

1 Candace J. Mitchell, L.P. (500033)  
2 **Veritas Family Law, LLC**  
3 4915 W. Bell Road, F-204  
4 Glendale, AZ 85308  
5 [Candace.thude@veritasfamilylaw.com](mailto:Candace.thude@veritasfamilylaw.com)  
6 Phone: (623)695-6953  
7 Arizona Legal Paraprofessional

8 **SUPERIOR COURT OF ARIZONA**  
9 **IN MARICOPA COUNTY**

10 In Re the Matter of:

11 **PETITION TO AMEND RULE 31.3(e)(4),**  
12 **ARIZONA RULES OF SUPREME**  
13 **COURT**

Supreme Court No. R-

Petition to Amend Rule 31.3(e)(4),  
Arizona Rules of Supreme Court

14 Pursuant to Rule 28, the Arizona Rules of the Supreme Court, **Candace J. Mitchell,**  
15 **L.P.**, Arizona Legal Paraprofessional, respectfully petitions this Court to adopt  
16 amendments to Rule 31.3(e)(4), Arizona Rules of Supreme Court, governing certified legal  
17 document preparers and legal paraprofessionals of whom may perform services in  
18 compliance with the Arizona Code of Judicial Administration.

19 **I. Background and Purpose of the Proposed Rule Amendments.**

20 The Task Force on the Delivery of Legal Services submitted their *Petition to restyle*  
21 *and amend Rule 31; amend Rules 32, 41, 42 (ERs 1.0, 1.5-1.8, 1.17, 5.1, 5.3, 5.4, 5.7), 46-*  
22 *51, 54-58, 60, 75 and 76, Ariz. R. Sup. Ct.; and adopt new Rule 33.1, Ariz. R. Sup. Ct* so as  
23 to propose expanding the universe of legal professionals in Arizona by adopting a new  
24

1 category of nonlawyer legal-service providers. At the time of its submission, the Task  
2 Force opted for the title of “limited license legal practitioner (“LLLP”). Thereafter, a final  
3 Order was issued Amending the Rules of the Supreme Court abrogating current Supreme  
4 Court Rule 31 and the Oath of Admission and the Lawyer’s Creed of Professionalism that  
5 follow the rule and replacing them with the adoption of new Rules 31, 31.1, 31.2, and 31.3  
6 in accordance with proposed Attachment #1 to that order, of which due to be effective  
7 January 1, 2021, thereby giving birth to the “Legal Paraprofessional”.

9 Here, this Petition will advocate for changing the title of the Arizona legal  
10 paraprofessional to “Legal Practitioner” based on the information provided by the Allied  
11 Legal Professionals national framework set forth by the Institute for the Advancement of  
12 the American Legal System (IAALS) for program growth, based on the experiences of the  
13 current practicing legal paraprofessionals themselves -- as it is important to highlight the  
14 evolving role of legal paraprofessionals as nonlawyers and how the proposed title better  
15 reflects their responsibilities and contributions to the legal ecosystem -- and touching base  
16 on the growing need and support of lawyers and nonlawyers alike to participate in *pro bono*  
17 services wherein a title of a person directly impacts how individuals and their involvement  
18 in *pro bono* services. Subsequently, here are detailed arguments to support this change.

21 **Professional Recognition.**

22 The term “Legal Practitioner” carries a more professional and inclusive connotation  
23 rather than “legal paraprofessional.” The title acknowledges the diverse range of tasks and  
24

