

GENERAL OVERVIEW

1150 Eck Hall of Law

Phone: (574) 631-7542 / Fax: (574) 631-4789 / E-mail: lawjobs@nd.edu

Website: law.nd.edu/careers

Twitter: @NDLawCareers

Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

The Career Development Office is here to assist you in acquiring the tools and skills with which you can engage in a successful job search. These skills will serve you both during law school and in your post-graduate professional life.

COUNSELING

Beginning October 15 of your 1L year and continuing throughout your career as a Notre Dame Lawyer, our career counselors are available to meet with you on an individual basis to discuss your personal goals and career development strategy.

There are two ways to meet or speak with CDO counselors:

- *Appointments*: Use Symplicity to schedule an appointment with a counselor. You can access Symplicity through the CDO website. Counseling appointments are generally thirty minutes long and can be conducted in person (preferable) or by telephone.
- *Walk-In Hours*: You may also speak with a CDO counselor by utilizing our walk-in hours. One CDO counselor is available to answer brief, career-related questions during walk-in hours each day: Monday – Friday: 12:45 – 4:45 p.m. and Wednesdays from 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Walk-in meetings are generally fifteen minutes long. Should you need more time to speak with a CDO counselor, we encourage you to schedule an appointment.

CDO counselors are happy to assist with all aspects of your job search and routinely work with students on career path planning, resume and cover letter review, mock interviews/interview preparation, and networking.

Planning your career path is an important element of a successful job search. CDO counselors are available to discuss your career goals and help you formulate a plan to develop the skills and experience you will need to enter your field of interest.

CDO counselors are also happy to review and critique 1L student resumes and cover letters beginning on October 15. Prior to meeting with a counselor for a resume or cover letter review, you should review the appropriate sections of our Resume Guide on our website. Please send your resume and/or cover letter to

the counselor you are meeting with at least 24 hours prior to your appointment to ensure they have time to review it in advance.

CDO counselors are also available to assess and critique interview skills through mock interviews. You can arrange for a mock interview by scheduling an appointment through Symplicity. CDO counselors are also available to help you strategize about an upcoming interview and discuss how best to prepare for and present yourself to potential employers.

No matter what career path you plan to pursue, networking is a critical component of every student's job search. CDO counselors can help you develop your networking strategy and teach you how to identify networking contacts, craft an outreach email, conduct a networking meeting, and maintain your contacts over time.

The CDO also hosts a wide variety of career-related programs throughout the year designed to assist in your job search. Guest speakers, student panels, and CDO counselors provide practical information to help plan and navigate your job search. Programs are generally held over the lunch hour with food provided. All CDO programs are posted on the main NDLS calendar online. Watch for weekly program reminder e-mails and flyers on law school bulletin boards. Programs can be recorded upon request.

RECRUITMENT PROGRAMS

ON-CAMPUS INTERVIEWS (OCI):

Each year, the CDO coordinates on-campus interviews for 2L and 3L students (1L students may also participate during the spring). Legal employers come from all parts of the country to interview students for summer positions and permanent employment.

While NDLS offers a robust OCI program, we strongly encourage you not to rely solely on OCI. Instead, utilize all the job search resources at your disposal in order to maximize your career opportunities. Only a small percentage of students obtain long-term employment through the OCI process. The vast majority of students obtain positions through networking or other self-initiated contact with employers.

OFF-CAMPUS INTERVIEW PROGRAMS (OCIPs):

In addition to OCI, each year the CDO coordinates OCIPs in certain large legal markets popular with law students including New York City and Dallas. Through membership in The Law Consortium, students can also participate in OCIPs in other markets such as Miami, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Washington, DC. Through the OCIPs, 2L and 3L students have the opportunity to interview with local employers unable to come to campus to participate in our OCI program.

RESUME COLLECTIONS

Employers interested in Notre Dame Law School students and alumni also post opportunities in Symplicity. From unpaid internships to summer associate positions and more, employers from all over the country share opportunities. Symplicity is accessible through our website.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TIMELINES

The professional development timelines that follow provide a general sketch of the basic activities you may engage in during your job search throughout law school. The specifics of your individual search will depend entirely on your own career interests and goals. We encourage all students to meet regularly with a CDO counselor to discuss their career interests and goals and plan the details of their own job search.

1L PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

Fall Semester

- **Mandatory:** Attend the CDO Introduction Program in September.
- **Mandatory:** Attend the CDO 1L Orientation Program in October.
- Have your professional photo taken. CDO will bring in a professional photographer for this purpose.
- Clean up social media accounts and increase privacy settings. Create a LinkedIn account, if you do not already have one.
- Attend one of the CDO resume workshops in September and prepare your resume.
- Join student groups that are related to your career interests.
- Sign up for GALILEE (Group Alternative Live-In Legal Education) in your target market, if interested.

After October 15:

- **Mandatory:** Meet with a CDO counselor between October 15 and November 15 to review your resume and discuss your career goals.
- Research summer employers who may be of interest to you and begin reviewing the Job Postings section on Symplicity, PSJD, the Government Honors & Internship Handbook, and other resources for summer job opportunities.
- Begin preparing application materials for the jobs for which you plan to apply.
- Starting on December 1, begin applying for summer jobs.
- Consider planning a trip to your target market(s) during Christmas Break and reach out to Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network (former employers, parents of friends, and friends of parents, etc.) to schedule networking meetings while there.

Christmas Break

- Travel to your target market(s) and conduct networking meetings with Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network.
- Continue preparing job application materials and applying for summer jobs.

Spring Semester

- **Mandatory:** If you have accepted summer employment, notify a CDO counselor and provide the name and location of your summer employer.
- Meet with a CDO counselor by late January to discuss the status of your job search and your plans for the spring semester.

- Continue applying for summer jobs and checking for newly posted summer job opportunities.
- Attend the Interview Skills program in late January.
- Research deadlines for the Summer Funding Program and other public interest funding (e.g., Equal Justice Works Americorps JD) and attend the CDO information session for the Summer Funding Program.
- Begin to research bar exam requirements for the states in which you may be interested. Some states have early registration deadlines, and some offer significant cost savings for early interest.
- If you are interested in pursuing a judicial clerkship, attend the CDO programs regarding the judicial clerkship application process.
- Consider planning a trip to your target market(s) during Spring Break and reach out to Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network to schedule networking meetings.

Spring Break

- Travel to your target market(s) and conduct informational meetings with Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network there.

Spring Semester (continued)

- Sign up for job fairs of interest (many have early deadlines).
- Continue preparing job application materials and applying for summer jobs.
- Meet with a CDO counselor to discuss how your course selections fit with your career path.
- If you plan to participate in OCI and/or the OCIPs, attend all OCI programming.
- If you are participating in the Summer Funding Program, complete and turn in your paperwork in advance of the deadline.
- Meet with a CDO counselor by late April to discuss your 2L summer job search and your networking plans for the summer.

