



California Occupational Guides

Detailed Guide for

Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive in California

May also be called: Administrative Secretaries; Office Assistants; Clerk Typists; Office Managers; Administrative Technicians; Administrative Associates; Administrative Support Assistants; Department Secretaries; and Personal Secretaries.

What Would I Do?

Secretaries help managers and workers make sure an office runs smoothly. Their duties vary depending upon the size and organization of the office. They use many types of office equipment and computer software to prepare reports and messages for staff and clients. In addition, they may edit work done by others using their knowledge of grammar and spelling. Secretaries handle telephone calls and mail. They also organize and maintain paper or electronic files.

Some Secretaries make travel reservations for office personnel. Others may set up their supervisor's schedule and keep the supervisor's calendar up to date. They may arrange, prepare materials for, and take notes at meetings. Additionally, they may establish work procedures and schedules. In small offices, they may handle the billing, payroll, bookkeeping, equipment, and supplies. In larger offices, they may specialize in one or more of these areas.

Many Secretaries have experience in special areas such as in engineering or real estate. In most cases, they are familiar with the language, the forms, and the procedures for working in that type of office.

Various office equipment used by Secretaries include scanners, phone systems, computers, and videoconferencing systems. Secretaries typically access various database software including word processing, spreadsheet, e-mail, and presentation software.

Important Tasks and Related Skills

Each task below is matched to a sample skill required to carry out the task.

| Task | Skill Used in this Task |
|---|---------------------------|
| Operate office equipment such as fax machines, copiers, and phone systems, and use computers for spreadsheet, word processing, database management, and other applications. | Computers and Electronics |
| Answer telephones and give information to callers, take messages, or transfer calls to appropriate individuals. | Active Listening |

| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Greet visitors and callers, handle their inquiries, and direct them to the appropriate persons according to their needs. | Customer and Personal Service |
| Set up and maintain paper and electronic filing systems for records, correspondence, and other material. | Clerical |
| Locate and attach appropriate files to incoming correspondence requiring replies. | Written Comprehension |
| Open, read, route, and distribute incoming mail and other material, and prepare answers to routine letters. | Reading Comprehension |
| Complete forms in accordance with company procedures. | English Language |

Source: U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Information Network (O*NET) at online.onetcenter.org

Working Conditions

Secretaries work full-time or part-time in offices under one or more managers or administrators. They often have to juggle priorities while dealing with deadlines and interruptions such as the breakdown of equipment. They also work with many people who have different, sometimes difficult, personalities. These pressures can cause stress at times.

Secretarial work is usually not physically hard, but the job sometimes requires lifting heavy boxes or supplies which involves stooping or bending. For instance, they may have to load and care for equipment like printers. Those who spend many hours at a computer must take regular breaks to avoid eyestrain or repetitive motion injuries like carpal tunnel syndrome. An ergonomic work station can reduce health issues.

The Secretarial occupation is generally not unionized. However, Secretaries in some areas may belong to their local Office and Professional Employees International Union of the AFL-CIO.

Will This Job Fit Me?

This occupation will appeal to those who like following set procedures and routines. The job of Secretary will satisfy those with conventional interests which can include working with data and details more than with ideas, such as using correct spelling and grammar. An ability to work well with people and be flexible is very helpful in this occupation. Also, conventional jobs usually have a clear line of authority to follow.

What Wages and Benefits Can I Expect?

Wages

The median wage in 2015 for Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive in California is \$38,045 annually, or \$18.29 hourly. The median is the point at which half of the workers earn more and half earn less.

| Annual Wages for 2015 | Low (25th percentile) | Median (50th percentile) | High (75th percentile) |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| California | \$30,059 | \$38,045 | \$47,849 |

Source: EDD/LMID Occupational Employment Statistics Survey, 2015 at www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/wages.html Wages do not reflect self-employment.

| Hourly Wages for 2015 | Low (25th percentile) | Median (50th percentile) | High (75th percentile) |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| California | \$14.45 | \$18.29 | \$23.01 |

Source: EDD/LMID Occupational Employment Statistics Survey, 2015 at www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/wages.html. Wages do not reflect self-employment.

Benefits

Benefits for Secretaries often include vacation, sick leave, health and life insurance, profit sharing, and a pension plan. Some may get reimbursement for continuing education courses.

What is the Job Outlook?

