

# Paid College Internship Program

---

*U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services Office*

*Western District of Pennsylvania*

## **Purpose**

It is the intent of the United States Probation and Pretrial Services Office in the Western District of Pennsylvania to offer students the opportunity to integrate classroom theory and knowledge with practical, hands-on, relevant experience. In doing so, the United States Probation and Pretrial Services Office makes a commitment to the student to provide a high quality interactive program where the student will gain invaluable, professional, and applicable experience.

The student intern will be assigned to one of three units within the United States Probation Office, but will be exposed to all aspects of the position of United States Probation Officer to include the pretrial supervision of charged individuals, presentence investigations, hearings, and the supervision of offenders. He or she will develop a firm and concrete understanding of the role of the United States Probation and Pretrial Services Office in the criminal justice system, as it pertains to United States District Courts. Current issues that the student will become well versed in include, but are not limited to: sentencing, offender reintegration, and alternatives to incarceration.

In return for this educational experience, the United States Probation and Pretrial Services Office has high expectations of the student. These expectations are based on the premise that the student is seeking an opportunity to develop him or herself professionally. There will be opportunities for the student to work on special projects involving collecting data, analyzing information, and in some cases, report writing.

At the conclusion of the internship, it is anticipated that the student will have begun to develop observation skills, interviewing skills, writing techniques and the ability to analyze and objectively deal with difficult situations. Needless to say, these are skills/abilities that are necessary in many careers and will be well utilized by the student in the future.

## **Intern Qualifications**

- From a four-year accredited college
- Preferably in senior year or graduate student; will accept junior with strong academic record (3.0 or above) and advisor referral
- GPA: 2.5 or above
- No prior failed intern placements (unless the fault of the agency)

- Student should supply a copy of transcript
- Student should send a letter of intent and an application if interested in an internship to the United States Probation and Pretrial Services Office for the Western District of Pennsylvania. The Intern Coordinators will keep the Chief United States Probation Officer advised as to the status and functioning of the internship program.

## Application Process

Normally an intern or volunteer will apply for placement in our office through their college's intern program. However, in some cases, inquiries from a prospective intern may come by letter, phone call, or personal visits. In those cases, the inquiry should be directed to the Probation Intern Coordinators. After the initial contact, the individual should be directed to send a "letter of interest," along with an application to the Intern Coordinators who will review the applicant's qualifications with the Assistant Deputy Chief United States Probation Officer.

If the person meets the minimum requirements and there is an opening for an intern, a personal interview will be scheduled. The interview will be conducted by the Intern Coordinators. The candidate will be required to sign an authorization permitting the Intern Coordinators to conduct a juvenile criminal records check as part of the application process. The candidate shall also sign an authorization permitting the Intern Coordinators to obtain a credit report. These documents will provide the foundation for the background investigation which must be completed on any intern who will work in the United States Probation and Pretrial Services Office.

An intern placement will not be made until the background investigation has been completed and reviewed by a member of the administrative team. If accepted as an intern, the candidate will be scheduled to meet with the Intern Coordinators/Personnel Specialist to complete the proper paperwork.

Once the forms and background investigation are completed, notification is forwarded to the Chief United States Probation Officer or her representative for her approval.

## Background Investigation

A background investigation will be conducted on an intern prior to his or her placement date. The focus of the investigation is to ensure that the confidentiality of all information that the intern is exposed to in the office is maintained. This should allow the intern to participate without restrictions in all aspects of our work. In addition to the criminal background information, the investigation will examine the candidate's family and social information, present living situation, current financial status, and employment history. **A student internship will be denied if the background investigation reveals factors that compromise security or lead our investigator to determine that the student background characteristics may be in conflict with the Judicial Code of Conduct for employees.**

## **Intern Expectations and Responsibilities**

- The student intern will conduct himself or herself in a professional manner at all times. This includes respecting confidentiality, issues of punctuality, appearance, attendance, and providing appropriate feedback to the learning experience.
- The student intern will work on special projects for data collecting, analyzing, or filing as directed.
- Under the guidance of an officer and with the aid of support staff, the student intern shall assist in conducting pretrial services interview with offenders and individuals capable of verifying information pertaining to the pretrial release of offenders.
- The student intern shall as requested and/or instructed assist in running records checks through local and national databases; assist officers in conducting inquiries with collateral agencies, and similar activities. Enter data into the office's computerized database system. Assist officers in preparing initial reports pertaining to pretrial release, furlough, and bail reports.
- The student intern shall assist the court unit staff with clerical duties as requested.

## **Supervisors**

- The supervisor for the unit to which the intern is assigned will serve as the time keeper, and will address all personnel issues to include performance evaluations for the paid intern(s).
- The supervisor for the unit to which the intern is assigned will be responsible for the review and approval of all work performed by the student interns.

## **Exit Interview**

Prior to the intern's completion of his or her internship with the United States Probation Office, the Intern Coordinators shall conduct an exit interview. The purpose of the interview is to gain insight into what was helpful for the intern, what could be eliminated or done differently, and any other constructive changes that could be considered. Furthermore, the interview can be used as an evaluation tool, exploring the intern's quality of work, work ethics/habits, skills, etc. Feedback to the intern will be valuable information for professional growth.