

Interviewing & Investigating PROGRAM OUTLINE



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

No case can be won without a quality investigation. Often times the preliminary investigation is performed by a paralegal — the result of which can play a key role in the client’s perception of the attorney, the firm, and the case. Blackstone’s Interviewing & Investigating advanced paralegal course provides an overview of interviewing and investigating skills used by paralegals to gather relevant information to assist the legal team in case preparation. The e-textbook, *Interviewing & Investigating: Essential Skills for the Paralegal* presents formal discovery as it relates to civil and criminal litigation. This course also includes ethical considerations that affect the interviewing and investigating process. Students will learn to identify and find witnesses, use public and private sources of information, and prepare and conduct interviews of clients and witnesses.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

Unit 1 | Introduction to Interviewing and Investigating; Ethical and Professional Responsibilities

Unit 2 | The Adversarial System, ADR, and Pre-filing Investigation; Formal Discovery

Unit 3 | Rules of Evidence and Communication Skills

Unit 4 | Investigation, Preparing, and Conducting Client Interviews

Unit 5 | Preparing and Conducting Witness Interviews

Unit 6 | Public and Private Sources of Information

Introduction to Interviewing and Investigating; Ethical and Professional Responsibilities

UNIT 1



This lesson includes explanation of the importance of interviewing and investigating skills for paralegals; covers factual analysis and investigation in civil and criminal litigation; discusses the rules of evidence and how attorneys use paralegals for interviewing and investigating. Details the ethical guidelines in place for legal professionals; lists the consequences of unethical conduct including unauthorized practice of law and conflicts of interest.

The Adversarial System, ADR, and Pre-filing Investigation; Formal Discovery in Civil and Criminal Litigation

UNIT 2

This lesson covers providing an overview of the adversarial system of justice; discusses the use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR); distinguishes between informal investigation and formal discovery. Covers the procedural rules that govern formal discovery for civil cases; details the scope and purposes of formal discovery; the role of the legal professional in formal discovery; how to draft discovery documents and motions. Covers the procedural rules that govern formal discovery for criminal cases; details the scope and purposes of formal discovery; the role of pretrial hearings in discovery; discusses the use of motions in criminal cases to aid discovery

Rules of Evidence and Communication Skills for Investigators

UNIT 3



This lesson explores the difference between various types of evidence; details the role of the burden of proof and degree of proof required in civil and criminal cases; discusses privileged information that may not be discovered. Presents the basic rules of evidence and their application to interviewing and investigating work. Discusses verbal, nonverbal, and written communication; how to use active listening skills; presents guidelines for written communications

Formulating a Plan of Investigation; Preparing and Conducting Client Interviews

UNIT 4

This lesson explains how to create an organized and effective plan for investigation. Discusses the types of interviews legal professionals conduct and how to schedule and prepare for an effective client interview. Discusses how to conduct a client interview, including active listening skills, verification of information obtained, and preparing an interview summary examination.

Preparing and Conducting Witness Interviews; Fact and Expert Witnesses

UNIT 5



This lesson details how to schedule and prepare for a witness interview. Discusses how to conduct a witness interview, including active listening and observation skills, verification of information obtained, preparing and conducting phone interviews; preparing a written witness statement. Covers the techniques to identify and locate fact witnesses; use of resources to find witnesses. Discusses the importance of expert witnesses; how to locate and evaluate expert witnesses; how to assist in preparation to cross-examine an opposing expert witness.

Public and Private Information Sources

UNIT 6

This lesson explains public records; discusses sources of federal agency and departmental information; lists the procedures to obtain information using the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts. Details the organization of state and local governments and the types of records they maintain; provides resources to access state and local records. Provides an overview of private sources of information to obtain records including medical, employment, educational, telephone, credit, and financial information.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Demonstrate a basic knowledge of the purpose and role of factual investigation and interviewing as it relates to formal discovery and informal investigation in the law office.

Describe the American adversarial system.

Explain formal discovery in civil and criminal procedure.

Describe the basic rules of evidence and how they are applied in interviewing and investigating by legal professionals.

Discuss relevant ethical and professional concerns including the unauthorized practice of law, client confidences, conflicts of interest, and improper communications.

Illustrate the communication and factual analysis skills needed to competently plan and carry out an effective investigation in a realistic case context including locating public and private records, identifying fact witnesses, locating qualified expert witnesses, and the scheduling and conducting of a client interview and a witness interview as well as the preparation of a witness statement.



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