

4.31 Department of Children's Services Internship Programs

Application: To All Department of Children's Services employees seeking to further their education through a BSW/BSSW or MSW/MSSW degree and student interns with a desire to work in child welfare.

This policy applies to those employees and student interns who begin their internship hours on or after May 1, 2018.

Authority: TCA 37-5-105(3), 37-5-106

Standards: COA: PA-HR 2.02, PA-HR-3.05, PA-PDS 1.01 (d)-1.02, PA-PDS 4.06

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Glossary:

- ◆ Internship
 - An internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting.
- ◆ Coach
 - A coach serves as the supervisor for the intern. The coach supports, directs, and oversees the activities of the intern during the internship.
- ◆ Field Supervisor
 - A Field Supervisor serves as the supervisor for the intern's field placement. The field supervisor supports, directs, and oversees the activities of the intern during the internship. Field supervisors must be approved and trained by the participating university.

Policy Statement:

The Department of Children's Services (DCS) encourages its employees to pursue the extension of their chosen degree program through internship experiences that offer maximum opportunity for professional growth.

Purpose:

To provide employees/students with both educational and practical experience that meets the internship agreement requirements between DCS and partner educational institutions and to outline minimum criteria and expectations for these internship activities. Sponsored universities may have additional guidelines or criteria for successful completion of internships.

Procedures:**A. Eligibility**

To be eligible to participate, interns must meet the following minimum criteria:

- a) Must be in good academic standing (GPA of 2.5 or higher);
- b) Must be at least 18 years of age at the outset of the internship;
- c) Must be authorized to work in the United States;
- d) Must sign the Intern Handbook at the outset of the internship and abide by its terms;
- e) Must be able to successfully complete a background check; and
- f) Must complete Respectful Workplace and G.R.E.A.T. Customer Service training within one (1) month of the internship start date.

B. Types of Internships

DCS offers two types of internships:

Paid Internships

Paid Internships are available to current employees enrolled in the agency's Title IV-E Tuition Programs.

Unpaid Internships

Unpaid internships are available to:

- a) Non-employee students enrolled in the agency's Title IV-E Tuition Programs;
- b) Students with a desire to work in child welfare who are currently enrolled (full-time or part-time) as a degree-seeking student in their third or fourth year of study with

an accredited college or university and are receiving school credit for their internship hours; and

- c) Non-employee law students or recent law school graduates seeking a legal internship and whose internship requirements are set out by the General Counsel's Office must sign the Intern Handbook at the outset of the internship and abide by its terms.

C. Title IV-E Tuition Program Interns

Title IV-E students are social work majors who have applied and were approved by DCS regional leadership to intern with the department.

1. Title IV-E students are required to sign a contract to work for the department when they graduate for up to two (2) years, depending on the amount of educational funding received.
2. Title IV-E students are given priority for intern placement so they may be trained in preparation of their future employment.
3. Title IV-E students must satisfy the requirements of a regular in-service volunteer according to DCS Policy [4.30 Department of Children's Service Volunteer Services Program](#), as well as the sponsoring university guidelines.

D. Student Interns Receiving College Credit

Student Interns, receiving college credit, are non-employee students who are not participating in the agency's Title IV-E Tuition Programs but desire to work in child welfare and who applied and were approved by DCS regional leadership to intern with the department.

1. Students must satisfy the requirements of a regular in-service volunteer according to DCS Policy [4.30 Department of Children's Service Volunteer Services Program](#), as well as the sponsoring university guidelines.
2. It is the student's responsibility to provide proof to the agency that he/she is receiving school credit for the internship and work with the agency to ensure credit requirements are met.

E. Internship Requirements

Internships shall meet the following criteria:

- a) The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the agency, must be similar to training which would be given in an educational environment;
- b) The internship experience must be for the benefit of the intern;
- c) The intern shall not displace regular employees, but shall work under close supervision of his/her field instructor or coach;
- d) The agency shall derive no immediate advantages from the activities of the intern, and on occasion its operations may actually be impeded; and
- e) The internship shall be of a fixed duration, established prior to the outset of the internship.

F. Additional Requirements for Current Employees Completing an Internship with the Agency

- 1. Current employees who are approved to complete an internship with DCS must be compensated for all time worked during the internship.
- 2. Internships for current employees will only be approved as a job swap with another employee, not as duties or tasks completed in addition to the employee's regular job duties, unless the employee is enrolled in a graduate MSW/MSSW program that allows regular job duties to count for full internship hour credit.

G. Additional Requirements for Employee Coaches and Field Supervisors

Each intern must be assigned a Field Supervisor, Task Instructor, (for BSW/BSSW and MSW/MSSW stipend students) or an Employee Coach (for non-employee students not participating in the tuition programs).

- 1. To be eligible to serve as a Field Supervisor/Task Instructor, the employee shall successfully complete the requirements established by the participating university program(s).
 - ◆ Field Supervisors/Task Instructors may not supervise more than two (2) students each semester or four (4) students each calendar year.
- 2. To be eligible to serve as an Employee Coach, the employee shall successfully complete coach training through the Department of Human Resources (DOHR) prior to the start of the internship.
 - ◆ Coaches may not supervise more than two (2) students each semester or four (4) students each calendar year.

Forms:

[*CS-0983, Program Agreement: MSW/MSSW Tuition Assistance Program*](#)

[*CS-1019, Program Agreement DCS Employee Graduate Tuition Reimbursement Program*](#)

Collateral Documents:

[*4.30 Department of Children's Service Volunteer Services Program*](#)

[*Volunteer Services Program Procedures Manual*](#)

[*Protocol: Student Interns Receiving College Credit*](#)