Increased office automation and organizational restructuring will continue to make Secretaries more productive in coming years. Use of automated equipment is changing the distribution of work in many offices. In some cases, traditional secretarial duties such as typing, filing, photocopying, and bookkeeping are done by clerks in other departments or by the professionals themselves. However, many secretarial duties are of a personal, interactive nature and, therefore, are not easily automated. Because technology cannot substitute for personal skills, Secretaries will continue to play a key role in most organizations. In addition to jobs resulting from growth, numerous job openings will result from the need to replace workers who transfer to other occupations or leave this very large occupation for other reasons each year.

Job opportunities should be best for applicants with extensive knowledge of software applications, particularly experienced Secretaries.

Projections of Employment

In California, the number of Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive is expected to grow faster than average growth rate for all occupations. Jobs for Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive are expected to increase by 17.5 percent, or 37,300 jobs between 2012 and 2022.

Estimated Employment and Projected Growth Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive

| Geographic Area (Estimated Year-Projected Year) | Estimated Employment | Projected Employment | Numeric Change | Percent Change | Additional Openings Due to Net Replacements |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--|
| California (2012-2022) | 212,800 | 250,100 | 37,300 | 17.5 | 25,600 |

Source: EDD/LMID Projections of Employment by Occupation at www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/employment-projections.html

Annual Job Openings

In California, an average of 3,720 new job openings per year is expected for Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive, plus an additional 2,560 job openings due to net replacement needs, resulting in a total of 6,290 job openings.

Estimated Average Annual Job Openings Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive

| Geographic Area (Estimated Year- Projected Year) | Jobs From Growth | Jobs Due to Net Replacements | Total Annual Job Openings |
|--|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| California (2012-2022) | 3,720 | 2,560 | 6,290 |

Source: EDD/LMID Projections of Employment by Occupation at www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/employment-projections.html

How Do I Qualify?

Education, Training, and Other Requirements

A high school diploma is sufficient for many graduates who have basic office skills to qualify for entry-level secretarial positions. However, employers increasingly require extensive knowledge of software applications, such as word processing, spreadsheets, and database management.

Secretaries should be proficient in keyboarding, spelling, grammar, and punctuation. They should have good customer service, oral communication, and organizational skills. Discretion, good judgment, and the ability to work independently are increasingly important as the Secretary moves up to higher-level administrative positions. Versatility is also helpful to deal with all the office changes brought on by new technology.

Experience

Since Secretaries build knowledge and experience to make good judgments on the job, many employers will not hire applicants until they have two to three years of experience.

Early Career Planning

Those planning on entering the secretarial field should develop competency in general business skills, language, and computer use. Classes in English, business, and computers will help to prepare for this career. Candidates should also be familiar with office machine operations and computer software, such as word processing and spreadsheet programs. Clerical jobs held while in school and during vacations provide good experience and often lead to full-time employment after graduation. Some employers and local high schools have work study programs that give students a chance to learn on the job.

Work Study Programs

Training can be obtained through high school vocational education programs, business schools, vocational schools, and community colleges. California offers Regional Occupational Programs (ROP) for Secretaries. To find an ROP program near you, go to the California Association of Regional Occupational Centers and Programs Web site at www.carocp.org/carocps.html.

Continuing Education

California does not require Secretaries to complete continuing education to perform their duties. Secretaries tend to acquire more advanced skills through on-the-job instruction by other employees. Secretaries also must learn to operate new office technologies as they are brought into their work setting. They may attend classes or use online education to learn how to operate new office technologies such as scanners or software. Or, they may receive training from equipment and software vendors. In addition, Secretaries may opt to join professional associations and take advantage of the workshops and courses offered there for professional development.

Certification

There are no mandated licenses or certificates required to perform the duties of Secretary. However, there are certifications Secretaries can obtain to show proficiency in various computer software programs and other secretarial functions. Certification is also a means to advance in the career.

The International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP) offers the Certified Professional Secretary (CPS) and Certified Administrative Professional (CAP) certification. A candidate must meet

a combination of work experience and educational requirements, pass a test, and pay a fee to achieve either certificate. In order to recertify every five years, they must complete ninety continuing education hours. For more information, go to the U.S. Department of Labor's Career InfoNet Web site at www.acinet.org and scroll down to "Career Tools." Click on "Certification Finder" at www.acinet.org/certifications_new/default.aspx and follow the instructions to locate certification programs.

Where Can I Find Training?

