

# Careers in Law and Legal Studies

Teacher  
Resources



**Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center**

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## Introduction

Careers in the law capture the imagination of students and adults alike. But what exactly do professionals in the legal system do? How does one become qualified for a law-related career?

This teacher resource complements tours offered at the Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center. For more information about touring the Learning Center, visit [courts.mi.gov/learningcenter](https://courts.mi.gov/learningcenter) or call 517-373-7171.

## Grade Level & Curriculum Connections

These resources are most appropriate for middle school students. However, the activities and information could be adapted for use by later elementary or by high school students. The enclosed materials are intended to help students fulfill Michigan's standards for Career and Employability, Social Studies, and English Language Arts.

## Career Planning

Before beginning these exercises, students should be familiar with Career Pathways, methods of career planning, and self assessment.

Careers in law and legal studies category appear under the Human Services Career Pathway. Careers in this path are related to economic, political, and social systems. These include education, government, law and law enforcement, leisure and recreation, military, religion, child care, social services, and personal services.

Individuals who succeed in human services careers typically have the following traits:

- Friendly, open, and cooperative.
- Like to work with people to solve problems.
- Value doing something that makes things better for other people.

## Legal Careers Briefcase

A briefcase gains its name from its original use—lawyers carrying legal briefs to and from court. A brief is a legal document containing all the facts and points of law pertinent to a specific case, filed by a lawyer before arguing the case in court.



### Time Required

2–3 class periods.

### Objectives

Students will:

- Collect information from multiple sources about various careers in law and legal studies. (CES 3:2, CES 2:1, R.CM.06–8.04, SOC.V.2.MS.2, SOC.V.2.MS.3)
- Transform ideas and requirements into a product. (CES 3:3)
- Present their findings to the class. (CES 3:6, S.CN.08.01, S.CN.06–08.03, S.DS.06–08.04, L.CN.06–08.02)

### Instructional Resources

Cereal boxes

Craft paper or grocery bags

Tape

Brass fasteners

Glue sticks

Craft foam, cut in 1" x 8" strips

Careers resources

Legal Careers graphic organizer

Markers, crayons, colored pencils

Magazine photos, clip art, etc.

