

# Want to be a LAWYER?

Who are they?

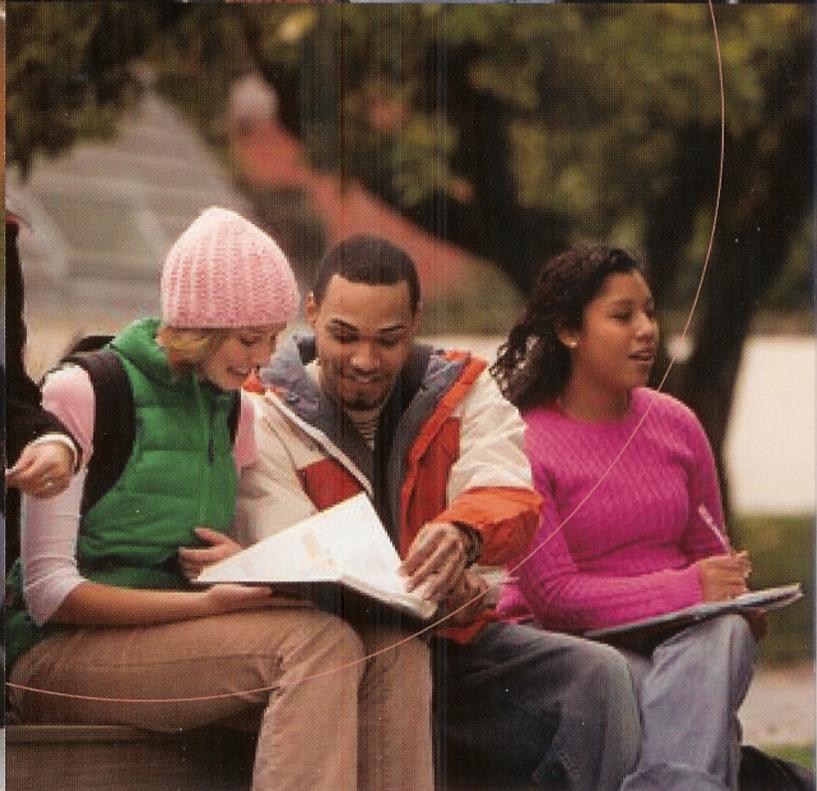
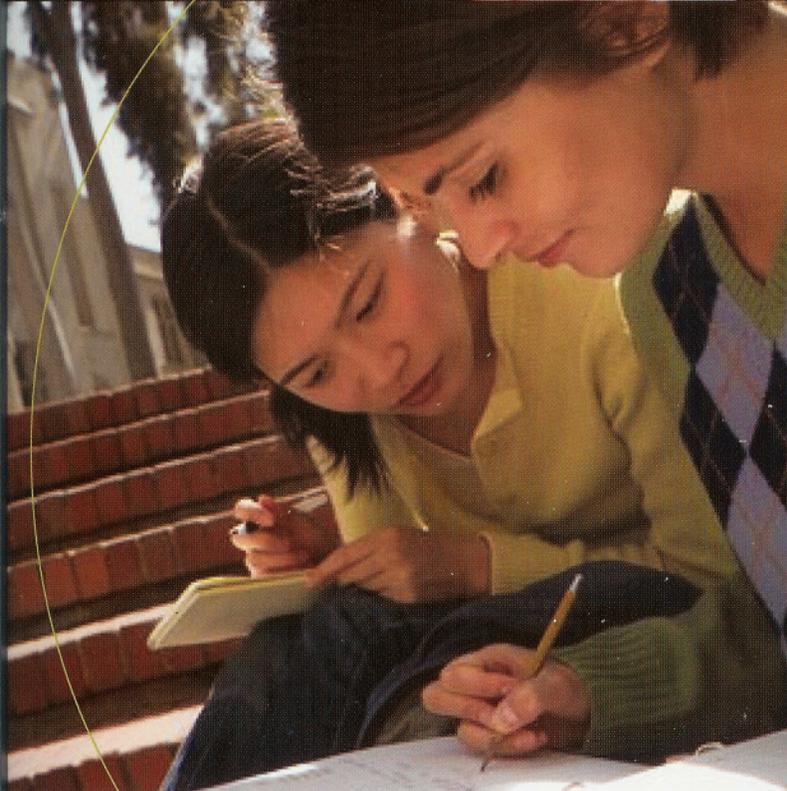
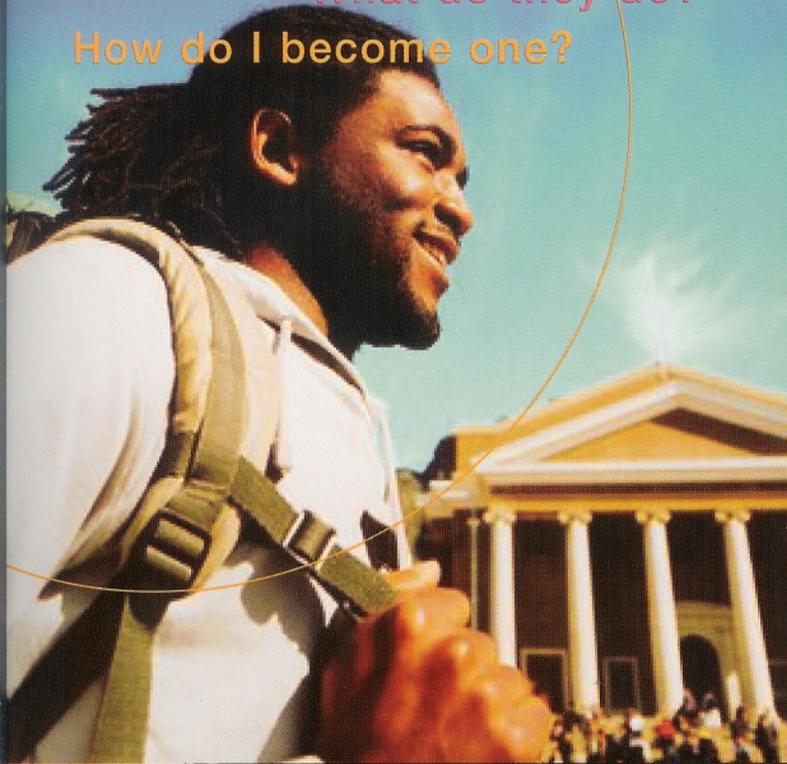
What do they do?