1 responsibilities undertaken by individuals in this role and it aligns with the broader national  
2 framework for legal paraprofessionals. Such a change would help elevate the status of  
3 legal paraprofessionals and reinforce their integral role in the legal system. In the past,  
4 titles such as "Attorney" or "Esquire" have conveyed a responsibility to serve the  
5 community and provide legal help to those in need. Communities trust that when they  
6 require assistance, attorneys can offer the necessary aid. Embracing the title "Legal  
7 Practitioner," akin to the role of a "Nurse Practitioner" in healthcare, has the potential to  
8 shape and enhance the public perception of legal paraprofessionals. Ultimately, these titles  
9 play a crucial role in magnifying the positive influence of their contributions. The Institute  
10 for the Advancement of the American Legal Justice System issued their publication  
11 wherein the selection of an appropriate title played a vital role in the development of an  
12 Allied Legal Professional ("ALP") component even stating the many different titles up for  
13 consideration and included the statement that, "[t]here was an informal consensus at the  
14 convening around the title "***Legal Practitioner***" for ALPs because it translates well (based  
15 on California's testing described later in this section), it conveys professionalism instead  
16 of including restricting descriptors such as limited and paraprofessional, and it is clear.  
17 "Legal Practitioner" may also be identifiable in comparison to nurse practitioners."<sup>1</sup> (Bold  
18 and italicized for emphasis).

---

24 <sup>1</sup> See Allied Legal Professionals: A National Framework for Program Growth, June 2023, available at  
25 [https://iaals.du.edu/sites/default/files/documents/publications/alp\\_national\\_framework.pdf](https://iaals.du.edu/sites/default/files/documents/publications/alp_national_framework.pdf)



1 A title change to “Legal Practitioner” may encourage career advancement  
2 opportunities for individuals in the field as it suggests a more dynamic and versatile role,  
3 potentially opening doors to expanded responsibilities and promotions. When Loretta Ford  
4 and Henry Silver from the University of Colorado first created the nation’s first nurse  
5 practitioner program in 1965 due to a need for health care among underserved populations,  
6 there was little familiarity of how the implementation of such program would eventually  
7 flourish, leading to the increase of over 234,000 nurse practitioners. Ford, Silver, and their  
8 students encountered resistance, as there was opposition to the title “Nurse Practitioner.”<sup>2</sup>  
9 Concerns surfaced that the term might be misleading and cause confusion. Concerns,  
10 uncertainties, and unease were consistently voiced by both the medical and nursing  
11 communities, as well as the general public and the prevailing sentiment was one of shared  
12 apprehension and doubt. Healthcare professionals feared that Nurse Practitioners might be  
13 perceived as lacking qualifications to offer medical care of which was traditionally  
14 provided by physicians and/or doctors without direct supervision, and that exact concern  
15 was voiced within the 243 comments after the submission of the *Petition to Restyle and*  
16 *Amend Supreme Court Rule 31*. Task forces, educational institutions, and the law school  
17 accreditors have been eager to find ways to bring more diversity to the legal ecosystem.  
18 Embracing the title “Legal Practitioner” could motivate individuals in the legal field to  
19  
20  
21  
22

---

23  
24 <sup>2</sup> See Nurse Practitioners: A Look Back and Moving Forward, authored by Theresa Granger, a professor in  
25 the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, available at <https://dworakpeck.usc.edu/news/nurse-practitioners-look-back-and-moving-forward>.

1 advance in their careers and take on more responsibilities as they climb the professional  
2 hierarchy. This progression might involve moving from roles like legal assistant and  
3 paralegal to becoming a legal practitioner, then advancing further to positions such as  
4 attorney, Judge Pro Tempore, Commissioner, and beyond. This could motivate educational  
5 institutions to establish a pathway for building a more diverse bar, which is crucial for the  
6 credibility of the legal ecosystem by allowing institutions to create scholarships for legal  
7 practitioners that would allow them to apply to law school without standardized testing by  
8 showing their competency within the legal field. The National Association for Law  
9 Placement (NALP) continues to reiterate that annual research shows despite a rise in  
10 employment rate, that bar admission still lacks diversity.<sup>3</sup> Adopting the title of “Legal  
11 Practitioner” will show individuals wishing to enter the legal profession, that our model  
12 mimics that of the healthcare field and will inspire those individuals to continuously pursue  
13 advancement possibilities of which will bring a more diversity to the legal ecosystem and  
14 within rural communities and legal deserts that so desperately need access to justice.

