

DELTA COLLEGE  
COUNSELING/ADVISING & CAREER SERVICES  
**LAWYER**

Salary Range: \$51,410 – More than \$145,600 per year

Personal Interests: Activities involving people and communicating information.

Work Environment: Offices, law libraries, and courtrooms.

**Description**

Lawyers act both as advocates and advisors in our society. As advocates, they represent one of the parties in criminal and civil trials by presenting evidence and arguing in court to support their client. As advisors, lawyers counsel their clients concerning their legal rights and obligations and suggest particular courses of action in business and personal matters. Whether acting as an advocate or advisor, all attorneys research the intent of laws and apply them to specific circumstances faced by their client. Lawyers may specialize in a number of different areas such as bankruptcy, probate, international, or elder law.

The majority of lawyers are found in private practice where they concentrate on criminal or civil law. In criminal law, they represent individuals charged with crimes, but civil law lawyers assist clients with litigation, wills, trusts, contracts, mortgages, titles and leases. Other lawyers handle public interest cases (criminal or civil), which may have an impact extending well beyond the individual client.

Lawyers are sometimes employed full time by a single client. If the client is a corporation, the lawyer is known as “house counsel,” and usually advises the company concerning its business activities. A significant number of lawyers are employed by various levels of government and play a key role in the criminal justice system. Others work for legal-aid societies, ie., private nonprofit organizations established to serve disadvantaged people. A small number

of lawyers work in law schools and are faculty members who specialize in one or

more subjects. Others work full-time in non-academic settings and teach part-time.

**Working Conditions**

Lawyers do most of their work in offices, law libraries, and courtrooms. They sometimes meet in clients’ homes or places of business and, when necessary, in hospitals or prisons. Sometimes travel is required for meetings, gathering evidence, and appearing in court.

Salaried lawyers usually have structured work schedules. Lawyers in private practice may work irregular hours while conducting research, conferring with clients, or preparing briefs. Often, they work long hours and may face pressure, especially when a case is being tried. Private practice lawyers usually determine their own workload so many stay in practice well beyond the usual retirement age. Legal work is usually not seasonal, but tax lawyers and other specialists may be an exception.

**Training, Other Qualifications**

To practice law in the courts of any state or other jurisdiction, a person must be licensed or admitted to its bar under the rules established by the jurisdiction’s highest court. Except Louisiana and Washington, the United States requires the 6-hour Multistate Bar Examination (MBE) as part of the bar examination. Many states also use the 3-hour Multistate Essay Examination as part of the individual state bar examination. Multistate Performance Testing (MPT) tests the practical skills of beginning lawyers and is used in many states. The required college and law school education usually takes 7 years of full-time study after high school. Law school applicants must have a bachelor’s degree to

qualify for admission. There is no recommended “prelaw” major, but frequently selected courses of study include history, English and literature, economics, and political science. Delta College offers classes toward the previous courses of study as a foundation for a law degree. Interested students should contact Delta College Counseling & Academic Advising with questions.

**Job Outlook**

Nationally lawyers held about 735,000 jobs in 2004. Employment of lawyers in Michigan is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through the year 2014. Here is Michigan’s employment outlook to 2012:

| Region                | Number employed (2014) | Percent growth | Projected yearly job openings |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Michigan              | 22,506                 | 12.8           | 512                           |
| Ann Arbor             | 1,634                  | 20.7           | 45                            |
| Battle Creek          | 3401                   | 15.2           | 9                             |
| Benton Harbor         | 487                    | 9.9            | 10                            |
| Central Michigan      | 210                    | 12.9           | 4                             |
| Detroit               | 16,764                 | 12.9           | 383                           |
| East Central Michigan | 195                    | 11.4           | 4                             |
| Flint                 | 1,090                  | 12.7           | 24                            |
| Grand Rapids          | 2,230                  | 20.3           | 62                            |
| Jackson               | 408                    | 9.7            | 9                             |
| Kalamazoo             | 653                    | 17             | 17                            |
| Lansing               | 1,186                  | 14.3           | 28                            |
| Muskegon              | 369                    | 8.2            | 7                             |
| N.E. Lower Peninsula  | 225                    | 11.9           | 5                             |
| N.W. Lower Peninsula  | 524                    | 18.8           | 14                            |
| Saginaw               | 728                    | 7.7            | 14                            |
| U. P.                 | 284                    | 17.8           | 3                             |

**Earnings**

Earnings of lawyers depend on the law school attended, academic record, and area of specialization. Additional factors include type, size and location of employer. Salaried lawyers in private industry generally earn more than those in their own

firms. However, partners in private law firms generally have the highest incomes of all lawyers. In 2006, the national median annual earnings of all lawyers were \$113,660. Salaries paid in selected areas in Michigan in May 2006 were:

| Area         | Annual Average |
|--------------|----------------|
| Michigan     | \$108,930      |
| Ann Arbor    | \$100,220      |
| Bay City     | \$105,590      |
| Detroit      | \$131,530      |
| Flint        | \$86,940       |
| Grand Rapids | \$107,520      |
| Lansing      | \$110,680      |
| Saginaw      | \$97,750       |

**Related Occupations**

Paralegal, legal assistant, law clerk, title examiner, abstractor, arbitrator, mediator, judge and hearing officer.

lawyer.doc Updated SC 10/07  
 Sources: Occupational Outlook Handbook and Michigan Occupational Information System (MOIS)  
 Career Center, Room D132  
 Bay City/Saginaw: (989) 686-9072  
 Midland/Auburn: (989) 495-4000, Ext. 9072  
 Frankenmuth, Birch Run, Reese & Vassar: (989) 758-3400, Ext. 9072 – Website: <http://www.delta.edu/careercenter>

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