There are two ways to search for training information at www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/resources/training-and-apprenticeships.html

- Search by Field of Study to find what programs are available and what schools offer those programs. You may use keywords such as: Secretary, Secretarial Science, and Administrative Assistant.
- Search by Training Provider to find schools by name, type of school, or location.

Contact the schools you are interested in to learn about the classes available, tuition and fees, and any prerequisite course work.

Where Would I Work?

The largest industries employing Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive are as follows:

| Industry Title | Percent of Total Employment for Occupation in California |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Elementary and Secondary Schools | 9.4% |
| Local Government | 4.4% |
| Employment Services | 3.8% |
| Colleges and Universities | 3.6% |
| Management & Technical Consulting Svc | 3.3% |

Source: EDD/LMID Staffing Patterns at www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/iomatrix/staffing-patterns1.asp

Finding a Job

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Secretaries are employed in organizations of every type from service-providing industries to manufacturing and construction. Students can register with their school placement center for job leads. Professional associations and personnel departments of government agencies advertise job opportunities on the Internet as well. Those interested in working on a temporary basis may seek assignments through a temporary agency specializing in office administrative positions. **Online job opening systems** include JobCentral at www.jobcentral.com and CalJOBSSM at www.caljobs.ca.gov.

To find your nearest One-Stop Career Center, go to [Service Locator](#). View the [helpful job search tips](#) for more resources. (requires [Adobe Reader](#)).

Yellow Page Headings

You can focus your local job search by checking employers listed online or in your local telephone directory. Below are some suggested headings where you might find employers of Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive.

- Schools
- Government Agencies
- Dental Offices
- Religious Organizations
- Secretarial Services
- Insurance Agencies
- Staffing Agencies
- Manufacturing

Find Possible Employers

To locate a list of employers in your area, use "Find Employers" on the LaborMarketInfo Web site at <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/aspdotnet/databrowsing/empMain.aspx?menuChoice=emp>

- Select the search for employers by occupation.
- Select a geographic area.
- Search for an occupation by keyword, occupation, or category.
- Select one of the top industries that employ the occupation.
- This will give you a list of employers in that industry in your area.
- Click on "View Filter Selections" to limit your list to specific cities or employer size.
- Click on an employer for the street address, telephone number, size of business, Web site, etc.
- Contact the employer for possible employment.

Where Could This Job Lead?

Office support positions serve businesses of every size and field possible, making it a good entry-level position to break into the field of one's choice. Office professional positions provide valuable preparation for moving up within a company for the Secretaries who broaden their knowledge of the company's operations. The next step up from Secretary might be Executive Secretary or office manager. Other potential positions a Secretary could move into are supervisory, middle management, instructor, or even sales representative. In smaller offices, promotions may be limited to pay raises based upon assuming increased responsibility.

Related Occupations

Below is a list of occupations related to Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive.

- Billing and Posting Clerks (SOC 43-3021)
- Court, Municipal, and License Clerks (SOC 43-4031)
- Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants (SOC 43-6011)
- Insurance Claims and Policy Processing Clerks (SOC 43-9041)
- Legal Secretaries (SOC 43-6012)
- Loan Interviewers and Clerks (SOC 43-4131)
- Office Clerks, General (SOC 43-9061)
- Receptionists and Information Clerks (SOC 43-4171)
- Tellers (SOC 43-3071)
- Word Processors and Typists (SOC 43-9022)

Other Sources

- International Association of Administrative Professionals
<http://www.iaap-hq.org/>
- Association of Executive and Administrative Professionals
<http://www.theaeap.com/>

These links are provided for your convenience and do not constitute an endorsement by EDD.

For the Career Professional

The following codes are provided to assist counselors, job placement workers, or other career professionals.

| System | Code |
|---|------------|
| SOC - Standard Occupational Classification at www.bls.gov/soc/ | 43-6014 |
| O*NET - Occupational Information Network at online.onetcenter.org/ | |
| Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive | 43-6014.00 |
| Interest Codes (RIASEC) at online.onetcenter.org/find/descriptor/browse/Interests/#cur | CES |
| CIP - Classification of Instructional Programs at nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/cip2000/ | |
| Administrative Assistant and Secretarial Science, General | 520401 |
| TOP - Taxonomy of Programs at www.ccccurriculum.info/ (California Community Colleges) | |
| Office Technology/Office Computer Applications | 051400 |

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