How do I become one?



The State Bar  
of California | Office of Legal Services,  
Access & Fairness Programs

180 Howard Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
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# Different Paths To Becoming A Lawyer

People follow many different paths to become a lawyer. The most traditional path is to work hard in high school, attend the best college you can and excel there, score high on the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) and then attend the best law school possible. You can also become a lawyer through a combination of education and experience.

There are other ways to become a lawyer. First, there are many different law schools. When selecting students, some law schools do not focus on grades and LSAT scores as much as legal interests and life/work experiences. Most law schools require a college degree, but some may only ask for equivalent course work. In California, the law permits qualified applicants to take the California Bar Exam without ever going to law school. It is important to be aware of these different paths to becoming a lawyer, because if you have the dream to become a lawyer, you can do it!

## Benefits Of A College Degree

By going to college, there will be more opportunities and choices for you. Going to college takes planning and preparation, but the benefits you can gain in the long run are worthwhile. Here are a few benefits:

- Having more and better jobs to choose from
- Earning more money
- Meeting diverse people
- Making lifelong connections
- Gaining greater confidence and independence
- Increasing your skills and knowledge base
- Broadening your perspective
- Preparing for law school and a career as a lawyer

For more information about planning for college, see:

California Colleges  
<http://www.californiacolleges.edu>

California Independent Colleges  
<http://www.aiccu.edu>

CollegeBoard.com  
<http://www.collegeboard.com/plan/>

OfftoCollege.com  
<http://www.offtocollege.com/>

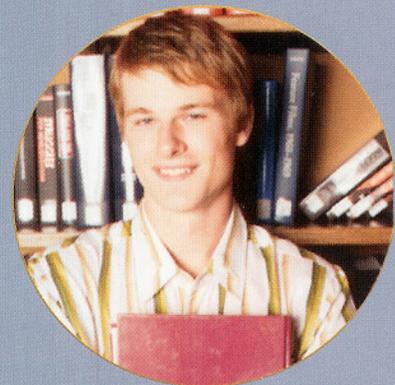


2006 Edition

# What Do Lawyers Do?

- Lawyers fight for people's Constitutional rights like the right to free speech, freedom from unreasonable search and seizure, and equal protection.
- Lawyers defend and prosecute people accused of crimes.
- Lawyers represent people in divorce and child custody disputes.
- Lawyers fight to protect the environment.
- Lawyers help people become United States citizens.
- Lawyers negotiate and draft contracts for businesses.
- Lawyers help people get public assistance and other benefits to which they are entitled.
- Lawyers sue companies for people injured by products and other lawyers defend those companies.
- Lawyers fight for renters' rights and low-income housing.
- Lawyers fight for workers' rights to unionize.
- Lawyers help people establish businesses.
- Lawyers prepare wills and trusts to guard people's belongings.
- Lawyers negotiate and draft agreements for the sale and development of land.
- Lawyers draft patents to protect people's inventions.
- Lawyers sue individuals and companies for people who believe others have stolen their inventions.
- Lawyers help businesses and people who declare bankruptcy.
- Lawyers represent musicians, writers, actors, and athletes when they negotiate contracts.
- Lawyers sue companies when people are wrongfully fired and other lawyers defend those companies.
- Lawyers become judges, lobbyists, professors, politicians, and business people.