Scissors

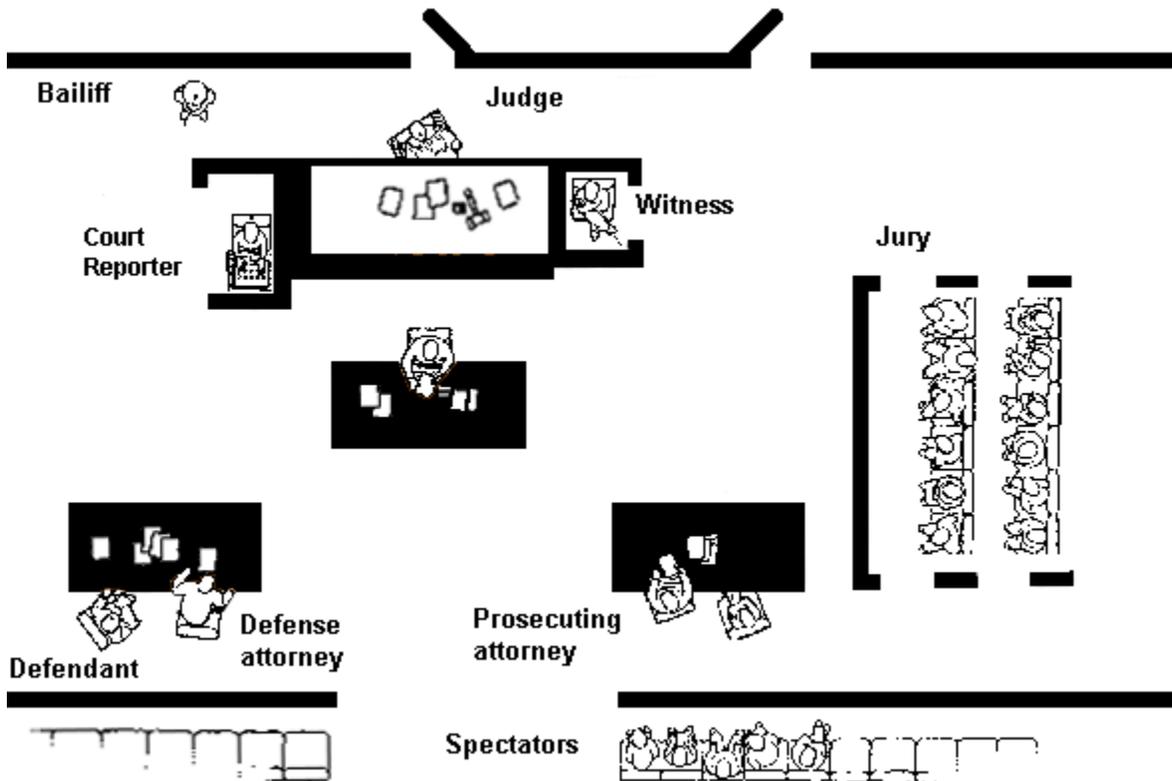
### Sequence of Activities

1. Develop a list of law-related careers for students to research. (See Glossary of Selected Law-Related Careers for suggestions).
2. Prepare the briefcases.
  - Wrap empty cereal boxes with brown paper, leaving one end open on each box.
  - Fasten a strip of craft foam to one side of each box with brass fasteners, forming a handle.
  - Seal each box.
3. Divide the class into groups of twos or threes. Assign a career for each group to research and distribute the Legal Careers graphic organizer. (See also Additional Resources for Researching Legal Careers.)
4. After the students have completed their initial research, they should transfer the information to the briefcase, using words, pictures, and/or drawings.

- Each group will prepare and make a presentation for the class about the career. Presentations may include poetry. (See Legal Careers Poetry.)

### Presentation Idea

To add interest to the presentations, set up the classroom like a courtroom and position each group in the location that corresponds with their career. Not all legal professionals have permanent positions in a courtroom, so any remaining students could make their presentations from the spectators' area.



## Legal Careers Poetry

This activity may be completed in conjunction with the Legal Careers Briefcase activity.

### Time Required

1–2 class periods

### Objectives

Students will:

- Collect information from multiple sources. (CES 3:2, CES 2:1, R.CM.06–8.04, SOC.V.2.MS.2, SOC.V.2.MS.3)
- Transform ideas and requirements into a product. (CES 3:3)
- Write poetry. (W.GN.06–08.01)
- Present their poetry to the class. (CES 3:6, S.CN.08.01, S.CN.06–08.03, S.DS.06–08.04, L.CN.06–08.02)

### Instructional Resources

Careers resources

Legal Careers graphic organizer

Legal Careers Poetry handout

Paper

Pen or pencils

### Directions

1. Develop a list of law-related careers for students to research. (See Glossary of Selected Law-Related Careers for suggestions.)
2. Divide the class into groups of twos or threes. Assign a career for each group to research and distribute the Legal Careers graphic organizer to focus the research. (See Additional Resources for Researching Legal Careers.)
3. Have students create and present poems about their career. The Legal Careers Poetry handout includes examples of a variety of poetry forms.

## Legal Careers Poetry

Students interested in careers in law and legal studies wrote the example poems.

