

## Hidalgo County Internship Policy

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines to offer experiential learning experiences for college students in County offices and departments. This policy applies to student volunteers, interns, and externs.

### **POLICY**

Hidalgo County offers volunteer opportunities, internships and externships in an effort to provide college students from a wide variety of educational disciplines the opportunity to apply traditional academic classroom learning to actual work experience. The County strongly believes that internships are an important tool in recruiting, developing and retaining innovative people in local government and an important part of assisting the County in meeting the needs of today while preparing the workforce of the future.

Internship opportunities may be paid or unpaid, subject to budgetary constraints and departmental recommendation. All placements must be approved by Commissioners' Court, and approval must include the following items:

1. Job description & responsibilities
2. Placement location & supervisor name
3. Duration of internship
4. Agreement with educational institution (if applicable)
5. If appointed, internship application, resume, and signed internship agreement
6. If paid, funds must be appropriated and fiscal note and budgetary impact must be included
7. Any other relevant information as required by Commissioners' Court

Each participating office/department will be responsible for administering the student internship within their department and ensuring the policies and guidelines set forth herein are followed. All interns (paid or unpaid) must comply with the Hidalgo County Personnel Policy Manual and/or Hidalgo County Civil Service Commission Rules (as applicable), and must complete the pre-employment training and enrollment requirements prior to commencing.

### **REQUIREMENTS**

All interns must be citizens of the United States, or if not, must be legally authorized to work in the United States. Proof of citizenship or authorization will be documented during the training and orientation process. Interns must be 18 years of age or older, and must be enrolled in an institution of higher education. Interns must complete an internship application and agreement, and must meet the pre-employment training and enrollment requirements. Interns must sign a Waiver of Liability Release, agreeing to assume any risk of injury that may occur while rendering services to the County.

### **UNPAID INTERNSHIPS**

1. Hidalgo County may accept student interns on a volunteer basis. Unpaid students may be appointed or may be selected through the Human Resources Department announcement and selection process. All unpaid internship placements must be approved by Commissioners' Court.

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- II. Unpaid student interns are considered "Volunteers," receive no compensation or benefits, are not covered under worker's compensation, and must sign a Waiver of Liability Release agreement prior to commencing the internship.
- III. Hidalgo County may enter into an agreement with an educational institution to provide college credit or required work experience for the internship, as applicable. The units of credit earned for participating are authorized and conferred by the school of attendance. All agreements with educational institutions must be approved by Commissioners' Court.
- IV. Students who are interested in seeking to gain work experience in a specific field or area may choose to independently volunteer as an unpaid intern. In such instances, students may or may not receive credit from the educational institution they attend.

### **PAID INTERNSHIPS**

- I. Hidalgo County may offer paid internships to students. A department's ability to use paid student interns will be based on their internal budget constraints.
- II. Paid student interns are considered "Temporary Employees," receive compensation for the duration of the internship, but receive no other benefits, are not covered under worker's compensation, and must sign a Waiver of Liability Release agreement prior to commencing the internship.
- III. All paid internship placements must be approved by Commissioners' Court, and must be selected through the Human Resources Department announcement and selection process..
- IV. Hidalgo County may enter into an agreement with an educational institution to provide college credit or required work experience for the internship, as applicable. The units of credit earned for participating are authorized and conferred by the school of attendance. All agreements with educational institutions must be approved by Commissioners' Court.
- V. Students who are interested in seeking to gain work experience in a specific field or area may choose to independently apply for a paid internship opportunity. In such instances, students may or may not receive credit from the educational institution they attend.

### **RECRUITMENT OF INTERNS**

Each participating office/department will be responsible for identifying and recruiting interns, and, if they desire, to establish partnerships with educational institutions that enroll students in a degree or area of study that could be utilized by the office/department.

Unpaid interns may be appointed by the office/department or educational institution, or may be selected through the Human Resources Department announcement and selection process; paid interns are subject to the Human Resources Department announcement and selection process.

### **TRAINING AND ORIENTATION**

Prior to beginning an intern assignment all student interns will be required to meet the pre-employment training and enrollment requirements.

All student interns (paid or unpaid), will be provided a copy of the Hidalgo County Personnel Policy Manual and/or Hidalgo County Civil Service Commission Rules (as applicable), must complete the pre-employment training and enrollment requirements prior to commencing, and will sign all relevant forms and acknowledgments as applicable, including but not limited to, personnel policy acknowledgement, harassment, nondiscrimination, and waiver of liability release form (as applicable).

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The participating office/department will be responsible for orienting students to the organization. Orientation should include:

- A clear list of expectations, job duties and goals;
- Departmental-specific policies and procedures;
- A list of the resources available to the student intern (i.e., a workstation that has been set up for the student intern, supplies and items needed by the intern); and
- Any other relevant information for the intern to be successful in the performance of their job duties.

### **STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

All interns must abide by the standards of conduct as outlined in the Hidalgo County Personnel Policy Manual and/or Hidalgo County Civil Service Commission Rules (as applicable), and are responsible for complying with the required standards of conduct.

At a minimum, all interns are required to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times and to use discretion when dealing with sensitive matters and confidential information. Students must maintain professional attire, hygiene and grooming in a professional business-like manner that is appropriate to the field of placement and which reflects positively on the County.

If any policy or standard of conduct is violated by the intern during the internship period, the intern will be terminated at the discretion of the County.

### **EVALUATION**

All interns should be provided with ongoing feedback on how well they are meeting the goals and expectations of their position. Participating offices/departments should provide interns with a formal written evaluation at the end of the internship. If applicable, participating offices/departments will be responsible for abiding by the requirements of the educational institution as per the agreement.

### **TERMINATION/COMPLETION**

All interns are considered at-will placements, and the placement can be terminated at any time at the discretion of the County.

Upon completion of the internship period, interns are not automatically entitled to a paid position within the County.