

# NC DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ADMINISTRATIVE

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Title:	Internships
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This policy addresses internships for individuals working with DSB staff. The mission of NC Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) is to enable people who are visually impaired, blind or deafblind to achieve their goals of independence and employment. A well-trained and committed workforce is essential to achieving our mission. Therefore, DSB provides internship opportunities for a variety of disciplines which provides students with knowledge of the abilities of individuals who are visually impaired, blind and deafblind as well as the types of services and supports needed for their success. Internships also provide students with exposure to DSB career opportunities and valuable experience with our programs and services.

Where funds allow and division needs warrant, DSB will offer paid internship opportunities. Due to funding limitations, the Independent Living Services and Medical Eye Care programs are not able to offer paid internships. The paid internship is a planned, supervised educational experience that provides the student an opportunity to apply the skills and knowledge developed in an academic setting to the field of practice in the community. This training experience with the division allows for extensive hands-on professional development with the population we serve and with other professionals in the community while also meeting the requirements of the student's academic program.

## **Paid Intern Positions and Pay Rates**

The following job classifications are currently approved to allow for paid interns for one semester, pending the availability of funds and appropriateness of the placement.

- Casework Tech, supervised by Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II (VRC) or VR Supervisor
- Orientation and Mobility Specialist, supervised by Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist
- Psychological Assistant, supervised by the Career and Training Center (CTC) Staff Psychologist
- CTC Residential Life Coordinator, supervised by the CTC Director
- CTC Residential Life Trainer, supervised by the Residential Life Coordinator
- Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor (ILRC), supervised by an ILRC II or Area Supervisor
- Licensed Recreational Therapists (LRT), supervised by an LRT or CTC Director
- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, supervised by a VRC II for VR Supervisor

Other positions will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Requests for other positions may be sent to the Assistant Director.

## Rates

Associate Degree Programs, \$17/hour

Bachelor's Degree Programs, \$20/hour

Master's Degree Programs, \$23/hour

## **Intern Eligibility**

A university, college, community college, or technical institution representative may refer qualified students to the Division for consideration for a supervised internship. This representative will be responsible for ensuring that all institution requirements are met throughout this process.

Approval to host an intern, whether paid or unpaid, is needed by the immediate supervisor, the educational/technical institution and the Staff Development Program Specialist. Paid interns must also be approved for hire by the Division Director, Temp Solutions and the Department of Health and Human Services Human Resources. Interns must be attending an accredited university, college, community college, or technical institution.

The following will need to be completed prior to a student beginning an internship.

### Interview (unpaid and paid)

Any potential intern will be interviewed by the staff member who will provide supervision. Supervisors of the DSB intern supervisor or other applicable staff may also participate in the interview. Interviews will convey information about the type of experience available with DSB, the intern's educational and work history, expectations on the part of the Division, what the potential intern hopes to gain from the experience as well as their vocational goals.

### Agreement with the Educational Institution (unpaid and paid)

All agreements with educational institutions are managed by the Staff Development Program Specialist. The Division Director or their designee must sign agreements. Confirmation of a completed agreement is needed from the Staff Development Program Specialist prior to the intern beginning a paid or unpaid internship.

### DSB Required Documents (unpaid or paid)

The DSB Confidentiality Statement must be completed prior to the intern having access to any client information. If any telework will be allowed, all telework agreement documents must be completed prior to conducting any telework.

### Unpaid Interns

Unpaid interns must complete a criminal background check and drug screen and receive approval to start. These screenings may be coordinated by Human Resources or the Director's Office. Presently, these screenings are being coordinated by the Director's Office. Contact the Division Assistant Director and the Assistant to the Assistant Director for guidance on the process.

### Paid Interns

At, or before the time of the interview, the potential intern will provide a copy of their State application to the DSB intern supervisor. The State application form used for this purpose is on the DSB shared drive. Intern supervisors who want to request an individual have a paid internship will forward the potential paid intern's completed State application (see below) along with a statement on why the individual would be a good fit for a paid internship to the Staff Development Program Specialist. The Staff Development Program Specialist will obtain all required approvals and inform the intern supervisor if the individual can be a paid intern.

Individuals approved for a paid internship will be hired through Temp Solutions and must follow all protocols for screening and approval to begin, including completing a criminal background check and drug screen. The job order for an intern must have "intern" on it in bold and highlighted. If the intern supervisor is not a supervisor with the division, then a supervisor associated with that office will need to serve as the supervisor for coordinating hiring with Temp Solutions and approving all times worked in the online timekeeping system. The intern's supervisor is responsible for completing all documentation required by the educational institution for tracking the student's progress.

Paid interns are paid a comparable wage to new professionals doing comparable work tasks. Providing payment to interns allows them to complete duties comparable to entry level staff and allows the Division to comply with federal labor laws. After sufficient training and with appropriate supervision, paid interns may participate in the delivery, planning and documentation of services up to 40 hours per week. Paid interns will be held to work output comparable to other entry level temporary staff. All interns will be expected to work hands-on with Division clients and staff and will be expected to complete all duties as assigned. Interns must be available to serve clients in-person according to the position requirements.

The process for hiring a paid intern is estimated to take four to eight weeks. Interns who wish to begin as unpaid while waiting to be approved for pay may do so. However, pay will **not** be retroactive and will begin only at the date of hire provided by Temp Solutions/DHHS Human Resources.

### **Internships for Current Division Employees**

Individuals who are already employees of the Division who request to complete an internship for an educational program with the Division will need the approval of their immediate supervisor and the Division Director. Requests will be sent by the immediate supervisor to the Staff Development Program Specialist who will obtain information for the Division Director's review. Employees who are approved for a Division-based internship will not need to engage in pre-employment screening. An interview with the intern supervisor and a completed agreement with their educational institution and the Division are required.

For questions about this policy, please contact the DSB Assistant Director.