### 15 **National and Global Alignment.**

16  
17  
18  
19 Adopting a title consistent with the national framework submitted by the Institute  
20 for the Advancement of the American Legal System (IAALS) facilitates collaboration and  
21 recognition on a more nationally recognized scale. It allows individuals within the legal  
22

---

23  
24 <sup>3</sup> See 2022 Report on Diversity, authored by the National Association for Law Placement, Inc. (NALP),  
25 January 2023, available at [https://www.nalp.org/uploads/Research/2022NALPReportonDiversity\\_Final.pdf](https://www.nalp.org/uploads/Research/2022NALPReportonDiversity_Final.pdf)

1 field from Arizona to seamlessly integrate into national legal networks. Meaning that  
2 adopting the term “legal practitioner” would be utilized either nationally or within a  
3 particular region of the United States where legal precedence is similar or comparable. As  
4 mentioned earlier, California has undertaken significant efforts and testing to identify a  
5 title that can be readily embraced. Through this process, the title that resonated most  
6 effectively was “Legal Practitioner.” Although additional research and contemplation are  
7 possible, the current moment presents an ideal opportunity to implement the title change  
8 and assess its impact in a comprehensive community setting. Now is the perfect moment  
9 to demonstrate to other states that Arizona is at the forefront of innovation in legal  
10 assistance. Let the Arizona Supreme Court seize this opportunity to showcase our  
11 leadership in pushing the boundaries and setting new standards in the legal field.

### 14 **Enhancing Legal System Efficiency and Pro Bono Work**

15 Recognizing legal paraprofessionals as practitioners emphasizes their active  
16 participation in legal processes, and their contribution to the efficiency of the legal system  
17 and the title change can foster a sense of professional identity, motivating legal  
18 practitioners to continually enhance their skills and stay abreast of legal developments  
19 throughout the legal system. Furthermore, it has the potential to dramatically increase pro  
20 bono efforts and cultivate collaborative partnerships among attorneys and other legal  
21 professionals (financial advisors, mental health professionals, therapeutic interventionists,  
22 etc.), all aiming to extend services to those financially unable to pay. Surprisingly, the 2018  
23  
24  
25

1 report from the American Bar Association highlighted a shocking fact: a whopping 48%  
2 of attorneys did not participate in any pro bono work.<sup>4</sup> This underscores a substantial gap  
3 in delivering crucial services to those in need, where the term "practitioner" becomes  
4 pivotal. By actively participating in the "practice" of pro bono services and offering legal  
5 services at reduced rates, it frees up time for attorneys to dedicate more of their own  
6 valuable time to engaging in pro bono services. Numerous federal authorities champion  
7 broader access to legal services, offering support, funding, and initiatives inclusive of  
8 individuals like legal paraprofessionals, which includes the Legal Services Corporation,  
9 America's Partner for Equal Justice of whom provides approximately 132 independent  
10 non-profit legal aid programs with offices across the nation.<sup>5</sup> However, it is crucial for  
11 these individuals to be officially recognized as "legal practitioners" on a nationwide scale  
12 by federal authorities. This recognition ensures that grants can be allocated to bolster their  
13 efforts in bridging the legal gaps and expanding access to justice. These federal goals  
14 underscore the significance of providing legal paraprofessionals with a title that truly  
15 reflects and aligns with these objectives. The deserving designation for these individuals is  
16 the impactful title, "Legal Practitioner."  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22

---

23 <sup>4</sup> See ABA Profile of the Legal Profession 2023, authored by the American Bar Association, available at  
<https://www.abalegalprofile.com/probono.html>

24 <sup>5</sup> See The Justice Gap: The Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-income Americans authored by The Legal  
25 Services Corporation (LSC), April 2022, available at [https://lsc-  
live.app.box.com/s/xl2v2uraiotbbzrhwtjlgj0emp3myz1](https://lsc-live.app.box.com/s/xl2v2uraiotbbzrhwtjlgj0emp3myz1)

1 II. Contents of the Proposed Amendment to Rule 31.3(e)(4).

2 *(Please note: deletions are reflected by ~~strikethrough~~ and additions are reflected*  
3 *by underline.)*

4 **(4) ~~Legal Document Preparers and Legal Paraprofessionals~~ Legal Practitioners.**

5 Certified legal document preparers and ~~legal paraprofessionals~~ legal practitioners may  
6 perform services in compliance with the Arizona Code of Judicial Administration.  
7 Disbarred or suspended attorneys may only be certified as a legal document preparer or  
8 licensed as a ~~legal paraprofessional~~ legal practitioner if approved by the Supreme Court.