Summer Break

- **Mandatory:** Schedule and complete a mock interview through the Summer Mock Interview Program.
- Read weekly emails from the CDO for summer job tips, recruiting updates, and important OCI/OCIP information.
- Notify the CDO of any changes in your contact information during the summer.
- Join the local bar association and the local Notre Dame Club and attend functions to build contacts in the local community. Contact Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network in your target market(s) to schedule informational meetings and phone calls.
- Keep track of your work experience by creating a file that includes copies of
 - Brief descriptions of your assignments
 - Your written work product
 - List of clients for whom you worked
 - List of attorneys with whom you worked
- Begin preparing for your 2L job search in early June by
 - Updating your resume
 - Selecting one or more writing samples and revising or redacting them as necessary

- Contacting potential references and making a reference list
- Obtaining a current transcript
- Researching potential employers
- If you are applying for judicial clerkships, prepare all application materials and provide them to the CDO as directed.
- Schedule and complete a meeting or phone call with a CDO counselor to discuss any questions you have about your summer experience and/or your preparation for your 2L job search.
- Participate in bidding for OCI and OCIPs, if interested in the participating employers.
- Check the Job Postings section on Symplicity and apply for positions with employers not participating in OCI or OCIPs.
- Beginning in early July, send application materials to employers of interest who are not participating in OCI or OCIPs or otherwise recruiting at NDLS.
- Participate in the OCIPs, if interested in the OCIP markets and participating employers (see [the Google Drive](#) under “Career Resources” for more details).

2L PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

Fall Semester

- **Mandatory:** If you have accepted summer employment, notify a CDO counselor and provide the name and location of your summer employer.
- Participate in OCI, if interested in the participating employers.
- Continue to check the Job Postings section on Symplicity and apply for summer positions with employers not participating in OCI or OCIPs.
- If you are applying for judicial clerkships, prepare all application materials and provide them to the CDO as directed.
- Follow-up with employers to whom you have applied outside of OCI, OCIPs and other Symplicity job postings.
- Meet with a CDO counselor by mid-September to recap your summer and discuss your job search plans for the fall semester.
- Research bar exam requirements for states of interest and begin preparing your application if necessary. The application process for some states can begin as early as fall semester of 2L year.
- Consider planning trips to your target market(s) during Fall Break and contact Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network (former employers, parent of friends, friends of parents, etc.) to schedule networking meetings while there.

Fall Break

- Travel to your target market(s) and conduct networking meetings with Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network there.

Fall Semester (continued)

- Plan a trip to your target market(s) during Christmas Break and contact Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network there to schedule networking meetings.
- Continue preparing job application materials and applying for summer jobs.
- Consider registering for a spring semester externship or clinic in your practice area of interest.

Christmas Break

- Travel to your target market(s) and conduct networking meetings with Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network.
- Continue preparing job application materials and applying for summer jobs.

Spring Semester:

- **Mandatory:** If you have accepted summer employment, notify a CDO counselor and provide the name and location of your summer employer.
- Meet with a CDO counselor by mid-February to discuss the status of your job search and your plans for the spring semester.
- If you are interested in pursuing a post-graduate fellowship, attend the CDO program regarding the post-graduate fellowship application process.
- Continue to check the Job Postings section on Symplicity and apply for summer positions.
- If you are applying for judicial clerkships, prepare all application materials and provide them to the CDO as directed.
- Follow-up with employers to whom you have applied.
- Consider planning a trip to your target market(s) during Spring Break and contact Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network there to schedule networking meetings.

Spring Break

- Travel to your target market(s) and conduct networking meetings with Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network there.

Spring Semester (continued)

- Sign up for job fairs of interest (many have early deadlines).
- Continue preparing job application materials and applying for summer jobs.
- Consider registering for a fall semester externship or clinic in your practice area of interest.
- If you are participating in the Summer Funding Program, complete and turn in your paperwork in advance of the deadline.
- Meet with a CDO counselor by late April to discuss your post-graduation job search and your networking plans for the summer.
- Continue preparation of bar application(s). Be mindful of applicable deadlines.

Summer Break:

- **Mandatory:** If you have accepted an interview for a judicial clerkship, notify a CDO counselor.
- **Mandatory:** If you have accepted a judicial clerkship, notify a CDO counselor and provide the name of the judge and the court.
- Schedule and complete a mock interview through the Summer Mock Interview Program.
- Notify the CDO of any changes in your contact information over the course of the summer.
- If you are applying for post-graduate fellowships, work on applications. You will go over your applications with a CDO counselor during the summer or early in the fall semester.
- If you are participating in the Summer Funding Program, schedule and complete your three required check-in phone calls with a CDO counselor during the designated time periods.
- Join the local bar association and the local Notre Dame Club and attend functions to build contacts in the local community. Reach out to Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network in your target market(s) to schedule informational meetings and phone calls.
- Keep track of your work experience by creating a file that includes copies of:

- Brief descriptions of your assignments.
- Your written work product.
- List of clients for whom you worked.
- List of attorneys with whom you worked.
- Begin preparing for your 3L job search in early June by:
 - Updating your resume.
 - Selecting one or more writing samples and revising or redacting them as necessary.
 - Contacting potential references and making a reference list.
 - Obtaining a current transcript.
 - Researching potential employers.
- Schedule and complete a meeting or call with a CDO counselor to discuss any questions you might have about your summer experience and/or your preparation for your 3L job search.
- Participate in bidding for OCI and OCIPs, if interested in the participating employers.
- Check the Job Postings section on Symplicity and apply for positions with employers not participating in OCI or OCIPs.
- Beginning in early July, prepare and send application materials to employers of interest who are not participating in OCI or OCIPs or otherwise recruiting at NDLS.
- Participate in the OCIPs, if interested in the OCIP markets and participating employers (see the Resource Center on the CDO website for more details).

3L PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

Fall Semester:

- **Mandatory:** If you have accepted employment, notify a CDO counselor with the name and location of your employer.
- Participate in OCI, if interested in the participating employers.
- Continue to check the Job Postings section on Symplicity and apply for post-graduation positions with employers not participating in OCI or OCIPs.
- Follow-up with employers to whom you have applied outside of OCI, OCIPs and other Symplicity job postings.
- Meet with a CDO counselor by mid-September to recap your summer and discuss your job search plans for the fall semester.
- If applying for post-graduate fellowships, review applications with a CDO counselor and prepare for interviews.
- Register for the MPRE.
- Consider planning trips to your target market(s) during Fall Break and reach out to Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network (former employers, parents friends, friends of parents, etc.) to schedule informational meetings while there.

Fall Break:

- Travel to your target market(s) and conduct informational meetings with Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network there.

Fall Semester (continued):

- Take the MPRE.
- Consider planning a trip to your target market(s) during Christmas Break and reach out to Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network there to schedule informational meetings.
- Continue preparing job application materials and applying for post-graduation jobs.
- Consider registering for a spring semester externship or clinic in your practice area of interest.
- Continue/complete preparation of bar application. Be mindful of applicable deadlines.