Form	Example
<p>Cinquain</p> <p>Line 1: 1-word title (usually a noun)</p> <p>Line 2: 2-word description (often two adjectives)</p> <p>Line 3: 3 words expressing action</p> <p>Line 4: 4-word phrase</p> <p>Line 5: 1-word synonym for the topic</p>	<p>Defense</p> <p>Practicing law</p> <p>Reading, Writing, Listening</p> <p>Protecting those in need</p> <p>Attorney</p>
<p>Diamanté</p> <p>Line 1: 1 noun</p> <p>Line 2: 2 adjectives</p> <p>Line 3: 3 participles (verbs end in "ing")</p> <p>Line 4: 4 related nouns</p> <p>Line 4: 3 participles</p> <p>Line 6: 2 adjectives</p> <p>Line 7: 1 noun (synonym)</p>	<p>Justice</p> <p>Thoughtful, Scholarly</p> <p>Reviewing, Asking, Writing</p> <p>Application, Brief, Arguments, Opinion</p> <p>Interpreting, Overseeing, Rule-making</p> <p>Supreme, Elected</p> <p>Judge</p>
<p>Limerick</p> <p>Line 1: 8 syllables (rhyme of A)</p> <p>Line 2: 8 syllables (rhyme of A)</p> <p>Line 3: 6 syllables (rhyme of B)</p> <p>Line 4: 6 syllables (rhyme of B)</p> <p>Line 5: 8 syllables (rhyme of A)</p>	<p>There was a Supreme Court Justice</p> <p>Who read the law as it "just is"</p> <p>The lawyers before her,</p> <p>They sometimes implored her.</p> <p>Said she, "Law just says what it is."</p>
<p>Acrostic</p> <p>The first letter of each line forms the name of the job title.</p>	<p>Prosecutor</p> <p>Responsible</p> <p>Office</p> <p>Smart</p> <p>Every criminal's nightmare</p> <p>Court</p> <p>Upholding the law</p> <p>Tough</p> <p>Organized</p> <p>Receptive</p>
<p>Couplet</p> <p>Two-lines: each line has the same meter and their endings rhyme with one another.</p>	<p>Formal training is what we get</p> <p>For the life in Government.</p>
<p>Haiku</p> <p>Line 1: 5 syllables</p> <p>Line 2: 7 syllables</p> <p>Line 3: 5 syllables</p>	<p>It's quiet in the court</p> <p>The bailiff has entered now</p> <p>The judge will come soon</p>
<p>Tanka</p> <p>Line 1: 5 syllables</p> <p>Line 2: 7 syllables</p> <p>Line 3: 5 syllables</p> <p>Line 4: 7 syllables</p> <p>Line 5: 7 syllables, rhymes with line 4</p>	<p>Judicial workers</p> <p>General trial court judge</p> <p>For the greater good</p> <p>The best 6 years happen then</p> <p>Do it all over again</p>

## Careers in Law & Legal Studies

Job Title

Duties

Special Skills

Education, Training, Experience, & Other Requirements

How to Get the Job

- Job application
- Appointment by an official
- Election

Explanation:

Work Location(s)

Professional Associations

Salary Range

## Becoming a Lawyer in Michigan

Becoming a lawyer is a step-by-step process. Read the steps and write in the order, numbering the steps, 1 through 6.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Attend law school to earn a J.D. (*juris doctorate*) degree. Law school is a three-year program.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pay dues to become a member of the State Bar of Michigan.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pass the Michigan bar exam. Receive “character and fitness” certification by the State Board of Law Examiners, determining that you are a trustworthy person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Earn a bachelor’s degree from a four-year college or university. You may study any major.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Be admitted to the bar by the Michigan Supreme Court and take the lawyer’s oath.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Graduate from high school.

It takes hard work and dedication to complete all the steps in becoming a lawyer. If you graduate from high school at age 18, approximately how old will you be if you complete these steps in the minimum amount of time? Place these three steps: *graduate from high school, earn a bachelor’s degree, finish law school/pass the bar* on the time line.