9  
10 **CONCLUSION**

11 Candace J. Mitchell, L.P. respectfully requests that the Court modify Rule  
12 31.3(e)(4) of the Arizona Rules of Supreme Court as requested above.

13 **RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED** this 10<sup>th</sup> day of January 2024.

14  
15  
16 By: /S/ Candace J. Mitchell  
17 Candace J. Mitchell, L.P.  
18 **Veritas Family Law, LLC**  
19 4915 W. Bell Road, F-204  
20 Glendale, AZ 85308  
21 Arizona Legal Paraprofessional

22 Electronic copy filed with the  
23 Clerk of the Supreme Court of Arizona  
24 This 10<sup>th</sup> day of January 2024.

25 By: /S/ Candace J. Mitchell

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

## APPENDIX

### Joint Statement to the Board of Non-Lawyers.

When the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System (IAALS) conducted their research, as communicated in their publication titled "Allied Legal Professionals: A National Framework for Program Growth," they highlighted key discussion points regarding the benefits and challenges associated with different state decisions in developing future programs. Among these challenges was the selection of an appropriate title for the Allied Legal Professionals (ALP) project. (Houlberg & Knowlton, Allied Legal Professionals: A National Framework for Program Growth, 2023). This title needed to strike a balance between clarity and conciseness, conveying professionalism while avoiding the implication that these individuals lacked full qualifications or proper licensing. It must be a meaningful title that conveys professionalism yet does not limit or convey to the public that these individuals are not fully qualified or adequately licensed. Several titles were considered for these Allied Legal Professionals, including the term "Legal Paraprofessional."

Today, we gather to advocate for the adoption of the term "Legal Practitioner" instead of "Legal Paraprofessional." Since obtaining licensure, many legal paraprofessionals have encountered confusion among their clients and within the legal community itself. The term "Legal Paraprofessional" often leads to misunderstandings, suggesting a less serious or less qualified role within the legal profession. In contrast, "Legal Practitioner" exudes professionalism and competence, aligning with the active role that Allied Legal Professionals play in assisting attorneys and clients within the limited legal framework they are approved to practice.

When examining the term "paraprofessional," the Oxford definition describes it as "a person to whom a particular aspect of a professional task is delegated but who is not licensed to practice as a fully qualified professional" or "a trained aide who assists a professional person." (Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2023). Legal Paraprofessionals are, in fact, licensed individuals qualified to practice law within their endorsed scope. They are practitioners by definition, as practitioners are those who engage in a profession. A paraprofessional by definition is not licensed. Legal Paraprofessional Staci Maret often finds herself having to over-explain the difference between a paralegal and a legal paraprofessional, as the titles appear interchangeable. (Maret, 2023). Plainly, the title we currently bear starkly contradicts both its definition and the public's common understanding and textbook definition of a paraprofessional. Thus, this frequently results in confusion and hampers the public's capacity to effectively seek and access the justice this license was designed to facilitate. Legal Paraprofessional Dionne Howell echoes this sentiment in that she often finds herself having to provide a distinct definition to potential clients and current clients so that they understand the difference between a paralegal and a legal paraprofessional. (Howell, 2023).

We strive for a name and role that accurately reflects our responsibilities. Legal paraprofessionals often undertake complex legal tasks, such as legal research, drafting legal

1 documents, and conducting client interviews—contributing significantly to the legal process.  
2 Therefore, using the term "Legal Practitioner" faithfully represents the breadth of their  
3 responsibilities and recognizes their vital contribution to the legal profession. Many individuals  
4 who have become licensed as Legal Paraprofessionals have been the foundation of the legal field  
5 for years, if not decades, sharing their expertise and knowledge along the way.