Christmas Break:

- Travel to your target market(s) and conduct informational meetings with Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network there.
- Continue preparing job application materials and applying for post-graduation jobs.

Spring Semester:

- **Mandatory:** If you have accepted employment, notify a CDO counselor with the name and location of your employer.
- Meet with a CDO counselor by late January to discuss the status of your job search and your plans for the spring semester.
- Continue to check the Job Postings section on Symplicity and apply for post-graduation positions.
- Follow-up with employers to whom you have applied.
- If you did not do so during the fall semester, register for and take the MPRE.
- Continue/complete preparation of bar application. Be mindful of applicable deadlines.
- Consider planning a trip to your target market during Spring Break and reach out to Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network there to schedule informational meetings.

Spring Break:

- Travel to your target market(s) and conduct informational meetings with Notre Dame Lawyers and other members of your network there.

Spring Semester (continued):

- **Mandatory:** Meet with the CDO alumni counselor by late March to discuss the status of your job search and your plans for the summer.
- Continue preparing job application materials and applying for post-graduation jobs.
- Complete a graduate employment survey. A link will be provided by the CDO.

CAREER PATHS

Planning for your professional life begins early in your law school experience, and it is important to take the time to explore the numerous career paths available to you, some of which include:

- Private Practice (small and large law firms);
- Public Interest (legal aid, advocacy groups, public defenders offices);
- Government & Military (prosecutors offices, JAG, state attorney generals offices);
- Corporate Counsel;
- Academia (professors, administration, in-house counsel);

- JD Advantage (compliance, project management; accounting firms, foreign service);
- Judicial Clerkships (federal, state, and local).

In determining which career paths may be of interest to you, it is imperative that you understand both your goals and your personality. Self-assessment is a key factor in deciding on a career path and taking ownership of your own legal career. If you are not an active participant in the process of assessing what you want out of your NDLS education and subsequent legal career, then the path you follow may be based entirely on the needs and criteria of others. Identify what skills, knowledge, and talents you possess that you can channel into your legal career.

Self-assessment begins with asking several basic questions:

- What are my skills, values, interests?
- What are my goals?
- Why did I go to law school?
- What potential practice areas do I want to pursue?
- Who is likely to hire someone like me?
- In what geographical locations am I interested?
- For what type of employer do I want to work?
- What are my monetary needs?
- What kind of work/life balance do I want?
- What am I willing to sacrifice to achieve my goals?

The better you understand yourself and your goals, the better prepared you will be to move forward with your job search. If you have questions about how your personality and goals fit with particular career paths, we encourage you to meet with a CDO counselor to discuss.

RESUMES

Resumes are a vital part of the interviewing and job search process. A resume serves as an introduction to prospective employers and is a representation of your writing abilities. It usually serves as a prospective employer's first impression.

You should assume that a reader will spend no more than 30 seconds on an initial scan of your resume. Therefore, it should be neat, error-free and extremely easy to read.

When drafting your resume, keep the following in mind:

- NDLS students are required to follow one of the resume templates found in the Templates and Examples guide. Electronic versions of the resume template can also be found on our [website's Google Drive](#).
- List your educational institutions and experiences in reverse chronological order. Remember, you are studying for a "Juris Doctor" and not a "Juris Doctorate."

- Start your descriptions with action verbs. Use the past tense for experiences in which you are no longer engaged or have already completed at a present employer.
- Be succinct, but use enough detail to distinguish your experiences and achievements. To the degree possible, tailor your work descriptions to match the skills you need for the job to which you are applying.
- Describe large or important projects and focus on any industry sectors, client/customer groups or skills that are relevant to your prospective employer. Focus on results and how you added value to the position.
- Keep your resume to one page.
- Make sure your resume is error-free.
- Update your resume on a regular basis and have it reviewed by a CDO counselor.

For a more in-depth discussion about resumes, please see the Resume Guide in the [CDO Google Drive](#).

COVER LETTERS

A cover letter should accompany your resume whenever you submit it, unless an employer specifically states that it is unwanted. Your cover letter is the first writing sample a potential employer will ever see. Therefore, it should be concise, persuasive, personal and error-free.

A cover letter will serve as an introduction, indicate your reasons for pursuing a certain position, set forth your relevant experiences or skills and indicate your availability for an interview. A cover letter allows for flexibility, tailoring and amplification – not always possible in the resume.

Perhaps most importantly, your cover letter should describe what you have to offer a potential employer. Focus on yourself – this is not the time to be modest or shy – and how the employer would directly benefit from hiring you. Your goal should be to complement your resume, not restate it. You should demonstrate traits which an employer expects, such as excellent writing skills, and set forth something about you which might distinguish you from other applicants in a positive way, making you memorable.

Personalizing each cover letter and making reference to the recipient's practice lends credibility to your request for consideration, reflects the time you have spent in analyzing the firm's practice and states how your skills fit into that practice. The letter itself should be no longer than one page and no more than three to four paragraphs.

Whenever possible, avoid mass-producing your cover letters. A letter that reflects careful research on an individual employer will convey your interest much better than a generic letter. Your prospects for employment will vastly improve if you selectively choose prospective employers to contact and tailor your letters appropriately. Let the letter reflect your individuality by describing what is particularly appealing to you about an employer.

Be sure to include any specific information requested by the employer if responding to a job posting, such as ties to a particular geographic location.

Always address each cover letter to a specific person – ideally to the individual who has the power to hire, to your contact or to a Notre Dame (or college *alma mater*) graduate. If you are responding to a notice for an advertised opening, write to the person designated. When you are targeting your search to a specific geographic or practice area, consult directories or websites that list the appropriate contact name, such as NALP’s directory of legal employers. Please see the Templates and Examples guide for a cover letter template and sample cover letters to serve as a guideline. In addition, you can find a more in-depth discussion about cover letters in the Cover Letter Guide on the [CDO Google Drive](#).

WRITING SAMPLE

Employers frequently request that law students provide a writing sample. A writing sample is simply a sample of your written legal work. In preparing your materials, consider your potential options and think critically about which best represents your writing abilities.

For first-year students, a memo or brief you prepared for your legal writing class often represents the best writing sample to use. For upperclassmen, work product from your summer employment or clinic experience is ideal. PLEASE NOTE: you must obtain permission from your employer prior to using any work documents. Your employer may require you to change the names and other sensitive information included in the document, and you should indicate that you have received your employer’s permission to use the sample on your cover sheet.

When submitting a writing sample, it should be:

- The best example of your analytical skills and writing abilities;
- completely error-free;
- approximately ten (10) pages in length;
- solely your work; and
- introduced by an appropriate cover page.

You should create a cover sheet for your writing sample explaining what the document is and any other information or context needed by the reader. The information should be presented in a manner similar to an abstract.