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18    19    20    21    22    23    24    25    26    27    28    29    30

### Additional Resources About Becoming a Lawyer

Admission By Examination, State Bar of Michigan  
<http://www.michbar.org/professional/byexam>

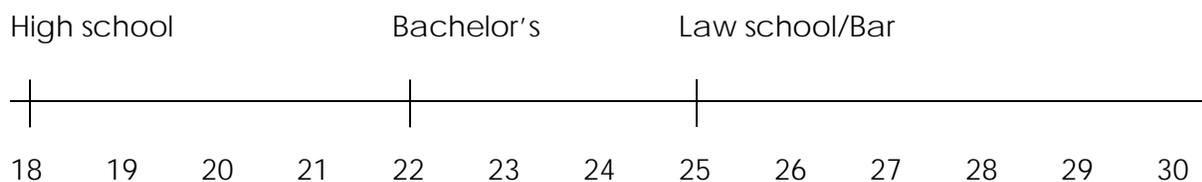
Thinking About Law School, Law School Admission Council  
<http://www.lsac.org/jd/think/getting-started.asp>

## Becoming a Lawyer in Michigan (Answer Key)

Becoming a lawyer is a step-by-step process. Read the steps and write in the order, numbering them, 1-6.

- 3 \_\_\_\_ Attend law school to earn a J.D. (*juris doctorate*) degree. Law school is a three-year program.
- 6 \_\_\_\_ Pay dues to become a member of the State Bar of Michigan.
- 4 \_\_\_\_ Pass the Michigan bar exam. Receive “character and fitness” certification by the State Board of Law Examiners, determining that you are a trustworthy person.
- 2 \_\_\_\_ Earn a bachelor’s degree from a four-year college or university. You may choose any major.
- 5 \_\_\_\_ Be admitted to the bar by the Michigan Supreme Court and take the lawyer’s oath.
- 1 \_\_\_\_ Graduate from high school.

It takes hard work and dedication to complete all the steps in becoming a lawyer. If you graduate from high school at age 18, approximately how old will you be if you complete these steps in the minimum amount of time? Place these three steps: *graduate from high school, earn a bachelor’s degree, finish law school/pass the bar* on the time line.



### Additional Resources About Becoming a Lawyer

Admission By Examination, State Bar of Michigan  
<http://www.michbar.org/professional/byexam>

Thinking About Law School, Law School Admission Council  
<http://www.lsac.org/jd/think/getting-started.asp>

## Legal Ethics

Those involved in the legal system place great importance on professional ethics. All lawyers in Michigan must receive “character and fitness” certification from the State Board of Law Examiners, and bodies such as the Attorney Grievance Board, Attorney Discipline Commission, and Judicial Tenure Commission exist to ensure ethical behavior by attorneys, judges, magistrates, and referees.

### Time Required

1–2 class periods.

### Objectives

Students will:

- Explain the meaning of ethics, and have a working understanding of the word.
- Recognize areas that require ethical behavior by lawyers.
- Write a new Lawyers Oath, based upon the oath taken by all lawyers in Michigan. (R.CM.06–08.01, R.CM.06–08.02, R.CM.06–08.03, R.CM.06–08.04, W.PS.06–08.01, W.R.06–08.01)

### Instructional Resources

Legal Ethics handout  
Paper and pencils/pens

Dictionary  
White board, chalkboard, or overhead

### Sequence of Activities

1. Divide the class into groups of twos or threes. Have each group develop a definition for the word “ethics.” Discuss the definitions and come to a consensus on the meaning of the word. Talk about why legal ethics are important to our system of justice and introduce some of the bodies that oversee professional and judicial ethics. (See Additional Resources: Legal Ethics).
2. Distribute the Legal Ethics handout and assign one paragraph per group for discussion and rewriting. Because some of the language is difficult, students should discuss the meaning of the paragraph and then discuss the importance of the ideas it contains. Next, have each group rewrite the paragraph, adding or subtracting ideas based upon their understanding of careers in law and legal studies in the 21st century.
3. Create a new Lawyers Oath by discussing each group’s paragraph and then writing it on the board. Groups may also offer ideas for additional lines, as they think appropriate. When the class is satisfied with the results, administer the oath to the class. Discuss why it is important for lawyers to say the words aloud in public.

## Extension Activities

1. Invite a lawyer or judge to speak to the class and ask him/her to discuss the importance of professional ethics and his/her remembrance of taking the Lawyers Oath. The expert may also be willing to administer the oath to the class.
2. Study the importance of good character and honesty in everyday life.