6 Adopting the title "Legal Practitioner" elevates the status and recognition these  
7 professionals rightly deserve within the legal community and among clients. This title conveys the  
8 idea that they are not merely support staff but integral members of the legal ecosystem, deserving  
9 of respect and acknowledgment for their contributions. The licensing requirements for legal  
10 paraprofessionals align with the formal education and training requirements of other practitioners,  
11 such as Licensed Psychological Practitioners in Alaska, who similarly need a master's degree, two  
12 years of post-master's experience, and a professional practice examination in psychology, state  
13 law, and ethics. These requirements closely resemble the licensure criteria outlined in the Arizona  
14 Supreme Court's Arizona Code of Judicial Administration 7-210 for legal professionals.

15 As shared by Legal Paraprofessional Stephanie Villalobos, prospective clients and even  
16 current clients persist in labeling her as a "paralegal" or "attorney" despite her repeated  
17 clarifications that she is neither. After almost two (2) years, a significant disconnect with the  
18 community's comprehension of the Legal Paraprofessional title remains, potentially impeding the  
19 advancement of its employment in the community. Even at a recent Paralegal Conference, a  
20 considerable number of attendees appeared unfamiliar with it or the nature of its scope. Only when  
21 it was likened to the role of a Nurse Practitioner in the medical field did they grasp the concept  
22 fully. It's evident that both the public and the legal community find the title "Legal  
23 Paraprofessional" not only perplexing but also suggestive of someone who lacks a licensure.  
24 (Villalobos, 2023).

25 In the pursuit of consistency in terminology and standardized language, IAALS recognizes  
that other states seek uniformity. The title "Legal Practitioner" can aid in establishing this  
consistency in the legal profession. Inconsistent terminology, like "Legal Paraprofessional," can  
lead to confusion and misunderstanding, both within the legal community and among the public.  
For instance, Legal Paraprofessional Tara Hughes often receives offers for educational  
paraprofessional roles or notifications for paraprofessional positions, as people associate the term  
with education-based positions like Special Education Paraprofessionals or Behavioral Health  
Paraprofessionals. (Hughes, 2023). Standardized language has always been a cornerstone of the  
legal field, ensuring individuals can understand and interpret terms with clarity and meaning.

In conclusion, the push and advocacy for adoption of the term "Legal Practitioner" instead  
of "Legal Paraprofessional" arises from the need to eliminate confusion and promote a more  
accurate representation of their role within the legal ecosystem. The term "Legal Paraprofessional"  
has often led to misconceptions about their level of expertise and commitment, which can hinder  
their effectiveness in assisting attorneys and clients. "Legal Practitioner" better captures the  
professionalism and competence that these individuals bring to the legal profession and within  
their scope of practice, emphasizing their active and fundamental role bridging the access to legal

1 justice gaps. This change in terminology serves to align perception with reality and ultimately  
2 benefits both legal practitioners and the broader legal community.

### 3 References.

4 Houlberg, M., & Drobinske, J. (2022). *Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal*  
5 *System* . Retrieved from The Landscape of Allied Legal Professional Programs in the  
6 United States:

7 [https://iaals.du.edu/sites/default/files/documents/publications/alp\\_national\\_framework.pdf](https://iaals.du.edu/sites/default/files/documents/publications/alp_national_framework.pdf)

8 Houlberg, M., & Knowlton, N. A. (2023, June). *Allied Legal Professionals: A National*  
9 *Framework for Program Growth*. Retrieved from Institute for the Advancement of the  
10 American Legal System:

11 [https://iaals.du.edu/sites/default/files/documents/publications/alp\\_national\\_framework.pdf](https://iaals.du.edu/sites/default/files/documents/publications/alp_national_framework.pdf)

12 Howell, D. (2023). Legal Paraprofessional. (C. J. Mitchell, Interviewer)

13 Hughes, T. (2023). Legal Paraprofessional. (C. J. Mitchell, Interviewer)

14 Maret, S. (2023). Legal Paraprofessional. (C. J. Mitchell, Interviewer)

15 Merriam-Webster, Incorporated. (2023). Retrieved from Merriam-Webster: [https://www.merriam-](https://www.merriam-webster.com/)  
16 [webster.com/](https://www.merriam-webster.com/)

17 Villalobos, S. (2023). Legal Paraprofessional. (C. J. Mitchell, Interviewer)