If you need to cut pages, do not simply use the first ten pages of your original piece. Similarly, do not cut the facts section and submit a standalone arguments section. Your excerpt must still convey the totality of your previous work while highlighting the best sections available. A facts section, of some form, is important as legal analysis is difficult for a reader to comprehend without factual context.

If your document was created with a partner, you may submit a portion of the document that is solely your work. On your cover sheet, explain that the full document was created in conjunction with a partner, the partner’s portion has been excised, and the portion provided is exclusively your work.

You may also provide a short synopsis of omitted, joint material that would help the reader orient him/herself to the issues (for example, a short restatement of the fact pattern).

Consider meeting with the professor or supervisor who assigned you the project. Let them know that you are thinking about using your work as a writing sample. Ask them if they feel this is your best piece and indicative of your abilities. If applicable, ask permission to use the piece. Solicit any advice they may have for improving the document.

For a more in-depth discussion about writing samples and examples of cover sheets, please see the Writing Sample Guide on the [CDO Google Drive](#) and the Templates and Examples guide.

REFERENCES AND LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

REFERENCES

Generally, students should have three references whose information they can pass along to potential employers who wish to verify academic ability, work ethic and/or character. At the beginning of your law school career, it will be difficult to have a full slate of law professors as references. In lieu of a law professor, previous employers or undergraduate/graduate professors, especially those who may have a connection to the law, can be used. During your second year, it is ideal to have at least two law professors and your summer employer available as references.

Talk with your references before you give out their information to accomplish the following:

- Make sure they are comfortable providing you with a reference;
- Ascertain how beneficial their referral may be with a particular employer;
- Ask your reference how they prefer to be contacted; and
- Provide each reference a copy of your resume.

As you progress through your law school career, you will come to know your professors on a more personal basis. Letters of recommendation from professors with whom you have a close relationship are very beneficial, as the recommender is able to provide insight on your demeanor outside the classroom or work environment. A third reference could be another professor, a previous employer or a contact within the legal profession. Developing your ties within the Notre Dame Alumni Network will help you broaden your list of potential references.

Unless instructed otherwise by your reference, provide employers with the following information for each reference: name, title and employing organization, mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address. Copy the header from your resume, paste it on a new page, and list the information for your references. Print this document on high-quality paper that matches your resume, and take copies along with you to any interviews you have scheduled. Please see the Templates and Examples guide for a template for your list of references.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

If an employer requests a letter of recommendation, approach your references to ask if they are willing to write a letter to the employer recommending you for the position. Provide them with all the pertinent information, including name of employer, contact individual, type of position and mailing address. Many recommenders feel that these letters should remain confidential and thus will prefer to send them directly to the employer. If this is the case, let the employer know that your letters of recommendation will arrive “under separate cover.” If the recommender and employer are not concerned with confidentiality, you can submit the letter with your other materials.

Letters of recommendation are crucial during the judicial clerkship process, and most judges prefer to see letters from three professors who are teaching and research faculty. See the Judicial Clerkship Handbook from the CDO for further details. In order to lay the groundwork for those letters, attend office hours regularly with questions you may have, seek out research assistant positions and connect with professors who have interests similar to your own when writing lengthier papers. When requesting letters of recommendation, you want to be sure professors have a complete picture of who you are, what you plan to do with your legal degree, and why you are requesting a letter from them. Once a professor agrees to write on your behalf, you should ask if they would be willing to have a brief meeting to discuss those topics. Also, you may want to give them an annotated resume – which may appear more like a curriculum vitae and will be longer than one page – so that they may refer to it and add nuance while writing a letter of recommendation. It can also be helpful to provide them with a copy of your cover letter to the employer for additional context regarding your interest in and qualifications for the position.

Lastly, strong letters often come from professors who:

- gave you a high grade in class,
- served as a supervisor to a research paper you wrote, such as a student note,
- taught you in a smaller setting, such as a seminar,
- was a professor you assisted as a research assistant,
- are former clerks, and/or
- know your personal history and goals within the profession.

Ultimately, better letters of recommendation tend to come when professors have more access to your writing, legal acumen (e.g., exams) and personality. Take steps early in your law school career to ensure a set of professors will have those connections to you.

INTERVIEWING

Strictly speaking, an interview is a formal meeting at which a prospective employer can assess the qualifications of an applicant. More loosely construed, an interview is your opportunity to enhance the rather two-dimensional picture an employer will have of you based on your application materials. In an interview, applicants and employers exchange information in a process that is designed to help each side determine if the other fits their needs. From the employer’s perspective, the goal is to ascertain whether the candidate measures up to his/her credentials and, sometimes more importantly, whether the candidate

will be a “good fit” within the work environment. Applicants are trying to determine whether the employer (and work) truly interests them and whether they will fit and thrive in the position.

Even if you already feel comfortable in an interview setting, preparation and repeated practice are crucial to effective interviewing. Many law students have never interviewed for a professional position. Others may have experienced interviewing but in other professions. This section will help you familiarize yourself with professional level interviews in general and, more specifically, prepare you for some of the quirks of the legal interview.

Screening Interviews vs. Callback Interviews

Screening interviews are frequently the first step in the formal interview process. Generally, employers decide who will be interviewed based on submitted application materials. Most often, these materials are resumes and cover letters that a student has sent to the employer, either in response to a posted opening, in a directed mailing campaign or in a resume collection coordinated through the CDO. Screening interviews may take place at the employer’s office, at a job fair, via teleconference or videoconference or at the law school through an interview program. Through this process, the employer aims to identify candidates who possess the necessary qualifications and who exhibit enthusiasm and potential for success with the employer. Screening interviews usually last 20-30 minutes.

If an employer responds favorably to a candidate, they will offer a callback interview. These interviews are lengthier and are usually held at the employer’s office. The callback interview allows a greater number of attorneys and staff members to participate in the interview process. While each employer may follow a slightly different process for callbacks, a student can expect to meet with approximately four attorneys for at least 30 minutes each and with a different set of attorneys over a meal.

Quite frequently, the callback interview focuses more on personality, work ethic and professional objectives than credentials. If the employer has determined in the screening interview that the candidate can “do the work,” the callback interview is frequently used to determine whether the candidate will be someone with whom they wish to work.

Some employers do not follow a two-step interview process and simply invite a candidate, based on his or her resume, for a one-time, in-office interview.

Preparation

It is essential that you know as much as possible about the employer with whom you are going to interview. Spending five minutes reading the employer’s website immediately prior to an interview is not effective preparation. You should never use a screening interview to find out the “basics” about an employer, such as what type of law they practice, how many attorneys are in the firm and where the employer is located. You want to save your interview time for insightful questions that convey your interest. You also do not want to demonstrate to the interviewer that you did not bother taking the time to conduct elementary research.

