

Mountain Area Workforce Development Board

Policy Change

Increase in the limit of Work Experience Hours from 300 hours to 400 hours per year for up-to two years to be effective March 1, 2015

Currently work experience assignments are limited to 300 hours per year. Although the number of hours was somewhat arbitrarily established the reasons were:

- Subsidized work must not be permitted to interfere with an employer's normal hiring processes. If the workload demands a part-time worker the employer needs to hire someone, not use a WIA youth for the job. Work Experience should not be seen as a government subsidy of an employer's workforce.
- Work experience hours must be kept at a level that reflects an employer's willingness to provide a youth participant with a valuable opportunity to learn about the expectations, of the work environment. And, to provide a youth who has little or no work experience a "work history" and hopefully a letter of reference to add to his/her resume.
- Too many hours of work experience, especially evening hours during the school year, can interfere with academic performance and/or attendance.
- The work experience investment in an individual should be kept relatively low so more youth can be served.

The reasons for the request in the policy change are:

- The extremely low income levels that govern youth eligibility reflect the hardship of the family/household, if the youth is not homeless and additional income is very important to the participant and those he/she is living with.
- At 400 hours the evening hours of employment can still be scheduled so that the work experience won't interfere with attendance or performance. Youth programs have rules that withhold work hours if attendance and academic performance aren't maintained.
- Additional hours would enable youth to earn extra income in the period between the end of the school year and June 30.
- The extra hours allow the student to learn more of the occupational skills associated with their assignments. Employer (especially private sector employers) might be more willing to accept work experience students if they had longer assignments on their worksites and the increased hours give participants a better chance to prove themselves as reliable and productive.

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) there will be an increased emphasis on work-based learning and adding an "academic and occupational skills education" component to the work experience assignment. This will increase the importance of work experience assignment and increase the impact of the work experience on the participant's skill development.