

Internship Program Policy



**United States Probation Office
Western District of Texas**

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MISSION

The mission of the Student Internship Program for the U.S. Probation Office for the Western District of Texas is multi-fold. The primary mission is to provide an opportunity for college students to develop experience in the field of corrections, particularly in the U.S. Probation system. To this end, several other objectives will be accomplished, which will become an integral part of the program's mission.

The program will help develop greater community involvement and closer relationships with the area institutions of higher learning. This bonding will allow us to become involved in other programs that may be beneficial to schools, students, probation staff and local communities.

The student internship program will involve volunteers who are early in their career exploration in a federal work environment. The program will be designed to ensure that the learning experience is beneficial to students and probation staff. While the main focus of the program will be to attract college students in corrections or criminal justice, other disciplines may be invited to participate. This will provide exposure in the field of corrections to students of related disciplines and may give them greater career opportunities. It will also provide U.S. Probation Officers knowledge beyond their general experience.

The ever expanding responsibilities associated with the field of corrections require knowledge from many disciplines including psychology, social work, education, business management, and counseling. Additionally, expertise in sub-specialties including computer literacy, substance abuse, mental health, investigative techniques, effective writing, and training are essential.

In summary, the program will allow us to learn from each other, develop greater community involvement, and encourage and prepare students to enter a field that requires commitment, creativity, and competency in many disciplines.

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

CHIEF U.S. PROBATION OFFICER: The overall responsibility for the efficient and successful operation of the Internship Program rests with the Chief U.S. Probation Officer who may have direct involvement with the program and will also designate other duties as delineated below.

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM COORDINATOR: The primary operational responsibility for the program is designated to the Internship Program Coordinator (IPC), which normally will be filled by a Deputy Chief U.S. Probation Officer. The duties will include, but may not be limited to the following:

1. If necessary, the IPC will chair an ad hoc committee of probation officers whose function is to make recommendations to the Chief U.S. Probation Officer for the evaluation, development, modification, update, coordination and implementation of the internship program.
2. Facilitate the acquisition and final submission of all Student Intern evaluations, which will be based upon the feedback received from the various U.S. Probation Officer Mentors to whom the Student Intern may be assigned.
3. If necessary, facilitate the statistical data required for submission to educational institutions and reports that may be required by the U.S. Chief Probation Officer.

INTERNSHIP COORDINATOR(S)

The Internship Coordinator (IC) is assigned in each divisional office and will be the principal coordinator of the Student Internship Program in each office. The IC role may be filled by a Supervising U.S. Probation Officer or a U.S. Probation Officer. The IC has the knowledge of which officer mentors are available, and which have the knowledge and areas of expertise, so that the student is exposed to the widest range of experiences.

The IC will also coordinate or oversee coordination of the student intern's daily activities to insure that the student intern obtains the maximum daily work experience and training opportunities, and is utilized in a manner most beneficial to the probation office.

The Internship Coordinator will:

1. Assign the student intern to one or more Probation Officer Mentors within the work sections of presentence investigations and/or supervision services. The IC shall consult with divisional supervisors in the assignment of Probation Officer Mentors.
2. Insure that the student intern is exposed to a broad range of work experiences, commensurate with the intern's abilities, and insure that adequate training is provided to the intern to maximize the intern's knowledge and experiences.
3. Maintain communication with the Probation Officer Mentors regarding the student intern's activities and progress, and use this information to prepare a performance evaluation form on each intern for submittal to the IPC.
4. Report any problems with the student intern or with the execution of the program to the IPC so that the appropriate intervention (reporting to the proper authorities and/or corrective action) may be initiated.

PROBATION OFFICER MENTOR

In order to insure that each student intern receives the maximum training, each intern will be "teamed" with a Probation Officer Mentor(s). The mentor(s) will work with the intern on a regular basis, providing instruction and guidance in their area(s) of expertise. It is possible that more than one mentor from each section/unit will be assigned the task of instructing the intern. Accordingly, the Probation Officer Mentor(s) should work with the IC to coordinate a seamless training process.