Some basics you should know:

- Size
- Structure (associate to partner ratio, aspects of different divisions within the firm, number of offices, etc.)
- Location
- Areas of practice
- Involvement in the community
- Representative clients
- Current news items about the firm or its attorneys
- Diversity
- Pro bono policies
- Salary ranges
- Billable hours
- The names, biographies and backgrounds of some of the attorneys who work there (at the very least, research those attorneys who will be conducting the interviews)
- Recent expansion or contraction
- Major ongoing or recently-completed cases

While you need to know basics about the employer, it is also extremely important for you to know yourself – meaning how you will market yourself, what skills you have to highlight, and how to discuss both your previous accomplishments and future goals. This can be very difficult for students, especially those who are not yet sure what type of law is of interest to them. Take heart: no one is asking you to commit to a practice area for the rest of your life, but you do need to be able to articulate to the employer what makes you interested in them and why you would be an asset. Make logical connections before and during your interview. For example, if you know you are deeply interested in criminal law, then do not interview with a firm that never goes to court or has no criminal law practice.

If you do not know what practice areas interest you, then be able to tell the firm what interested you enough to take time out of your schedule to interview with them. For example, you really enjoy your Torts class. You can say to the employer who has a significant medical malpractice practice, “I am only a 1L, so I am not yet sure what type of law I want to practice; however, I really enjoy my Torts class [for reasons X, Y, and Z], so I’d love to gain some experience in that area. When I was researching your firm, I noticed that 40 percent of your practice is devoted to medical malpractice cases. That is what piqued my interest in your firm and made me want to interview with you.”

It is not a bad idea to have some answers to common interview questions prepared ahead of time. Some questions that interviewers may ask include:

- Have you decided what city you would ultimately like to settle in?
- Why do you want to live in (place)?
- Do you have family in (place)? What ties do you have in (place)?
- How would you describe yourself? Tell me about yourself.
- What do you consider your greatest weakness? Strengths?
- What motivates you?
- What kind of law are you interested in?
- Why did you go to law school?
- Why did you select Notre Dame Law School?
- What do you like about law school?
- How has law school been better, worse or different than what you expected?
- What is your favorite class? Why?
- Are your grades a good indication of your academic achievement? Why or why not?
- What law school activities do you participate in and enjoy?

- What do you do when you're not in class/studying?
- Have your ideas about being a lawyer changed since you entered law school?
- If you weren't in law school, what would you be doing right now?
- When are you available to begin work?
- How would a previous employer describe you?
- How did you get your last job?
- What did you gain from your last work experience?
- Describe your ideal level of supervision.
- What problems have you encountered in previous jobs?
- What is the most interesting job you've ever had?
- What achievements do you look back on with pride and why?
- What is some constructive criticism that you have received, and how have you responded?
- Describe the biggest challenge you have faced and how you have overcome it.
- How do you evaluate success?
- What do you know about our organization?
- Why are you interviewing with our organization?
- Who else are you interviewing with?
- What practice area do you see yourself in?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years?
- What goals do you have for your legal career?
- What long-term satisfaction do you expect to obtain from a legal career?
- If you could be anything other than a lawyer, what would it be and why?
- Why should we hire you?
- Do you have any questions for us? (The answer to this is always "Yes" so have questions prepared.)

An increasing number of legal employers are using an interviewing process called "behavioral interviewing" to identify the best candidates for their organizations. Behavioral interviewing is based on the theory that past and present behavior is a predictor of future performance. By asking an applicant to give examples of past or current use of specific "competencies" (e.g., skills, abilities, personal traits), interviewers hope to assess and predict the applicant's future performance and potential success with their organization. This interviewing technique has been used effectively in the business world for a number of years and is now being adopted by more and more law firms, especially larger ones.

When answering behavioral interview questions, use the STAR method to formulate a complete response:

- Situation: Explain the situation to give the interviewer the necessary context.
- Task: Describe the task you faced, including what outcome was expected of you.
- Action: Using "I" or "we" statements, describe the specific action you took.
- Result: Explain the result you achieved, and explain what you learned from the experience.

Some examples of behavioral interview questions you may receive are:

- Tell me about a time when you explained a complex issue to a person in a way that they could understand it.
- Tell me about a time you were assigned a research project in an area that was unfamiliar to you and how you approached it.
- Describe an ethical dilemma you were confronted with and how you dealt with it.

Some questions that you may want to ask the interviewer include:

- Why did you (the interviewer) decide to join the organization?
- Why do you like being part of this organization?
- What do you like best about what you do? What do you like least?
- What is the most interesting project you're currently working on?
- Has working here been what you expected?
- What keeps you here? Do you see yourself here long-term?
- How would you describe the organization and the people who work for it?
- How would you describe the personality of the organization?
- How would you describe the hierarchy or structure of the organization?
- What do you see as the benefits/drawbacks of working at an organization this size?
- What do you think sets this organization apart from other organizations in the area?
- For those employers with multiple offices: Are the different offices independent?
- Is there a shared client base?
- Is there a mentoring system at your firm for summer positions (or entry-level associates)?
- When people are working on projects, how common is it to seek out advice or input from others in the group/department?
- How are assignments distributed?
- Why type of supervision and evaluation are given to a summer associate?
- How many participants does the firm expect to have in the summer program?
- (For younger associates who summered at the firm) How is life at the firm different from your summer experience?
- Are offers extended by a particular practice group?
- What practice areas are growing at the fastest rate? Are there plans to expand into other practice areas?
- What changes do you foresee in (practice area)?
- What outside activities are attorneys involved in (local bar association, civic organizations, etc.)?
- How are new attorneys trained? Summer clerks/associates?
- How soon does a new attorney have direct client contact?
- How do you find the quality of life within the firm?
- What is your day-to-day work life like? What about for a clerk/associate?

You should not ask any questions that you could answer through simple research, nor should you ask questions that are more appropriate after an offer has been extended, such as questions about salary, benefits, vacation and leave policies, or billable hour requirements. Most of these questions can be answered through other sources, such as the [NALP Directory of Legal Employers](#).

THE INTERVIEW

Dress for the occasion

Interviews for legal positions are *professional* interviews. If you dress unprofessionally, it reflects negatively on your interest level, your commitment to the interview process and your ability to represent the employer in a professional manner. You must wear a dark suit, and men must wear ties. Specifically,

wear a suit that is clean, pressed, in good condition and fits you well. Wear a coordinated shirt in a white or a muted color, with no pattern. Your shoes should be professional and match your belt, if you are wearing one. If you are wearing heels, they should be moderate and close-toed, and pantyhose should be skin-toned. Your hair should be neat, including any facial hair. Make-up should be light, and you should not wear any perfume, cologne, or aftershave. Jewelry should be limited and conservative, and fingernails should be manicured and clean, with only a clear or light shade of polish. All tattoos should be covered, and you should bring a briefcase or portfolio.

Plan ahead — set out your clothes the night before and make sure everything is clean, wrinkle-free and fits you well.

