

# FAQ's about the Public Service Requirement

## What type of work qualifies for the mandatory public service requirement?

The student's public service work:

- must be *law-related* (this includes tasks such as preparation for and assistance with trial, client and witness interviewing, citizen legal education, drafting documents, legislative analysis and policy interpretation, and research and writing; **not** tasks such as clerical work or event planning)
- must be *uncompensated*
- *may not receive academic credit* (work at for-credit externships and clinics is not eligible)

## Where can students work?

Students may work for:

- legal service offices that serve indigent clients
- non-profit organizations (including, but not limited to 501(c)(3) organizations)
- public interest groups
- private attorneys handling pro bono cases (cases handled for no fee or a substantially reduced fee on behalf of a person or group unable to secure legal representation; court-appointed work is eligible)
- government agencies
- faculty doing pro bono work

## How should students choose public service projects?

Students should review *Guide to the Public Service Program* and the *List of Approved Public Service Placements* (available in the Feinstein Institute, Suite 243, and on the Feinstein Institute website - <http://law.rwu.edu> under Public Service in the Quicklinks) to determine which placement might be of interest. Additional information about each placement is available in a binder in the Feinstein Institute Resource Library. Liz Tobin Tyler, Director of Public Service and Community Partnerships, is available to counsel students about public service opportunities and to help them find projects that match their interests. She can be reached at 254-4634 or [lt Tyler@rwu.edu](mailto:lt Tyler@rwu.edu).

## When can students begin their public service work?

Students may begin their public service work as early as their first year. First year students are generally advised not to begin a public service project until after their first semester. If a first year student wishes to begin his/her public service during the first semester, s/he should consult with Liz Tobin Tyler.

**Does the public service work have to be completed in one semester?**

No. There is no time limit for the work. Students and supervisors should discuss a time-frame that best meets their needs and goals.

**Can students complete their 20 hours at more than one placement?**

No. All of the 20 hours must be completed at one placement. However, students are encouraged to explore as many public service opportunities as they wish once their requirement is fulfilled. Students should keep track of the hours for ALL of the public service work they do during law school for recognition by the Feinstein Institute. Forms for tracking public service hours are available from the Feinstein Institute.

**Can students initiate their own public service placements?**

Yes. Students are encouraged to develop their own public service placements. But they **must receive pre-approval from the Director of Public Service prior to starting work.** Students wishing to initiate their own projects must submit the *Pre-Approval for Student-Initiated Public Service Project* form to the Director of Public Service **in advance** of work on the project. Students will **not receive credit** for a self-initiated public service project without pre-approval.

**Can students work extra hours at a public interest or judicial clerkship to receive credit for their public service requirement?**

Since students receive academic credit for a public interest or judicial externship, they **may not count** any hours worked at the placement **during the semester of the externship** toward their public service requirement. If a student wishes to work on a **separate public service project** at a placement where s/he has clerked in the past, s/he **must receive the pre-approval of the Director of Public Service.**

**Can work done during the summer count toward the public service requirement?**

Yes, so long as the work is eligible in other ways (law-related, uncompensated, etc) and the student has sought pre-approval from the Public Service Program Director if the placement is not on the list of approved public service placements. Students who receive a public interest summer stipend may count work above and beyond the 140 hours required for the stipend toward the public service requirement. They must complete all appropriate paperwork to receive credit.

**What paperwork is required for completion of the public service requirement?**

All forms and information about deadlines for submission of forms are available from the Feinstein Institute for Legal Service or from the Feinstein Institute website. All forms must be completed and submitted by the designated deadlines in order for a student to receive credit for completion of the requirement.