The primary duties of a Probation Officer Mentor will include, but will not be limited to, the following:

1. Overseeing the regular activities of the student intern and making sure that the intern is exposed to all the work assignments and educational opportunities possible. In keeping with the intern's level of capability, the Probation Officer Mentor will also insure that the intern is assigned tasks which are most beneficial to the probation office.
2. Maintaining frequent communication with the IC, in regard to the intern's training activities and/or performance assessments (i.e., violations of terms of the internship agreements, violations of ethics or district policy, etc.). This information will be used by the IC to complete the intern's evaluation.

3. Seeking advice or consultation from the IC, if unsure of how to proceed with a student intern's training or about the program requirements.

ELIGIBILITY/APPOINTMENT CRITERIA

1. It will be the policy of the U.S. Probation Office for the Western District of Texas to invite college students from local universities and colleges, principally from the fields of social sciences, corrections and criminal justice and other related fields of study.
2. Students must be willing and able to complete a minimum of one semester up to one year commitment. The IC and the student intern will determine a work schedule that will allow the student intern to complete the educational institute's required number of work hours per semester.
3. Students should have good moral character with no history of arrests; good class standing and be mature and responsible as determined by the university liaison person and the probation office's IC for the respective divisional office.
4. Students must be willing to undergo a background check which will include, but not limited to: a criminal records check, credit check, submission of fingerprints to the FBI's automated fingerprint database, reference checks with teachers and other listed references.
5. After the initial screening process, the student intern "candidate" will be required to participate in an interview process that may involve more than one interview.
6. The student may be required to sign an Authorization to Release Information about previous medical, mental health or substance abuse treatment.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

The recruitment and selection of interns is a shared responsibility between the designated divisional internship coordinator and the Human Resources Office for the Western District of Texas. Due to the sensitive and confidential nature of the functions and responsibilities of the U.S. Probation Office, it is essential to ensure that all personnel, whether hired in official capacities or given positions as volunteers or interns are mature, responsible, and of the highest ethical standards. Hence, the application and selection process for student interns will be comprehensive and thorough. Such a process also helps to ensure: the perpetuation of a quality program for students who are seriously interested in, and committed to, a career in the field of corrections; reduced liability for all parties concerned;

and that the highest performance standards and training will be maintained in the service of the U.S. Courts.

Typically, the student intern contacts the divisional IC if the student is interested in an internship with our agency. The IC will discuss the requirements and responsibilities of an intern with said student. If the student is interested, he/she will be required to submit an application packet to the divisional IC.

The packet will contain:

1. A University faculty representative verification that said student qualifies for internship with the U.S. Probation Office and a recommendation for that student's participation in the program;
2. A brief resume of the student's accomplishments;
3. A copy of the student's undergraduate and graduate (if applicable) transcripts;
4. Three personal references;
5. Application for Judicial Employment (AO 78) (Appendix 1);
6. Declaration for Federal Appointment (Appendix 2);
7. Applicant Consent and Authorization for Access to Financial Records (Appendix 3).

These materials should be submitted one quarter or semester prior to the quarter or semester of internship. Internships generally last for a 16-week period or one complete quarter or semester. All materials, to include the starting and ending dates of desired internship, should be submitted to the Internship Coordinator in the respective division.