Bring copies of your resume, cover letter, transcript, and writing sample, along with a list of your references with the appropriate contact information. Do not bring gum, a cell phone, ear buds, coffee, or a backpack to the interview. If you have piercings, take them out.

Convey your interest

Employers frequently tell us that candidates are unable to articulate *why* they are interviewing with a particular firm. If you have done your homework, this simply becomes a matter of expressing yourself in an enthusiastic but professional manner. Make a list of accomplishments or strengths that make you attractive to this particular employer. Evaluate your strengths and think of specific examples that will illustrate those strengths. Do not limit yourself to legal job experience. Many of the skills you have developed in non-legal jobs transfer to the legal profession. However, you must be able to articulate your qualifications in a convincing manner. For example, “I have an excellent work ethic” does not convey the point as effectively as “I am a full-time student, work part-time, finance 100 percent of my education, and I maintain a B average GPA.” Similarly, “I am a people person” does not speak to your abilities as well as “I worked in public relations for three years prior to coming to law school, have been elected SBA class representative, and am a student member of the American Bar Association.”

Try to connect your current interests and past experiences to the type of work done by the employer. For example, if you did a substantial amount of volunteer work in the past, talk to non-profit employers about your commitment to helping others. If you went to law school for the sole purpose of becoming a prosecutor, tell an attorney general’s office that very fact. If you worked as a file clerk in a title company and that sparked an interest in real estate law, emphasize that to the employer that specializes in real estate law.

Be professional and personable

No matter what your qualifications are, you will not interview successfully unless you establish a positive, professional rapport with the interviewer. Establishing this rapport starts the minute you walk in the door.

Arrive at least 5 to 10 minutes early for your interview. If you are more than 10 minutes early, go to a restroom and check your appearance. If you are participating in an on-campus interview, you do not need to check in with the CDO. You can simply wait for your turn. If you are interviewing in the employer’s office, check in with the receptionist. Let him or her know your name, why you are there, and who you

are meeting (e.g., “Hello. My name is Joe Student. I’m here for a 10:00 interview with Jane Lawyer.”). Be friendly and courteous to everyone within the office no matter what their title or position. Staff can be extremely helpful — and influential — in the interview process. Also, make mental or physical notes on every person who assisted you during your interview so that you will be able to send appropriate thank you notes after your interview.

Greet the interviewer with a smile and a firm, dry handshake. Maintain good posture. While the interviewer is speaking, be an active listener by maintaining eye contact and nodding occasionally when appropriate.

When the interview has concluded, thank the interviewer for their time and let them know that they should feel free to contact you if they have additional questions. Of course, you do not want to pressure them to tell you whether or not you will receive a callback interview or an offer, but it is acceptable to ask about the general time frame of the recruiting process so that you can plan accordingly.

PHONE AND VIDEO INTERVIEWS

Phone and video interviews have become more common in recent years as employers look to reduce recruiting costs. While much of the preparation for a phone or video interview will be the same as that for an in-person interview, there are a few additional elements to keep in mind. As you prepare yourself for a phone or video interview, please consider the following:

- Participate in a mock interview over the phone or video to help familiarize yourself with the experience and the technology.
- Choose a room for the interview that is quiet and will allow you to conduct the interview free of distractions or interruptions.
- Test your phone or webcam in advance of your interview. Make sure that you have good reception in the room where you will conduct the interview and that your phone is fully charged.
- If you are interviewing over the phone, prepare notes to keep in front of you to aid you if necessary.
- Dress as you would for an in-person interview. Even if you are interviewing over the phone, dressing professionally can help put you in the proper mindset for the interview.
- Speak up and speak clearly. This is important in all interviews, but especially in those over the phone or video. It can be very difficult to hear a student who is too soft-spoken or speaks too quickly.
- Avoid interrupting the interviewer. Again, this is important in all interviews, but especially in those over the phone or video where the interviewer cannot be seen or there is a slight delay in transmission. Allow for a brief pause before you begin to answer the interviewer’s question to ensure that you do not cut him or her off.
- Close the interview strongly. There is no handshake at the end of a phone or video interview, so it can be easy for students to just let the interview tail off at the end. Be sure to thank the interviewers and make a good final impression.

The CDO has a dedicated room for phone and video interviews. If you wish to use the room, you must reserve it in advance. To do so, please contact Heidi Baguer at hbaguer@nd.edu. We strongly encourage all students to schedule a practice run in the room prior to their real interview if possible.

FOLLOW UP

Send a thank you note

Take notes immediately after each interview to record your impressions of the firm and the people you met. Write down the name of everyone you met so you can remember to send them a thank you note. A thank you note reaffirms your interest in the position and expresses your appreciation to the interviewer for taking the time to consider you. Send the note promptly after the interview — the next day is ideal. Handwritten notes can make a great, but an e-mailed thank you letter is appropriate and sufficient in most cases. Refer back to topics discussed in your interview (both position-related topics and “unrelated” topics such as a shared interest) and personalize the message whenever possible. Without exception, thank you notes should be sent after every interview, even informational interviews. However, make sure your thank you notes are completely error-free. Failing to send a thank you note will not cost you a callback or an offer, but a thank you note containing errors might.

Give the employer time

Hopefully the employer has given you a general time frame for the remainder of their recruiting process. If they have not, tactfully ask where they are in the process and when they hope to conclude. Avoid asking bluntly, “So, when will I hear from you?” If the time period outlined by the interviewer has passed, give them a bit more time. If you still have yet to hear, it is acceptable to contact them. Tell them that you are still extremely interested and offer to provide any additional materials that they might need in their decision-making process. Even if you are extremely anxious to hear from an employer or are frustrated by the process, remember to maintain your professional demeanor. In the event you have not received a timeline from an employer, waiting two weeks (or ten business days) after the interview to follow up is a good rule of thumb.

INTERVIEW CANCELLATION POLICY

All interviews are, of course, professional appointments and should be treated as such. You should always make every effort to attend an interview as scheduled, whether it is informational or evaluative. The individual conducting your interview has taken time out of his/her day to meet with you, and that professional courtesy should be treated respectfully.

In the event a cancellation is absolutely necessary, you should always give the appropriate individual as much notice as possible in order for that person to adjust his/her schedule. For any scheduled interview other than an on-campus interview arranged through the CDO, you should directly contact the individual with whom you have been communicating prior to the interview (e.g., interviewer, recruiting contact).

For on-campus interviews through the CDO, the procedure outlined below must be followed. Failure to abide by the procedure outlined below may result in suspension from on-campus interview participation until appropriate corrective action is taken.

