

Effective Practice: Incorporating Service Learning into a Paid Summer Position

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Issue being addressed: Community service and service learning is a vital component to acquiring a comprehensive or whole education. Unfortunately, some students are not afforded the opportunity to participate in community service activities due to financial obligations. These students may have to work to support themselves, leaving a small amount of time to devote towards participating in meaningful community service projects. One choice is to pay students for being involved in significant community based projects.

When offering a paid position to a service-learner

- Outline the position and its requirements to the student. Allow the student to set personal goals, and make the student and agency aware of each other's expectations. There should be a mutual agreement of what the process and outcomes should look like.
- Provide extensive training on issues that may be addressed in the position. The student should at least be aware of the environment and demographic in which she/he would be working.
- Provide weekly reflection questions, the student must continue a process of reflecting in order to see what is going wrong and what is going right in order to find out how to make things more effective and efficient. Reflection also allows the students to figure out their roles within the organization and assess the challenges that they may face. Reflecting also provides them with the opportunity to make positive changes during the project.
- Conduct site visits to make sure that student reflections are based in reality, and address any issues and concerns that may arise. The position should be based on a mutual relationship between the student, the agency and the constituents they serve. All parties should be working towards accomplishing their goals.