



24-4540

DATE: February 27, 2024 (Item No. {{item.number}})

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: James R. Williams, County Executive

SUBJECT: Student Trainee Stipend Delegation of Authority Resolution

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Adopt Resolution delegating authority to the County Executive, or designee, to negotiate, execute, amend, or terminate agreements to pay stipends to individuals engaged as student trainees, in an amount not to exceed \$3,000 per month and no more than 40 agreements per fiscal year, following approval by County Counsel as to form and legality, and approval by the Office of the County Executive. Delegation of authority shall expire on June 30, 2027.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no impact to the County General Fund as a result of the recommended action. The estimated range of each stipend agreement is between \$3,000–\$15,000, with 20–40 agreements anticipated to be executed in each respective fiscal year under the delegation of authority. The cost of the stipend agreements is included in the existing appropriations of the applicable department/agency.

CONTRACT HISTORY

The Board of Supervisors has previously authorized delegation of authority to the County Executive, or designee, to execute agreements for stipends for student trainees.

On October 4, 2016 (Item No. 25), the Board adopted Resolution No. BOS-2016-55, delegating authority to the County Executive, or designee, to execute student trainee stipend agreements, which expired on June 30, 2022.

On April 19, 2022 (Item No. 60), the Board adopted Resolution No. BOS-2022-53 delegating authority to the County Executive, or designee, to execute student trainee stipend agreements. Resolution No. BOS-2022-53 allowed the County Executive, or designee, to execute 15 student stipend agreements per fiscal year.

Due to the increased number of student trainees in the various County departments/agencies, Administration is requesting to increase the allocation to 40 student stipend agreements per fiscal year and extend the delegation of authority to June 30, 2027, through this new resolution.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION AND BACKGROUND

The County of Santa Clara currently provides required “hands-on” training to students enrolled in certain specified educational programs at local colleges and universities. To support these students in their professional endeavors and to better attract students to the County of Santa Clara after graduation, the County provides “stipends” to students to help offset their educational costs and living expenses while they are engaged in the training program.

Administration recommends that the County Executive, or designee, be delegated the authority to enter into stipend agreements with student interns for purposes of consistency and administrative oversight. Delegating authority to the County Executive, or designee, to enter into stipend agreements on behalf of the County will give the County the ability to continue paying students a stipend and continue these important training internships. It will also serve to reduce the number of such interns classified as extra help, which will ensure that all students being paid via stipend, as opposed to an hourly wage, are true “trainees” as required by federal law. Finally, delegating authority to the County Executive, or designee, will allow the stipend to be paid more efficiently, as individual departments/agencies will not be required to seek a separate delegation of authority or agreement approval from the Board of Supervisors.

The State of California requires students seeking degrees or certifications in certain professions to fulfill specific training requirements to obtain the degree, license, or other certification. The County of Santa Clara is uniquely able to provide the “hands-on” training opportunities required through student trainee programs at the Social Services Agency (SSA) and/or Santa Clara Valley Healthcare. For several years, the County has partnered with California colleges and universities to provide required training for students seeking a degree in such professions such as social work and clinical laboratory science. Providing these training opportunities not only helps the students but also the County in that departments are better positioned to recruit new employees from the students they help educate and train.

To attract students to the County for these training programs, the County has provided students “stipends” to help offset costs of educational and living expenses incurred while the students are engaged in training. Most competing internships offer such stipends since students engaged in these training programs are earning credits and not “employed”; therefore, they do not earn an hourly wage. The stipend amounts are, in some cases, covered by specific grants. If not covered by a grant or other funding, County departments have factored in the stipend costs as part of their operational budgets.

The County currently has student trainees in three different County departments: the Department of Aging and Adult Services, the Behavioral Health Services Department, and the Santa Clara Valley Medical Center. The student trainees are all enrolled in specific, required educational training programs through local colleges and universities. Below is a brief description of training programs provided by the departments.

Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS)—Master of Social Work

To further strengthen DAAS' mission to promote a safe and independent lifestyle for elders and dependent adults, SSA is encouraging social work students to engage in social work internships with a focus on elder and dependent adults. Many universities and colleges have strong social work programs, but do not offer comprehensive courses in gerontology or geriatrics. The DAAS student internship stipend will help attract students to this growing and worthwhile field and further the Board's goals as outlined in the Seniors' Agenda.

Providing a learning environment for future social workers is an important aspect of work within DAAS. The DAAS students graduate with a newfound appreciation for services to the older adult community and are energized to create change that will impact social welfare with older adults in mind. During the course of students' placement with DAAS, they are able to meet with elderly and dependent adults from all walks of life as they accompany social workers on their investigations; gain a greater understanding of how to communicate with elderly adults, people with mental health illness, and people with physical or developmental disabilities; gain a greater understanding of the agencies and resources available for people with mental health, aging, or disability needs; and develop critical thinking and reasoning skills as they assist social workers in coordinating services or investigations.