If you must cancel a scheduled on-campus interview, please remember that:

- Interviews must be cancelled at least two business days before the interview, Monday through Friday. Emailing the CDO on Saturday that you cannot attend an interview scheduled for Monday is not acceptable. You must provide sufficient time, at least two business days, so that new arrangements can be made. All on-campus interviews are cancelled through Ali Wruble, Recruiting Program Manager (awruble@nd.edu).
- If you have a true emergency and must cancel less than two business days before the interview:
 - As soon as possible, email Ali Wruble at awruble@nd.edu.
 - For any interview appointment you do not keep, write a message of apology to the employer and submit a copy of the message to Vincent Versagli, Director of Career Development. This must be done in order to ensure that you can continue to participate in on-campus interviews.

You are expected to attend all scheduled on-campus interviews unless you have already accepted an offer of employment. If you have accepted an offer of employment, then you must submit a written request to Ali Wruble at awruble@nd.edu that all on-campus interviews be cancelled. (Please note that considering an offer is not the same as accepting an offer.)

Late on-campus interview cancellations create problems for all parties concerned:

- Employers miss the chance to fill a slot with another student.
- Several late cancellations can cause an employer's total number of interviews to drop below the level that makes a trip to campus worthwhile.
- Your colleagues lose valuable opportunities to meet with employers.
- Students interviewing immediately after a "no-show" may find an employer less than receptive.
- Employers are not pleased when they arrive on campus and receive a schedule vastly different from the one that was sent to them only days before.

Please help us encourage employers to continue to interview on campus by keeping your interviews. Please help your classmates by giving us at least two business days' notice if you must cancel an interview.

For a more detailed discussion of interviewing, please see the Interview Guide on the [CDO Google Drive](#).

ACCEPTING OR REJECTING OFFERS

Notre Dame Law School is a member of the National Association of Law Placement (NALP) and endorses NALP's *Principles and Standards for Law Placement and Recruiting Activities* (Principles and Standards). Reprinted below is Part V: General Standards for the Timing of Offers and Decisions. You can view Part V: General Standards for the Timing of Offers and Decisions on [NALP's website](#).

Please note that not all employers are members of NALP, so the NALP standards linked above may not be observed by every employer with whom you interview. If you receive an offer from an employer with a short deadline and are unsure of how to handle it, please contact a CDO counselor for advice.

When accepting and rejecting offers, be professional and expect the same behavior from employers and other applicants. If an employer is pressuring you to make a quick decision, take that into consideration when evaluating whether you want to work for that employer. On the other hand, if you receive an offer from an employer for whom you would like to work, do not hesitate to accept and immediately withdraw your name from consideration by other employers. **Specifically, after accepting an offer, you must contact all employers with whom you have completed a callback interview and still remain a candidate to remove yourself from consideration. Similarly, if you are scheduled for any upcoming interviews after accepting an offer, you must cancel them immediately.** Be gracious when rejecting offers, thanking the employers for their time and the opportunity they presented to you.

It is both unprofessional and unethical to continue to interview – or worse, to accept a job offer – after you have accepted an offer with another employer. Doing so reflects poorly upon your character and upon Notre Dame Law School. If you have accepted an offer, you must not pursue or entertain any other offers. If you are ever in doubt as to how to handle an acceptance or rejection of a job offer, please contact the CDO for assistance.

NETWORKING

Networking means nothing more than building relationships. In its truest form, networking is simply when people meet to exchange ideas, information, and contacts. It can take place in a formal networking meeting, an office, an airplane, bar, holiday party—anywhere two people are talking and building a relationship. The topic of conversation is irrelevant as long as people are building a rapport, a level of trust or a bond with each other.

Networking is a vital part of a successful job search in law school and will play an ongoing and even more important role in your legal career after graduation. Networking includes contacting professionals with whom you are already acquainted, as well as making new contacts who may be able to help you secure job opportunities – either by putting in a good word for you to a potential employer or keeping you apprised of jobs that are not advertised or openings that may be about to occur. It is not simply asking someone if they are hiring or if they know of a job opening. Successful networking often results in the creation of meaningful relationships in which the contact becomes emotionally invested in your professional success and serves as a personal advocate on your behalf.

Whether you use your smart phone, Access, Excel, a three-ring binder, or note cards, be sure to have thought about how you would like to keep track of important contact information. Name, address, phone numbers, email address, company, note section, follow-up action, and the date of your last contact with that person are necessary entries for your management system. You may choose to be more detailed and include additional information, but at least have the basics.

Networking Meetings

A networking meeting is a useful tool that allows you to build your knowledge about a practice area while providing an effective networking opportunity. The goal is not to ask for a job; rather, it is to make contacts and learn what it means to practice in a particular field or geographic area. This is an opportunity to ask a practicing attorney questions about the day-to-day practice in a particular field, the various career paths successful attorneys have taken in that field, and the skills necessary for success. This information can be used to craft an effective cover letter and to articulate clearly your interest and applicable skills during an interview.

Individuals to Contact

- Notre Dame Lawyers or attorneys from your undergraduate institution who practice in the field of law in which you are interested.
- Attorneys you know of who have a tie to your geographic area or other areas of interest.
- Attorneys suggested to you by your professors, staff members, family and friends.

For examples of emails requesting a networking meeting, please see the Templates and Examples guide.

How to Network

The following steps will help you begin building a successful professional network.

- Be able to articulate who you are. Know your past experiences, the lawyer you want to be, and what you have to offer.
- Call or e-mail the networking contact requesting a meeting or phone conversation. Ask for information and not a job.
- Conduct your meeting/informational interview.
- Send a thank you note after you meet with a contact.
- One month later, send a follow up e-mail, letter, or phone call to networking contacts with whom you have had a positive experience. The conversation is simply to update the networking contact of your progress. This step is often forgotten, but it will produce better results.
- Maintain contacts. Repeat the step above on a bi-monthly or quarterly basis. Major calendar events can give you a reason to contact someone (e.g., the holidays, end of a semester).

Thirty-Second Message (the Elevator Pitch)

You are in an elevator and happen to strike up a conversation with the person standing next to you. Can you give a thirty-second speech that will let that person know who you are, what you do, and what your career interests are? Can you quickly articulate your personal brand eloquently?

Often people can and want to help you, but they will not know how unless you communicate this information to them. By developing a “thirty-second message,” you will make a good impression and increase the likelihood of making a new contact. A good thirty-second message includes:

- Relevant background information, including your education and experience;
- Summary of your career interests; and,
- A question or request for assistance from the other person.

For a more detailed discussion of networking, please see the Networking Guide in the [CDO Google Drive](#).

PREPARING FOR THE BAR

It is never too early to plan for the bar exam. All states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories require passage of a bar exam before a lawyer is admitted to practice law in that jurisdiction or state. The bar exam is offered twice yearly in most states (February and July).

All jurisdictions require law students or graduates to register for the bar exam and to submit an application before taking the bar exam. Most state bar applications require letters of recommendation, references, and other personal information and charge an application fee. Additional supporting documents may be required in the applicant's review. Because each state individually determines what criteria it will use to determine an attorney's eligibility for admission to practice, it is critical that you determine the individual requirements for your state. Registration deadlines vary by state and change periodically, so it is extremely important that you look at your state's bar exam deadlines as early as possible in your law school career.

