

Unpaid Intern/Volunteer FAQs

- **Are background checks required for Unpaid Interns and Volunteers?**
 - Yes. With the exception of current Northwestern students and individuals under the age of 18, a criminal background check is required.
- **Northwestern Employee also be an Unpaid Intern or Volunteer?**
 - Per the Department of Labor (DOL), employees of a nonprofit organization may not provide unpaid or volunteer services that are "the same as, similar, or related to" their regular job duties. Furthermore, organizations may not request or direct employees to perform unpaid or volunteer services during the employee's normal working hours, even if the requested volunteer duties are not the same as or similar to the employee's regular job duties.
- **How do I request a Net ID for my Unpaid Intern or Volunteers?**
 - Send your NET ID request to consultant@northwestern.edu with the following information: Intern/Volunteer Full Name & Intern/Volunteer Personal Email address.
- **Can an Unpaid Intern or Volunteer receive a Wildcard?**
 - In some cases, an Unpaid Intern or Volunteer may be able to get a wildcard. Please contact the Wildcard office directly at wildcard@northwestern.edu or 847-467-6843 for information.
- **How can we find volunteers through Northwestern? Is there a place where we can post our volunteer opportunity to see if anyone is interested in helping us out?**
 - Departments may contact [University Career Services](#) or the [Center for Student Involvement](#) to see if they can assist in searching for intern/volunteers.
- **Can an Unpaid Intern or Volunteer be under 16 years old?**
 - Northwestern University requires Unpaid Interns and Volunteers to be at least 16 years old. Per the Illinois DOL, minors 14 and 15 years of age may at times, volunteer their services. However, if the work is voluntary, a signed letter is required from the parent or guardian confirming that they understand the nature of the work, and the hours involved and that the work will be unpaid. A waiver must not be granted until such letter has been provided.
 - Additionally, Unpaid Interns/Volunteers between 14-15 years of age are restricted to the following schedule:
 - When school is in session, children 14 and 15 years of age may work:
 - Up to 3 hours per day;
 - Up to 24 hours per week; and
 - The combined hours of school and work may not exceed 8 hours per day.
 - When school is NOT in session (including summer vacations, holidays and weekends), children under the age of 16 may NOT work:
 - More than 8 hours per day;
 - More than 6 days per week; nor
 - More than 48 hours per week.
 - Allowed hours of work are 7am to 7pm except between June 1st and Labor Day, when working hours may be extended to 9pm.
 - A scheduled meal period of at least 30 minutes shall be provided no later than the 5th consecutive hour of work.

- **Can I pay my Unpaid Intern a Stipend?**
 - If an employer wishes to pay an intern a stipend, then the intern becomes a temporary employee, subject to minimum wage and all of the other applicable requirements under the Federal Labor Standards Act (FLSA).
- **Can I give my Unpaid Intern or Volunteer a gift card?**
 - While nominal incentives such as lunch or an award document, actual payments in the form of a gift card may be interpreted by the Department of Labor as compensation for services
- **What forms should I have my Unpaid Intern or Volunteer complete prior to their assignment?**
 - Your Unpaid Intern or Volunteer must complete the [DCFS attestation form](#) and [Lab Liability Waiver Form](#). We also recommend that [the Unpaid Intern and Volunteer Acknowledgement](#) form is also completed.