



EL PASO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

Unpaid Internship and Volunteer Program Policy

Adopted Date: March 21, 2016

Revised Date: December 11, 2023

Through a Volunteer Program, El Paso County offers unpaid internships and volunteer work for candidates who are qualified under the following guidelines. This policy is not applicable to paid interns or participants of a fellowship program.

I. DEFINITIONS

- **Volunteer-** A volunteer is anyone who, without compensation or expectation of compensation, performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of the county.
- **Unpaid Intern-** Trainees who work at the County for a discrete period of time to gain work experience and knowledge about a particular field or position.

II. BENEFIT

The County commits to providing volunteers and interns with practical, valuable experiences through their designated assignments.

Volunteers and Interns may participate for any or all of the following reasons:

- To earn credit hours towards their degree plans.
- To receive “on the job” experience.
- To develop industry specific mentors.
- To explore new career options.
- To serve and strengthen their community.

III. ELIGIBILITY

- Volunteer assignments may have age requirements depending on the department and/or assigned tasks.
 - Parent/Guardian permission is required for volunteers/interns ages 14-17.
 - Volunteers under the age of 14 must have a parent/guardian volunteering alongside them as a registered volunteer.
- If currently enrolled in school, internship candidates must be in good academic standing.
- County employees are permitted to volunteer their personal time outside of normal working hours. County employees who decide to volunteer will do so freely, without any pressure or coercion, and will work on assignments outside the scope of their regularly assigned duties as employees in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act. Volunteer hours performed by County employees are not considered hours worked.
- Family members of County employees are eligible for volunteer service.

IV. VOLUNTEER AND INTERNSHIP REQUIREMENTS

Volunteers and interns who are selected to participate in the El Paso County Volunteer Program are required to:

- Agree to complete all assigned tasks, within the deadline and with appropriate supervision.
- Agree to uphold the El Paso County Code of Ethics.
- Agree to and abide by the policies and procedures set forth by El Paso County, as they apply to employees.
- If required by the assigned department and by the nature of the volunteer assignment, complete

- background check and fingerprinting; and
- If required by the assigned department and by the nature of the volunteer assignment, complete position specific training.

In addition to the criteria above, volunteers and interns are subject to the following requirements:

- Interns must be currently enrolled in an accredited educational institution or have graduated within the last twelve (12) months.
- Interns may not work more than forty (40) hours in one week.
- If applicable, interns and volunteers are responsible for coordination with their academic institution and for ensuring completion of any paperwork required by the respective educational institution.
- Volunteers and interns are not County employees and are not covered by Workers Compensation policies or any other benefit provided to County employees. Volunteers and interns are required to complete the El Paso County volunteer agreement before any assignment commences.

V. **DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITY**

In return for their service, the participating department shall provide the following:

For Volunteers and Interns:

- A supervisor to train, coach, and mentor as needed.
- Performance feedback throughout the internship/volunteer experience; and
- Opportunities to assist in other areas of the program as requested.

Additional responsibilities provided to Interns:

- Hands-on learning opportunities about various aspects of the department to which they are assigned.
- Opportunities to observe various departmental functions; and
- Completion of paperwork and/or certification of hours served as required by the intern's school.

El Paso County will not be responsible for school credit or grades received by the volunteer or intern for their participation in the program. El Paso County may only offer Pass/Fail if requested by the college or institution.

Participation in the program may be terminated at any time by either the volunteer/intern or El Paso County. Additionally, the volunteer's or intern's participation in the program may continue as long as both El Paso County and the volunteer or intern benefit from the experience. However, in the case of an internship, participation in the program may not exceed one year from the date of the intern's graduation.

VI. **PLACEMENT PROCESS**

Departments who wish to participate in an internship/volunteer opportunity must contact the County Volunteer Coordinator with a request that includes the anticipated tasks and expected scope of work for the volunteer/intern. This includes a general description of the duties and responsibilities of the volunteer or intern.

Departments may request assistance from the County Volunteer Coordinator in finding qualified volunteers/interns or may use their own resources to recruit.

VII. **PARKING**

Please refer to the County's Parking Policy for Unpaid Interns, Volunteers, Board Members, and Community Members Receiving a County Resolution for additional information.