

**MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
LEGAL ASSISTANT PROGRAM**

COMPETENCY STATEMENT

PLA 2104 – Legal Research

Course Description:

This course provides students with an understanding of the process of legal analysis and research. Students will become familiar with research materials, including learning the difference between official and unofficial reporters and mandatory and persuasive authority. Students will employ different research strategies and will locate sources in a traditional law library. Students will also learn how to implement and apply citation rules and shepardize.

Credits: 3

Prerequisites and Co-requisites: The student must have completed PLA 2003, Fundamentals of Law.

Course Competencies:

Competency 1: The student will understand the court system and how the law is reported.

The student will be able to:

- A. Describe the court system.
- B. Explain how a case is reported.
- C. Disect a case.
- D. Draft a case brief.
- E. Recognize various sources of law and evaluate their persuasive value as legal authority.

Competency 2: The student will understand, identify and locate primary sources of law.

The student will be able to:

- A. Locate reporters to find case law using the following method:
 - 1. Citation
 - 2. Parallel citation
 - 3. Case name
 - 4. Cross referencing
- B. Employ digests to find the law.
- C. Utilize rules of the court to find the law.

- D. Identify the various sources of federal and state statutory law and understand the use of these sources.
- E. Explain how the constitutions serve as a primary source of law.
- F. Discuss the purpose of uniform and model acts.
- G. Discuss the value of local ordinances as a source of law.

Competency 3: The student will understand, identify and locate secondary sources of law.

The student will be able to:

- A. Locate the following secondary sources:
 - 1. American Law Reports
 - 2. Words and Phrases
 - 3. Restatements
 - 4. Am Jur
 - 5. Corpus Juris Secundum
 - 6. Decennial Digest
 - 7. Federal Digests
 - 8. Supreme Court Digest
 - 9. Federal Practice and Procedure (Wright)
 - 10. Federal Procedure
 - 11. Am Jur
 - 12. Am Jur Proof of Facts
 - 13. Am Jur Deskbook
 - 14. Am Jur Trials
 - 15. Loose-Leaf Services

Competency 4: The student will understand the proper method of citation for the various sources of law.

The student will be able to:

- A. Provide accurate written citations for the various sources of law in accordance with the ALWD and Bluebook citation manuals.
- B. Utilize Shepard's to verify the current status of law and the sources of law.
- C. Explain the use of slip opinions, pocket parts, and other loose-leaf materials in updating the sources of law.
- D. Explain any differences between ALWD and Bluebook citation.

*Competency 5: The student will understand the online resources available for computer assisted legal research.**

The student will be able to:

- A. Discuss the operation of Westlaw.
- B. Describe the operation of Lexis-Nexis and Shepard's.
- C. Discuss Auto-Cite, CD Rom applications, and Loislaw.

Competency 6: The student will understand how alternative online cites can be used for legal research.

The student will be able to:

- A. List important URL's.
- B. Discuss the content of the sources.
- C. Describe how these sites are relevant for research.
- D. Explain how they should be cited.

Note: *Recognize that CALR is offered as a separate and distinct course (PLA 2932).

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