Once the packet is submitted, the IC will complete and include with the packet the following items:

Criminal History Check (NCIC or Atlas)
Credit History Check
Reference Checks

- The packet containing all of the materials will be submitted by the divisional IC who will submit a cover memorandum (Appendix 4) with his/her recommendation as to the student intern applicant (approval or denial) to Human Resources. A Human Resource representative will ensure that all documents have been completed and

signed. The HR representative will submit the packet to the Deputy Chief U.S. Probation Officer for review. Thereafter, the Deputy Chief will submit the packet to the Chief U.S. Probation Officer for approval. If approved, the Chief U.S. Probation Officer will submit the packet to Human Resources for processing as follows:

- HR representative will notify the divisional IC of approval.
 - HR representative will coordinate with the divisional IC a day/time to administer oath, provide remaining paperwork, and fingerprint the approved intern on their first day.
- Fingerprints:
 - El Paso: fingerprinting (one card) will be arranged through the El Paso Division IT staff.
 - San Antonio: fingerprinting (one card) will be done by HR.
 - Other Divisions: Intern will complete two fingerprint cards and will be fingerprinted by local Marshal's Office.
 - HR representative will prepare/finalize the Appointment Oath (AO78A) (Appendix 5) for swearing in of intern, the Gratuitous Waiver form (Appendix 6), Verification of Personal Information Form (Appendix 7), and ID badge receipt.
 - Photo ID to be provided (to include expiration date)
 - San Antonio: HR representative will take photo and prepare intern temporary photo ID Card.
 - Other Divisions: HR representative will coordinate for photo to be taken at division location and e-mailed to HR representative for preparation of temporary photo.
 - HR representative will obtain intern's signature on photo ID receipt form. The HR representative will note to the intern that all issued items will be returned to the IC prior to separation.
 - HR representative will forward:
 - Appointment Oath and Gratuitous Waiver to Chief U.S. Probation Officer for signature, and;

ID receipt form to U.S. District Clerk for signature.

- HR representative will create a file to maintain all of the approved intern's paperwork, which will be kept in the office.
- IC will notify HR representative of intern's last day. Intern will turn in temporary photo to IC, who will forward it to HR representative, and file will be closed out.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

In an effort to ensure that a meaningful, enjoyable and quality educational experience is obtained with limited liability and interference with the operations of the Probation Office and Court, student interns will be required to meet certain responsibilities.

These responsibilities are divided into two primary areas: Administrative and Operational (daily duties).

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The IC and/or the Probation Officer Mentor(s) will assist the student intern(s) in becoming familiar with the functional administrative policies of the U.S. Probation Office. Familiarity with the administrative policies will help the student intern understand those responsibilities that are needed to carry out his/her duties during the period of internship.
2. All students will be required to become familiar with and abide by the general rules of confidentiality and ethical standards as presented by his/her mentor, the IC, or other staff persons with whom the student will have contact, and will adhere to the most recent Code of Conduct adopted by the Judicial Conference of the United States.
3. Students will clearly identify themselves as interns when working or communicating with other professional, social or law enforcement agencies, clients, or with the general public and refrain from addressing policy issues.
4. Written communications prepared by student interns that are forwarded to such agencies or individuals must be approved by the U.S. Probation Officer Mentor or, in his/her absence, by the duty officer or supervisor.

5. When possible and/or directed, students will be expected to participate in staff or unit meetings and will be encouraged to engage in discussions related to the criminal justice system in general or the duties to which they have been assigned. Students will also be encouraged to attend any training sessions conducted during their respective term as an intern.
6. If the student is experiencing any problems in the Internship Program, whether related to duties or issues, or feels the need to question or discuss certain actions by staff, he or she should address these matters with the Probation Officer Mentor, the IC, or the divisional IC's supervisor. If any conflicts cannot be resolved, then it may be necessary to involve the Deputy Chief U.S. Probation Officer (IPC) and/or the University Liaison Person.
7. It is understood that any papers or articles that the student may write concerning the U.S. Probation Office, or which identify the agency, must be shared with the IC and the Deputy Chief U.S. Probation Officer, and submitted one week prior to the end of the internship.
8. It is further understood that students will serve their internship without monetary compensation, except for reimbursement for certain authorized expenses that may be required in the performance of their duties. Such expenses may involve, but may not be limited to:
 - a. gas (mileage)
 - b. parking
 - c. document copying in the field
9. Students will be expected to prepare a typewritten evaluation of their internship, subsequent to the completion of the program. The evaluation is to be submitted to the IC and the Deputy Chief U.S. Probation Officer no later than one week from the last date of contact with the U.S. Probation Office. Students who do not submit an evaluation will not be considered to have officially completed the program. This open ended format is to ensure that the student's evaluation is personal, objective and covers areas which the student feels is important. This evaluation will help the probation office maintain a quality program and a meaningful educational experience for the student. The evaluation will in no way impact the student's grade or personal evaluations or recommendation.

OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES (DAILY DUTIES)

1. Students are expected to report for their field placement on the dates and time prescribed or agreed upon. In the event that a student is unable to keep his/her assigned date and time, the probation officer mentor should be contacted as soon as possible. In the absence of an assigned mentor or the IC, a divisional supervisor should be notified.
2. A student intern should not perform the essential functions of a U. S. Probation Officer or Officer Assistant, all of which are law enforcement positions. The Internship Program should not be used to replace the duties of officer assistants.
3. Student interns will have the following basic responsibilities:
 - attend in-house or classroom training, including probation officer/assistant training;
 - attend court to observe a hearing (student intern will be accompanied by an officer at all times);
 - witness court activities related to the sentencing process;
 - occasionally accompany an officer on a field visit for orientation to the probation process (when events may be controlled and safe) and maintain written chronological entries of all contacts and daily logs of all out of office activities, such as home or community agency contacts;
 - assist with collateral investigations (obtaining data verification between jurisdictions) or otherwise assist in verifying data, utilizing authorized databases (PACTS, PACER, etc.);
 - assist with researching and developing community resources;
 - proofread and edit reports;
 - observe at least one of the following in-house programs: SATS, DOWD, Pre-Release Orientation Program, Parenting Classes, Job Readiness Training programs.

PROHIBITIONS

Student interns shall not:

- perform the essential functions of an officer or officer assistant;
- regularly accompany a law enforcement officer on field visits;
- assist in interviewing, counseling or advising an offender or family;
- assist in presentence investigations;
- draft presentence reports or make sentencing recommendations to the court;
- drive GSA vehicles;
- accompany or conduct interviews in a jail/detention facility;
- be allowed to carry firearms, Capstun devices, or other self-defense devices while in the performance of their duties;
- carry badges or any other official law enforcement or government identification, aside from the student intern identification card that will be provided. Student identification card is to be used solely for purposes related to their duties as an intern and is not to be carried or used outside their designated work schedule;
- sign any documentation as a representative of the probation office;
- initiate or suggest that they can or will initiate any legal sanctions or violation proceedings against any offender;
- be allowed to collect urine specimens from offenders on supervision;
- be allowed to drive offenders to any location without a USPO being present;
- report to any assigned duty under the influence of any illegal substance and will not use any such substance (aside from prescribed medications) during the performance of their duties and responsibilities as an intern. If taking medications, the student will so inform the probation officer mentor of the type and purpose of such medication;

- be allowed to fraternize with offenders;
- be allowed to go on home visits with the Gang Unit or home visits conducted on any other high risk type of offender. In addition, interns will only receive a brief overview of the gang unit in order to maintain the confidential/intelligence available to Gang Unit USPOs;
- be allowed to work on any OCEDEF, gang related cases (Mexican Mafia, Barrio Azteca, etc.), high profile cases or large conspiracy cases, which are in the presentence investigation phase due to the possibility of sensitive information being released.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE U.S. PROBATION OFFICE