These are only a few examples of what lawyers do. There are many, many more career paths a lawyer can follow!



# The Traditional Path To Becoming A Lawyer



## Meet Some Lawyers



**Sheila Kuehl** was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She was an actress throughout her childhood, but quit the profession to go to college at UCLA, then to law school at Harvard University. She co-founded the California Women's Law Center, where she drafted laws related to children, families, women, and domestic violence. In 1992, she was the first openly gay or lesbian person to be elected to the California State Assembly, and she was elected to the California State Senate in 2000.



**Dale Minami** received a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Southern California and received his J.D. in 1971 from UC Berkeley Boalt Hall School of Law. He co-founded the Asian Law Caucus and the Asian American Bar Association of the Bay Area. He has been involved in significant litigation involving the civil rights of Asian Pacific Americans and other minorities, including *Korematsu v. United States*, a lawsuit that overturned a 40 year old conviction for refusal to obey exclusion orders aimed at Japanese Americans during WWII.



**Cruz Reynoso**, the son of farm workers, was born in Brea, California. He graduated from Pomona College and UC Berkeley Boalt Hall School of Law. After serving as the director of California Rural Legal Assistance, helping low-income individuals, he became the first Latino appointed to the Supreme Court of California. Former Associate Justice Reynoso is now a professor at UC Davis School of Law. In 2000, President Clinton honored him with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor.



**Renee Carter** was born in the inner city of New York. Her involvement in youth activities and interest in juvenile criminal justice led her to the field of law. Ms. Carter obtained her Bachelor's degree from UC Davis and her J.D. from the University of San Francisco School of Law. She is a former Deputy District Attorney and former President of the Wiley W. Manuel Bar Association, the Sacramento affiliate chapter of the National Bar Association, the nation's oldest and

largest organization of attorneys of African descent in the United States and throughout the world. Ms. Carter graduated from the charter class of the State Bar's Leadership Academy.



**K. Luan Tran**, a former refugee from Vietnam, is known for his business litigation skills and pro bono work with the Vietnamese-American community. He holds three law degrees, including one from Harvard Law School. He was recently recognized as among the "Top 20 under 40" attorneys in California and graduated from the charter class of the State Bar's Leadership Academy. Mr. Tran is currently in private practice in the firm of Lee & Tran in Los Angeles.



**Eric Brooks**, a native of Bloomington, Indiana, received his Bachelor's degree from Indiana University in 1992 and his J.D. degree from UC Berkeley Boalt Hall School of Law in 2000, where he was awarded a Moot Court Advocacy Award and the Charles Houston Bar Association Student Achievement Scholarship. Mr. Brooks is an associate at Morrison & Foerster in San Francisco and his practice focuses on representing public companies and their officers and directors

in securities class actions, SEC investigations, and derivative suits. Mr. Brooks graduated from the charter class of the State Bar's Leadership Academy, and is a former chair of the State Bar's Ethnic Minority Relations Committee.

## Who Can Become A Lawyer?

- You don't need to be a straight "A" student to become a lawyer.
- You don't need to be born in the United States to be a lawyer.
- You can become a lawyer at age eighteen and above.
- You don't have to agree with the law to be a lawyer.
- You can have a disability and become a lawyer.
- You can be of any racial or ethnic background and be a lawyer.
- You can be of any sexual orientation to be a lawyer.
- You don't need to be rich to become a lawyer.

## Where Can I Learn More About The Law?

American Bar Association

<http://www.abanet.org/publiced/youth/sia/home.html>

Courts – Self Help Center

<http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/>

Picturing Justice: Law and Popular Culture

<http://www.usfca.edu/pj/index.html>

The State Bar of California – When You Become 18

<http://calbar.ca.gov/calbar/pdfs/publications/Becoming-18.pdf>

United States Department of Justice Kids and Youth

<http://www.usdoj.gov/kidspage/index.html>

## Where Can I Learn More About Becoming A Lawyer?

American Bar Association

<http://www.abanet.org/careercounsel/prelaw.html>

FindLaw.com - Pre-Law Resources

<http://stu.findlaw.com/prelaw/>

Law School Admissions Council

<http://lsac.org/LSAC.asp?url=lsac/getting-started.asp>

Princeton Review

<http://www.princetonreview.com/law/research/>

The State Bar of California – Homepage

[http://calbar.ca.gov/state/calbar/calbar\\_home.jsp](http://calbar.ca.gov/state/calbar/calbar_home.jsp)