CITY OF BELLINGHAM

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE: **Paralegal & Claims Coordinator** **E-PLAN**
SG:E1-11
DEPARTMENT: **Legal** **CS:N**
FLSA:Y
EEO4CODE:AS

JOB SUMMARY:

Performs a variety of complex paralegal, technical, clerical, and analytical tasks in support of the civil division of the City's Legal Department, requiring independent judgment in applying knowledge of legal principles and processes. Responsible for advanced technical support activities and paraprofessional work to support the administration of the liability claims and litigation program for the Legal Department. Coordinates, investigates, evaluates, and assists with the final resolution of claims, all under the supervision of the Senior Assistant City Attorney responsible for the risk management program. Litigation work involves drafting a variety of legal documents for attorney review and signature, legal research focused on cite checking, preparing and responding to discovery requests, and assisting attorneys with hearings, mediations, and trials, including the preparation of briefs, binders and exhibits. Other administrative legal work involves nonclaim, nonlitigation matters, which constitute an important component of the position. Work requires a high degree of confidentiality and discretion with respect to information.

SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIPS:

Reports to the City Attorney. Also receives direction from the Senior Assistant City Attorney responsible for the City's risk management program as well as the Deputy City Attorney and other Senior Assistant City Attorneys. Works independently under the general direction of an attorney and under the guidance of applicable Legal Department and City policies and procedures, as well as federal, state, City laws, laws, rules and regulations.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE JOB:

1. General: Performs specialized administrative, clerical and paralegal services in support of all phases of claims, litigation, and case management in the civil division of the City's legal department and provides specialized administrative support to attorneys generally.

2. Legal Documents and Legal Process: Drafts and edits a wide variety of documents including legal notices, answers, motions, declarations, settlement agreements, subpoenas, orders, discovery, correspondence, ordinances, resolutions, contracts, deeds, easements, and other specialized documents for attorney review and signature. Assists with the preparation of court memorandums and briefs. Performs legal research such as checking citations to authority and a formal record and verifying proper

procedures. Coordinates and compiles civil discovery requests and responses, including interrogatories, requests for production, public records requests, and requests for admission.

3. Case Management and Procedures: Develops and maintains case file systems for litigation, maintains computer files with a high level of accuracy. Independently performs case management that includes monitoring for compliance with policies, court rules, case schedules and rules of procedure in an extensive variety of jurisdictions and forums, including all levels of local, state and federal courts, arbitrations, and administrative hearings.

4. Claims: Under the general direction of the Senior Assistant City Attorney responsible for risk management, evaluates and resolves liability claims, receiving assistance with complex, sensitive, or significant claims from the Senior Assistant City Attorney or other senior professional staff. Coordinates with related department personnel to perform claims investigations. When needed, visits incident sites and takes photographs. Discusses claim details with insurance adjusters, claimants and witnesses. Maintains claims data base and spread sheets. Prepares claim denial and approval letters. Coordinates processing for payment of liability claims.

6. Reports: Under supervision of Senior Assistant City Attorney, prepares Quarterly Claims and Litigation Reports for review by the Mayor, City Council, department heads and insurance carriers and Risk Assumption Reports, Reserve Reports and other related reports at the request of the Finance Department. Coordinates responses to auditor inquiries regarding claims and litigation program and cases.

7. Communication and Coordination: Communicates and coordinates with opposing counsel and their staffs, assigned counsel, expert and fact witnesses, process servers, investigators, court reporters, clients, City staff, translators, agencies, and court and board personnel.

8. Hearing/Trial Support: Coordinates the appearance of witnesses, creates trial binders and exhibits, and otherwise supports attorneys at their hearings and trials, requiring attendance on occasion.

9. Agreed Orders and Filing/Service: Enters agreed orders with District and Superior Court Judge's and Commissioners. Files and serves pleadings with multiple courts, boards, agencies and opposing parties.

10. Confidentiality: Deals with highly sensitive and confidential information with discretion and professionalism.

11. Back-up and Special Assignments: Provides back up to the Legal Administrative Assistant position as necessary and performs work on special projects/assignments that may be outside the normal area of assignment, as directed.

ADDITIONAL WORK PERFORMED:

1. May provide backup to other staff members throughout the legal department, which may include duties of lower and similarly classified positions.

2. Performs other related work of a similar nature and level.

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities):

Knowledge of:
- General civil litigation, personal injury/tort defense law, real estate/land use law, and contracts.
- Advanced knowledge of the liability claims program area.
- Legal terminology, principles, forms, procedures, technology and specialized functions, standard legal formats and court orders. Knowledge of procedures and rules in an extensive variety of jurisdictions and forums, including all levels of local, state and federal courts, arbitrations, and administrative hearings.
- Comprehensive knowledge of office practices, procedures~~,~~ and equipment.
- Knowledge and use of a variety of filing systems, both computerized and hard copy, and ability to accurately maintain them.

Skill in:
- Strong computer skills including data entry/retrieval and word processing. Ability and willingness to learn new applications and techniques.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills, including strong drafting and editing/proofreading abilities.
- Interpersonal sensitivity and problem-solving skills for interacting with others using courtesy, tact, and good judgment.

Ability to:
- Perform legal research for brief preparation.
- Work independently and prioritize workload for timely completion of assigned tasks while functioning as a member of a team.
- Maintain accuracy and attention to detail in a multi-task environment.
- Maintain confidentiality of information and follow departmental processes.
- Maintain consistent and punctual attendance.
- Ability and willingness to demonstrate the Public Service Competencies of Service Orientation, Results Orientation, and Teamwork and Cooperation.
- Physical ability to perform the essential functions of the job, including:
  - Frequently operate a computer and other office machinery such as a keyboard, mouse, phone, and fax machine;
  - Frequently communicate accurate information and ideas with others;
  - Remain stationary for long periods of time;
  - Occasionally move between work sites;
  - Occasionally transport objects weighing up to thirty (30) pounds.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT:

Work is performed in an office setting which includes a customary range of noise and other distractions, and low everyday risk working around standard office equipment. May work for extended periods of time at a computer workstation. Work can involve deadlines and requires

ability to handle stress while continuing to function at a high level. This is a sedentary position with minimal physical exertion requirements.

EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:

- Associate degree in paralegal studies or related degree AND
- Three years of experience in a legal support role with a focus on civil litigation, OR
- Five years of progressively responsible experience in a legal support role with a focus on civil litigation.
- Experience and/or training in liability claims administration preferred.
- Keyboarding speed of 65 wpm net required.
- Word processing skills required.
- An equivalent combination of education and experience sufficient to provide the applicant with the knowledge, skill and ability to successfully perform the essential functions of the job will be considered.

NECESSARY SPECIAL REQUIREMENT:

- Employment contingent upon passing a criminal background check.
- Notary Public License or ability to obtain within six months of employment.

PREPARED BY: Joan Hoisington
01/2011

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