1. The IC in each division, under the direction of the Chief U.S. Probation Officer, will maintain the overall responsibility of the Student Internship Program. A file on each intern will be maintained by the Human Resources Office. All official correspondence with the intern and the respective education institution will be included in this file. All evaluations performed by the IC will be placed in this file.
2. Probation Officer Mentors, who work with the student interns, will be responsible for training, monitoring and reporting upon the progress of each intern.
3. All staff members will have joint responsibility to assist a student intern when necessary to ensure proper procedures, office, and district policies are followed.
4. The student intern will be assigned duties and tasks that are representative of the overall functions of a U.S. Probation Officer and will be given opportunities to gain knowledge of the Federal Judiciary and the Department of Justice. The intern is to be given, to the extent possible, meaningful duties and is not to be used to routinely perform mundane tasks. Staff members who are not assigned as a Probation Officer Mentor to the intern should not independently ask the intern to carry out job functions.
5. As part of its commitment to the community and to the educational institutions participating in the Student Internship Program, the U.S. Probation Office will make every effort to be available for consultations with the departments from which the student intern has come.
6. The U.S. Probation Office makes a commitment to provide the best possible training for the student intern and to submit to the faculty liaison or designee a complete evaluation of the student's progress as may be required.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARTICIPATING EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

1. The participating education institution should make every effort to ensure that selected applicants are committed to pursue a career in the field of corrections or criminal justice and are mature, responsible and emotionally able to handle the responsibilities and duties of a student intern.
2. Liaison faculty members are welcome to visit the students' places of internship during their participation to obtain a better understanding of their experiences and to establish a better working relationship with the office in which the internship is being conducted.
3. It is to be clearly understood by both the educational institution and the student intern that all services that will be rendered to the government, as part of the internship program, will be without compensation, other than personal expense reimbursement, as previously described. An acknowledgment of Gratuitous Services and Waiver form (Appendix 2) will be signed by the student and returned to the probation office.

DRESS CODE

All student interns are expected to be appropriately groomed while representing the U.S. Probation Office. Tattoos should be covered at all times.

All students are expected to dress in neat and professional attire to maintain the probation office's (and by extension the Court's) public image.

Examples include:

Men

- Khakis or dress slacks
- Button style dress shirt
- Jacket (when attending court)
- Tie (when attending court)
- Tie or slip-on dress shoes (no sneakers, sandals or flip-flops)

Women

- Dresses or skirts (neither should be higher than 3 inches above knee)
- Pantsuits
- Skirt or slacks
- Blouse or sweater (no low cut or see through tops allowed)
- Appropriate dress shoes (no sneakers, sandals or flip-flops)

TIME AND ATTENDANCE

Student interns are expected to adhere to a schedule, which will be determined once they are selected. Any deviation from this schedule should be communicated to the divisional IC, in advance, if possible. Numerous unexplained absences may be grounds for dismissal from the student intern program, with corresponding notice to the student's college or university.

USE OF EQUIPMENT & SOFTWARE PROGRAMS

Student interns will be provided with access to government equipment and software programs that are necessary to complete their assigned tasks while working at the U.S. Probation Office. Such equipment is subject to strict oversight according to regulations promulgated by the Judicial Conference of the United States.

Equipment available for student intern use includes, but may not be limited to:

- computer workstation
- copiers
- scanners
- general office equipment

Software Programs available for student intern use are limited to the following:

- PACTS – user rights are limited to read only
- Lotus Notes – the student intern should not be placed in any group e-mail listings within the district
- Internet/Intranet access – this is access is to be used for work purposes only
- In and Out Board
- Word

Misuse of government equipment or software may lead to dismissal from the student intern program with corresponding notice to the student's college or university.

SECURITY PROTOCOLS

The student intern will be issued an identification badge and a key card for access into the building. The key card is provided by the U.S. Marshal's Office.

The student intern will wear their identification badge on their person while in the office.

The student intern's key card access is limited to the following:

- Entrance through the main doors for each division/satellite office, **no** side entrance access will be granted (*note: given the unique logistics of each division/satellite offices exceptions may be granted by the Chief U.S. Probation Officer*);
- Entrance into the division/satellite office will be during the weekdays between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

Please note that a student intern is not given security clearance by the U.S. Marshal Service. Therefore, adherence to these basic security protocols is important.