## Additional Resources on Legal Ethics

Regulatory Agencies, State Bar of Michigan  
<http://www.michbar.org/professional/disciplinary.cfm>

Ethics, State Bar of Michigan  
<http://www.michbar.org/opinions/ethicsopinions>

Lawyers Oath, State Bar of Michigan  
<http://www.michbar.org/generalinfo/lawyersoath>

Michigan Court Rules and Other Rules, Michigan Supreme Court  
<http://courts.mi.gov/Courts/MichiganSupremeCourt/rules/Pages/current-court-rules.aspx>

Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE) Study Aids, National Conference of Bar Examiners  
<http://www.ncbex.org/study-aids/>

Oath of Public Officers, Michigan Constitution, Article XI, Section 1  
<http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-Article-XI-1>

*It is reasonable that everyone who asks justice should do justice . . .*  
— Thomas Jefferson, letter to George Hammond, May 29, 1792

## Legal Ethics

In the United States, the legal system is built upon justice, a core democratic value. To practice law in Michigan, every lawyer must take and honor the oath written below.

### Lawyers Oath

I do solemnly swear (or affirm):

I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Michigan;

I will maintain the respect due to courts of justice and judicial officers;

I will not counsel or maintain any suit or proceeding which shall appear to me to be unjust, nor any defense except such as I believe to be honestly debatable under the law of the land;

I will employ for the purpose of maintaining the causes confided to me such means only as are consistent with truth and honor, and will never seek to mislead the judge or jury by any artifice or false statement of fact or law;

I will maintain the confidence and preserve inviolate the secrets of my client, and will accept no compensation in connection with my client's business except with my client's knowledge and approval;

I will abstain from all offensive personality, and advance no fact prejudicial to the honor or reputation of a party or witness, unless required by the justice of the cause with which I am charged;

I will never reject, from any consideration personal to myself, the cause of the defenseless or oppressed, or delay any cause for lucre or malice;

I will in all other respects conduct myself personally and professionally in conformity with the high standards of conduct imposed upon members of the bar as conditions for the privilege to practice law in this State.

## Simulations

Simulations can be excellent ways to engage students in real-life situations that require higher-order thinking (HS – 6.2.10). In addition, many legal professionals trace the origin of their careers to an experience with mock trials or other simulations.

Resources for mock trials (simulations of jury trials where evidence is presented), moot court (simulations of appellate court arguments), and small claims court proceedings are listed on the Learning Center's Mock Trials and Other Simulations webpage:

<http://courts.mi.gov/education/learning-center/educator-resources/curriculum/pages/mock-trials-and-other-simulations.aspx>.

## Glossary of Selected Law-Related Careers

**Attorney.** See Lawyer.

**Bailiff.** A court officer in charge of prisoners during a trial; also responsible for guarding the jury and preserving order in the court.

**Commissioner.** Highly experienced lawyer who prepares reports about cases that may be heard by the Michigan Supreme Court.

**Court Administrator.** A court employee who directs the nonjudicial aspects of a court, such as personnel, budgeting, and jury management.

**Court Clerk.** A court employee who maintains a court's permanent records.

**Court Crier.** A court officer who opens sessions of a court. The opening speech typically begins with "Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye," or "Oyez, oyez, oyez."

**Court Interpreter.** A person who translates court proceedings for those who do not speak or understand English.

**Court Reporter/Recorder.** A certified professional who makes a word-for-word record of court proceedings using a computer or other recording device.

**Friend of the Court Investigator.** A court employee who enforces custody, parenting-time, and child support orders.

**Judge.** A public official, elected to administer law in a court of justice. A judge has the authority to make decisions in civil and criminal proceedings. To be qualified as a judge in Michigan, a person must be licensed to practice law in the state and have practiced law for at least 5 years. Michigan's trial court and Court of Appeals judges are elected to six-year terms.

