.1 Annual WSBA Budget Process

The Staff Liaison works collaboratively with the Board, and the Executive Director or their designee, to develop a budget that will allow the Board to fulfill its duties and functions, consistent with the rules and orders that authorize and regulate the Board.

The Board's budget will be submitted for approval to the Board of Governors as part of WSBA's overall budget.

WSBA and the Board of Governors cannot pass a budget for a Board without an opportunity for the Board to provide input to the WSBA and Board of Governors.

6.2 Funding Outside the Annual Budget Process

A Board may request additional funding outside of the budget cycle.

Such requests should be submitted to the Executive Director and will be considered by the Executive Director, the Budget & Audit Committee, or Board of Governors as authorized by WSBA Fiscal Policies & Procedures.

6.3 Funding a Board Duties and Functions as Described by GR 12.3

All reasonable and necessary Board duties and functions as defined by each Board's court order or rule must remain funded at a level that ensures the duties and functions can be met. The Boards acknowledge that WSBA has the authority to establish the budget for the WSBA and the Boards. The WSBA acknowledges that this authority cannot be used to interfere with a Board's independence as defined in section 3.0.

6.4 Board Fundraising

A Board may seek additional funding, above and beyond the funding which WSBA provides, including grants for a particular duty or function from a government, private, or public sector entity.

If a Board raises such funds, then WSBA shall not reduce the budget of the Board because of the funds raised, unless it is for the same work.

As a Board is not a legal entity entitled to have and manage a bank account, the Board will need to seek the approval of WSBA, the Washington State Bar Foundation (WSBF), or with the approval of WSBA or the Court another appropriate entity to accept and manage such funds on behalf of the Board.

7.0 Other Actions

Consistent with GR 12.3, WSBA may engage in other activities that are necessary and proper to enable Boards to carry out their duties and functions consistent with the overall capacity of WSBA. This might include access to other WSBA resources and teams, including communication channels, design and publication services, website presence, financial analysis, WSBA technology, and continuing legal education.

8.0 Immunity & Indemnification

8.1 Immunity

If a court order or rule that authorizes and regulates a Board extends immunity to the Board and the members serving on a Board, WSBA shall cooperate with the Board and the Court to provide and defend such immunity.

8.2 Indemnification from Lawsuits

WSBA Bylaw Article XIV indemnification applies to members of court created boards described by this policy to the same extent as volunteers appointed by the WSBA.