



What Do We Mean by Career Internships?

Career internships provide youth with experiences that expose them to the world of work. These internships are not designed to help them get a specific job, but to help them understand career options, the nature of the workplace, and how their experiences, such as schooling, will contribute to their choice and options of work and further education. Internships should help youth look at what careers they might like—and not like—to pursue and give them hands-on experience in how to function in the work world. Effective career internships require thoughtful and considerable planning, coordination, and continual supervision of both interns and mentors. Ideally, they have support from school personnel and family members.

Strong career development internship programs for youth can take many forms, but generally:

- provide a structured and sequenced set of experiences both in the workplace and in related opportunities for learning and reflection that will enable interns to work with a skilled adult worker
- provide opportunities to learn about the workplace as well as their particular job in it
- help youth reflect on the knowledge and insights gained to deepen their learning experiences and understanding of themselves
- promote critical thinking and problem solving abilities necessary for career and life success
- include ongoing support that interns might require to succeed
- encourage a broad understanding of work options

Effective internship programs include:

- supervision of work by adult employees and guidance in relationship to each intern's academic and career journey
- Mentors who take intern's preferences and interests into account when providing work experiences
- Staff supervision and support of the mentor-intern relationship
- authentic and meaningful work
- opportunities to gain job-readiness, life skills, and learning experiences that help interns explore career fields

Youth Development and Career Development Internships

Strong career development internship programs are aligned with youth development principles: young people should experience close relationships

with caring adults, high expectations, engaging activities, opportunities to make a difference in their world, and continuity of support in every setting in which they live, work, and study. The research-based youth development approach demonstrates that these experiences promote successful development in young people.

Research on the Mentoring Relationship

In its publication *Mentoring: A Synthesis of P/PV's Research: 1988-1995*, Public/Private Ventures arrived at the following findings based on its research of Big Brothers/Big Sisters' mentoring program:

- Well-run mentoring programs can make important and observable changes in attitudes and behaviors of at-risk youth
- The key to effective mentoring relationships lies in the development of trust over time between two strangers of different ages
- Effective mentoring programs provide an infrastructure that includes processes for screening, orientation and training, and support and supervision