In addition to a bar examination, there are character, fitness, and other qualifications for admission to the bar in every U.S. jurisdiction. Applicants are encouraged to determine the requirements for any jurisdiction in which they intend to seek admission by contacting the jurisdiction. Addresses for all relevant agencies are available through the National Conference of Bar Examiners. The National Conference of Bar Examiners' [website](#) has all the information you need, plus links to every state's own website. Start there to find your state's bar examiner. The Comprehensive Guide on their site has a thorough overview of each jurisdiction's requirements, with much of the information presented in table format for easy comparison.

Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE)

The Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE) is a two-hour, 60-question multiple-choice examination developed by NCBE that is administered three times per year. It is required for admission to the bars of all but three U.S. jurisdictions (Maryland, Wisconsin, and Puerto Rico). Because MPRE requirements vary from one jurisdiction to another, examinees are advised to check with the bar admission agency in the jurisdiction to which they seek admission before registering for the MPRE. Passing scores are established by each jurisdiction.

Students may take the MPRE before the end of their third year, and 3Ls often take it in November. Please note: some states require you to take the MPRE before taking the rest of the bar, so be sure to check your state's requirements. Go to the National Conference of Bar Examiners [MPRE page](#) to get more information about future test dates, or to the [Online Registration Page](#).

Character and Fitness

All states have a thorough "Character and Fitness" portion of the bar application. It is important to review this section as early as possible. Sometimes, in order to complete this portion, you will be required to obtain supporting documents, such as fingerprints or a driving record, which will require additional steps and lead time. Additionally, your law school application may be reviewed for consistency with the records you submit at the time of seeking admission. Examples of topics your state may cover include:

- Educational history, including any disciplinary actions;
- Employment history, including any charges of misconduct;
- Criminal history;
- Financial history, including any neglect of financial responsibilities;
- Litigation history;
- Driving history;
- Mental health;
- Substance abuse.

Consult [Chart 2](#) in the NCBE/ABA Comprehensive Guide for an overview of character and fitness determinations of each state. To learn more about any state's moral character requirements, visit the state's bar admission website.

In reviewing your information and determining its significance, various factors are likely to be considered, including your age at the time the conduct occurred, when the conduct occurred, the seriousness of the conduct, your candor in providing the information, and your conduct since the incident(s) took place. For mental health and substance abuse matters, treatment for these problems is not usually enough for denial of admission. Typically examiners want to see that an applicant is taking personal responsibility and addressing the problem(s).

Do not omit information for fear that the information will prohibit you from admission. Failure to disclose information is likely to cause you more difficulty in admission than the incident itself. Answer all questions completely and honestly. Direct any questions about the character and fitness requirements to the board of bar examiners of your state.

When to Take the Bar Exam

Most graduates take the July bar exam the summer after graduation. However, students who have not obtained employment by graduation or who are working in a temporary position, such as a judicial clerkship or fellowship, may decide to defer taking the exam until later. Keep in mind that many employers hiring after graduation may require bar passage as a prerequisite for hiring. To the extent possible, learn the hiring requirements of your desired employer(s). Feel free to speak with a CDO counselor about any questions you may have on this issue.

All States Differ

If you do not have a specific destination state in mind, then note the requirements of your leading candidates. Please feel free to speak with a CDO counselor to discuss your specific situation if you are uncertain how to proceed.

It is critical to pay close attention to the requirements of each jurisdiction that must be met in order to both sit for the bar exam and be admitted to practice. Requirements vary widely and may require lead time to accomplish. For instance:

- Ohio requires students to register during their second year of law school and show proof of attendance at a one-credit hour substance abuse class prior to sitting for the bar exam.
- New York requires all candidates for admission to submit documentation showing they have completed 50 hours of qualifying pro bono service. For any candidates beginning law school after August 1, 2016, an increased experiential requirement is in effect (15 credits).

Students should investigate carefully the requirements of the jurisdiction in which they intend to sit for the bar exam and prepare accordingly. Since jurisdiction rules and policies can change, students are strongly encouraged to consult the bar admission agency directly with questions and to ensure accuracy of the information.

Bar Exam Formats

Each state determines which combination of exam elements to administer for admission to the bar. For jurisdiction-specific information, consult the NCBE's website. Study Aids for all exams are available through the NCBE website.

- **MBE** –The Multistate Bar Examination (MBE) is a six-hour, 200-question multiple-choice examination developed by NCBE and administered by user jurisdictions as part of the bar examination on the last Wednesday in February and the last Wednesday in July of each year. The purpose of the MBE is to assess the extent to which an examinee can apply fundamental legal principles and legal reasoning to analyze given fact patterns.
- **MEE** –The Multistate Essay Examination (MEE) is developed by NCBE and consists of six 30-minute questions. It is administered by user jurisdictions as part of the bar examination on the Tuesday before the last Wednesday in February and July of each year. The purpose of the MEE is to test the examinee's ability to (1) identify legal issues raised by a hypothetical factual situation; (2) separate material which is relevant from that which is not; (3) present a reasoned analysis of the relevant issues in a clear, concise, and well-organized composition; and (4) demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental legal principles relevant to the probable solution of the issues raised by the factual situation. The primary distinction between the MEE and the Multistate Bar Examination (MBE) is that the MEE requires the examinee to demonstrate an ability to communicate effectively in writing.
- **MPT** –The Multistate Performance Test (MPT) is developed by NCBE and consists of two 90-minute items. It is administered by user jurisdictions as part of the bar examination on the Tuesday before the last Wednesday in February and July of each year. User jurisdictions may select one or both MPT items to include as part of their bar examinations. Jurisdictions that administer the UBE use both MPT items. The MPT is designed to test an examinee's ability to use fundamental lawyering skills in a realistic situation and complete a task that a beginning lawyer should be able to accomplish. The MPT is not a test of substantive knowledge. Rather, it is designed to evaluate certain fundamental skills lawyers are expected to demonstrate regardless of the area of law in which the skills arise.

- **UBE** – The Uniform Bar Exam (UBE) is administered over two days, with the MBE given on the last Wednesday of February and July and the MEE and MPT given on the Tuesday prior to that. Jurisdictions that use the UBE may require applicants to also complete a jurisdiction-specific educational component and/or pass a test on jurisdiction-specific law in addition to passing the UBE. The UBE is designed to test knowledge and skills that every lawyer should be able to demonstrate prior to becoming licensed to practice law. It results in a portable score that can be used to apply for admission in other UBE jurisdictions.

Bar Review Courses

Many students studying for the bar choose to sign up for an optional bar review course with one of the numerous bar review companies. Many courses prepare students for both the multistate and state portions of the bar exam and for the MPRE. Others focus only on one portion of the test. For a list of some of the many bar review options, visit FindLaw's website.