**Justice.** A judge of a Supreme Court. Michigan's justices are elected to eight-year terms. See Judge for other qualifications.

**Law Clerk.** A law school student or graduate who assists a judge by conducting legal research, writing memos, and drafting opinions.

**Law Librarian.** A librarian who works in a law school, law firm, or government library, aiding lawyers and other legal researchers.

**Lawyer.** A professional who has earned a college degree plus a degree from an accredited law school. A lawyer must also pass a test, called a bar exam, and be certified by the State Bar of Michigan to practice within the state. Lawyers usually specialize in a particular area of the law. Some prosecute or defend those accused of crimes (criminal law). Others represent governments, businesses, or individuals in matters of civil law, such as contracts, wills, environmental law, torts or real estate transactions. A number of lawyers become judges. Still others use their legal training in fields such as education or business.

**Legal Secretary.** An assistant who helps a lawyer or judge by taking and transcribing dictation, screening callers, setting up appointments, and completing similar tasks.

**Magistrate.** In Michigan's state courts, a professional appointed by a district court judge who has the power to perform certain judicial duties. These include, holding informal hearings on civil infractions, issuing arrest and search warrants, and setting and collecting bonds.

**Mediator.** A professional trained to help people resolve their problems without going to court. Some mediators are lawyers.

**Paralegal/Legal Assistant.** Paralegals, also called legal assistants, assist lawyers. They interview clients, maintain client records, conduct legal research, and draft letters and legal documents.

**Probation Officer.** A professional who works directly with adults or juveniles who are currently on probation.

**Psychologist.** A professional who provides counseling and other treatment services.

**Referee.** A professional who conducts certain court proceedings at the Friend of the Court or the Juvenile Section of Family Court. Most referees are lawyers.

## Also See

Michigan Judicial Institute, Handbook of Legal Terms

<https://mjieducation.mi.gov/documents/resources-for-trial-court-staff/178-holt-rev-2015/file>

## Additional Resources for Researching Legal Careers

### Careers, General Information

Career Explorer, Pure Michigan

<http://www.mitalent.org/career-explorer/>

Occupational Outlook Handbook, U.S. Department of Labor

<http://stats.bls.gov/oco/>

America's Career InfoNet, U.S. Department of Labor (includes videos)

<http://www.acinet.org/acinet/>

### Legal Careers

Careers in the Court System (brochure), Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center

<http://courts.mi.gov/education/learning-center/Documents/careers.pdf>

Preparing for Law School, American Bar Association

[http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal\\_education/resources/pre\\_law.html](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/pre_law.html)

### Select Professional Organizations

#### *Judges and Quasi-Judicial*

American Judges Association

<http://aja.ncsc.dni.us/>

Michigan Association of District Court Magistrates

<http://www.madcm.org/>

Michigan Judges Association

<http://mijudge.org/>

Referees Association of Michigan

<http://referees-association.org/>

#### *Lawyers*

American Bar Association

<http://www.americanbar.org/>

Criminal Defense Attorneys of Michigan

<http://www.cdamonline.org/>

National Association of Women Lawyers  
<http://www.nawl.org/>

Prosecuting Attorneys Association Michigan  
<http://www.michiganprosecutor.org/>

State Bar of Michigan  
<http://www.michbar.org/>

Local and Special Purpose Bars  
<http://www.michbar.org/resources/local-special-bar>

### *Mediators*

Association for Conflict Resolution  
<http://www.acrnet.org/>

Michigan Association of Court Mediators  
<http://macm.cc/>

### *Other Court- and Law-Related Professional Associations*

American Association of Law Libraries  
<http://www.aallnet.org/>

American Probation and Parole Association  
<http://www.appa-net.org/>

Michigan Translators/Interpreters Network  
<http://www.mitinweb.org/>

NALS  
<http://www.nals.org/>

National Association of Court Management  
<http://www.nacmnet.org/>

National Court Reporters Association  
<http://www.ncraonline.org/>