Master of Social Work (MSW) student internships in County departments, such as Child Welfare and Mental Health, are often rewarded with federal or County stipends, but stipends have not been available for MSW trainees interested in aging services. The ability to offer a stipend through the DAAS student trainee program has helped increase interest by graduate students in the field of aging and adult services, and the ability to continue to offer a stipend to students will promote the rapidly growing discipline of aging and adult services.

Behavioral Health Services Department (BHSD)—Clinical and Doctoral Programs

BHSD offers stipend internships to qualified students working towards the completion of their MSW program, MFT program, LPCC program, Doctor of Philosophy in Clinical Psychology (PhD), and/or Doctor of Psychology (PsyD). All interns are trained in both clinical and community work in the public behavioral health setting. An emphasis is placed on training students who come from unserved or underserved communities to help meet the increasingly diverse language and cultural needs of Santa Clara County.

Under supervision of a licensed psychologist, therapist, or clinician, student interns are provided the opportunity to apply and expand their knowledge of their respective disciplines. Clinical interns learn to complete clinical assessments, formulate a diagnosis, and how to document services rendered. Upon completion of the program, students can deliver services at an equivalent level to that of an employee in their host unit. The doctoral intern program builds competency for students in the delivery of psychological services per the guidelines set forth by the California Board of Psychology and equips students for a future career as a licensed clinical psychologist.

Clinical interns help to provide case management, rehabilitation counseling, and clinical services for individuals, families, and groups. Doctoral interns help provide forensic/psychological testing, psychological educational groups, consultations, and carry

limited caseloads. Their work aided in the decisions of BHSD, Public Defender Office, and Juvenile Court to help prevent minors from experiencing extended incarceration stays.

The growing shortage of Behavioral Health Service providers is one of the most challenging issues facing the department and Santa Clara County. The ability to offer a stipend has enabled the department to increase interest in the field of behavioral health in the public sector and has provided County and contract agencies the opportunity to recruit highly skilled and thoroughly trained staff. As a result, BHSD wishes to continue the student stipend program as the outcomes have been productive and beneficial.

Santa Clara Valley Medical Center (SCVMC)—Clinical Laboratory Scientist (CLS)

The California Hospital Association has repeatedly stressed the need to increase the number of Clinical Laboratory Scientists (CLSs) and Medical Laboratory Technicians (MLTs) in the workforce. CLSs and MLTs are an integral part of the patient care delivery team responsible for conducting a wide range of diagnostic tests, ranging from simple blood tests to genetic testing. The test results are utilized by physicians to help determine treatment plans for patients, thereby directly affecting patient care. The growing shortage of CLSs and MLTs is one of the most pressing workforce issues currently facing hospitals.

SCVMC has actively participated in the training of CLSs and operates the largest training program in northern California. Students are required by the California Department of Public Health – Lab Field Services, to complete a 52-week training period as part of their training. SCVMC’s training program exposes students to a variety of specialized areas, including microbiology, chemistry, hematology, and toxicology within the laboratory and allows them to train with the County’s lab professionals. SCVMC provides a stipend to CLS trainees, which is essential in helping to recruit high-quality trainees to the program. SCVMC provides two programs per year and the pass rate on the national licensing exam is 100%, which speaks to the quality of its training program.

These students provide SCVMC with an invaluable source of qualified employee candidates, and staff can assess the capabilities and competency of each trainee during the training period. Once the trainees graduate, SCVMC has the opportunity to recruit these skilled individuals who already have the insight into the SCVMC system to permanent CLS positions. The student stipend trainee program is an invaluable resource for SCVMC.

CHILD IMPACT

The recommended action will have a positive impact on children and youth by providing hands-on experience and training for students to continue working in various areas at the County that positively benefit children and family services.

SENIOR IMPACT

The recommended action will have a positive impact on seniors by encouraging Master of Social Work students to enter the specialized and growing field of aging and adult services by providing them with an opportunity to train at the County.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The recommended action will have no/neutral sustainability implications.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

The County would not be able to provide stipends, thereby limiting these Departments' ability to recruit and train the highest quality candidates.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

The Clerk of the Board of Supervisors will notify the Employee Services Agency's Contracts Manager, Brandon Pham, who will in turn, work with the departments to execute the individual stipend agreements

ATTACHMENTS:

- 2024 Student Trainee Stipend DOA Resolution