

Frequently Asked Questions

- Q.** Should I, or my university field director, call my local DCFS office to see if they will accept me as an intern?
- A.** No. After your application is reviewed and background clearance is received, we will contact offices where you are interested in completing your internship. If there is an approved supervisor at the identified office, we will forward your information to them, and they will contact you to set up an interview.
- Q.** Where do I send documents and questions?
- A.** Mail to: DCFS.Internships@illinois.gov
- Q.** What is an Affiliation Agreement, and why is it needed for me to complete an internship?
- A.** An Affiliation Agreement is a legal document negotiated between the DCFS Office of Legal Services and the contracts/legal division of your educational institution that remains in effect for three years. A current and fully executed Affiliation Agreement must be in place before you can be approved as an intern with DCFS. This process can be initiated if the Affiliation Agreement does not yet exist. Once the agreement is signed by both parties, the placement process can begin.
- Q.** How long does it take before I gain an internship placement with DCFS?
- A.** The placement process may take up to two months and could take longer. This timeline includes the background clearance and locating a supervisor and location. It may also take longer if an Affiliation Agreement is in the approval process.
- Q.** Is this a paid internship?
- A.** No. This is an academic internship that will allow you to receive the credit needed for your degree.
- Q.** I don't have a car. Can I still obtain an internship?
- A.** To obtain an internship with DCFS, you need to have a valid driver's license and access to reliable transportation throughout the duration of the internship. You don't have to own a car, but you need reliable access to an insured vehicle to get to and from your assigned DCFS office, home visits, meetings, court, etc.

Q. Is it guaranteed that I will receive an internship with DCFS?

A. No. Placements are assigned on a *first-come, first-served basis*. However, we will be happy to provide you with information about Child Welfare Contributing Agencies (CWCAs) that contract with DCFS if we cannot match you with an internship.

"I have gained knowledge that I never knew I would. I am in awe of the great experience I received. I accepted a position."

–Intern in the DCFS Division of Child Protection assigned to the Joliet office



Illinois Department of
DCFS
Children & Family Services

<https://dcfs.illinois.gov/brighter-futures/independence/dcfsaip.html>

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Illinois DCFS Academic Internship Program



Illinois Department of
DCFS
Children & Family Services



The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Academic Internship Program through the Office of Learning and Professional Development (OLPD) partners with colleges and universities to provide internships for students. Staffed with masters-level instructors, DCFS internships are tailored to the student's interests and university/college requirements. The program offers enhanced learning opportunities in, but not limited to:

- Developing engagement and case management skills through direct practice with children and their families.
- Developing skills in program development, social policy, administration and community engagement.
- Developing knowledge of the child welfare system and broader community supports.
- Engaging in research.
- Support units within the department.

"Overall, my internship experience at DCFS was wonderful. The placement team I worked with was friendly, inclusive and always trying to find ways to help me learn." –Urbana Intern

Internship placement opportunities

Specialties include, but are not limited to:

- Child abuse and neglect investigations
- Intact family services
- Placement/permanency services
- Foster caregiver/birth parent support
- Policy and advocacy
- Research and child well-being
- Legal services (law students only)
- Licensing
- Educational programs for youth in care

Application submission deadlines

The open application windows for each semester are:

- **Summer semester: Apply between January 15 – February 15**
- **Fall semester: Apply between March 15 – April 15**
- **Spring semester: Apply between September 15 – October 15**

Internships may span multiple semesters without the need to reapply.

"I appreciate all your help with the services you provided to me. HR called a couple of weeks ago and made me an offer. I accepted." –Intern with the DCFS Office of Education & Transition Services (OETS)



How to apply

To apply for the Academic Internship Program, students should fill out the online application by visiting <https://dcfs.illinois.gov/brighter-futures/independence/dcfsaip/intern-application.html>.

Eligibility requirements include:

1. Possession of a valid driver's license.
2. An upperclassman pursuing a bachelor's degree, a student pursuing a master's degree or a post-graduate student.
3. The University Degree Program requires an internship.
4. The University Degree Program requires a minimum of 120 internship hours.
5. A fully executed Affiliation Agreement must exist between the university and DCFS (this can be initiated if one does not exist).

If the application is approved, the student will be emailed documents that make up the background check process. The forms must be completed and returned to the below email address, along with letters of two professional or academic letters of recommendation.

Students may also email questions to DCFS.Internships@illinois.gov.



Academic Internship Application
(scan to apply)



Questions? Email us.
(scan to connect)