

# COURTROOM CAREERS

## Poway Adult School offers a fast path to a high-paying job as a court reporter

By Gail Allyn Short

**C**ourt reporters play an invaluable role in American courtrooms, ensuring accuracy and transparency in the legal process as they capture every word spoken with precision and speed. It's an exciting and lucrative job, offering a front-row seat to real-life courtroom drama and a good living; the average annual salary for a court reporter in California is about \$89,000 according to Salary.com, with entry-level positions averaging about \$55,500.

It's also one of the many Career Technical Education programs offered at Poway Adult School, with a relatively low-cost program designed to get students from the classroom to the courtroom with just 12 months of training. Students also complete a requisite 40-hour internship and at the end are qualified to take the Certified Verbatim Reporter (CVR) national certification exam.

Three recent students from the school's court reporting program say the PAS program has them set on new career courses.

Kathleen Keenaghan was working in the legal field before she was laid off from her job in March 2020, and had been aware of a nationwide shortage of court reporters in recent years—there were more than 21,000 job openings for court reporters in the United States in 2021, as older professionals retire. She eventually enrolled in the program, and was preparing to take her exam last fall.

"There's so much opportunity and job security out there," says Keenaghan, "and I'm also staying in the legal field, which has been my happy place my entire career."

Keenaghan notes another benefit of the program is its relatively low cost (base tuition for the program is \$3700): "The school was great in implementing payment plans for students who couldn't afford to pay for it all upfront. So, they worked with me the whole time," she says.

Another student, Stephanie Cole, says she previously worked as a broadcast captioner back in England before moving to the United States with her then-husband and children.



Poway Adult School alumnae Stephanie Cole, Kathleen Keenaghan and Megan Hulse were all able to pass the Certified Verbatim Reporter (CVR) national certification exam through the adult school's court reporter CTE courses.

"I was looking for a second career, something that could help sustain me and my boys for the future," she says. After attending an informational meeting about the court reporter program at Poway Adult School, she enrolled. "As far as tuition goes, it's incredibly affordable, and their registration process was super easy. It seemed to all click into place"

Cole recalls taking the court reporting classes online from home at night and how her instructor worked to make the lessons interesting.

"My teacher did a really great job of mixing it up," she says. "So, it wasn't just three-and-a-half straight hours of legal terminology. We learned how to write things on the machine, then we would learn some legal terms and then we would have some dictation practice using the legal terms that we had just learned."

Cole started working as a freelance court stenographer this past October, taking depositions and working at hearings in the Attorney General's office. She says she enjoys the freedom of being able to control her hours.

"The freelance situation suits our family life much better. I can pick and choose my hours while my kids are at school and still be around for them," she says.

Megan Hulse, a former reading teacher for the Poway Unified School District, says she enrolled in the court reporting program in

2020 because she wanted a career change.

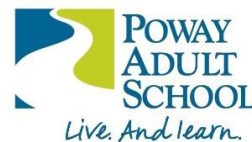
"The thought of being a fly on the wall and sitting in a courtroom and all the things that went along with that sounded really appealing to me," Hulse says.

As a student, Hulse says she liked the convenience of logging onto her computer at night for the lessons. She also liked that the course was largely self-paced, with live classes on Zoom once a week.

She recently passed the CVR exam, and the married mother of two says she is looking forward to her new career.

"Having that income and having the type of flexibility that I'm going to be able to have is just amazing," Hulse says.

"I'm coming up to that finish line, and I can't wait."



Poway Adult School is one of almost 300 adult schools in California that are operated by K-12 school districts. California Adult Schools provide education, training, and support services to ensure that adult learners reach their education and workforce goals. For more information, visit [powayadultschool.powayusd.com](http://powayadultschool.powayusd.com) or call (858) 668-4012.