

**RCW 49.12.471 Farm internship project.** (1) The director shall establish a farm internship project for the employment of farm interns on small farms under special certificates at wages, if any, as authorized by the department and subject to such limitations as to time, number, proportion, and length of service as provided in this section and as prescribed by the department.

(2) (a) A small farm may employ no more than three interns at one time under this section.

(b) For any small farm located in a county that became eligible to participate in the farm intern [internship] project on May 4, 2023, at least one of the interns employed by the farm must be an individual who, in addition to meeting the farm's qualifications applicable to all intern applicants, also has direct experience working as a migrant farmworker or whose parent or grandparent has direct experience working as a migrant farmworker. If a farm is employing only one intern and the farm does not receive any applications from individuals who meet the criteria set forth in this subsection, the requirement of this subsection does not apply. If a farm is employing more than one intern, the farm must employ at least one intern who meets the criteria set forth in this subsection.

(3) A small farm must apply for a special certificate on a form made available by the director. The application must set forth: The name of the farm and a description of the farm seeking the certificate; the type of work to be performed by a farm intern; a description of the internship program; the period of time for which the certificate is sought and the duration of an internship; the number of farm interns for which a special certificate is sought; the wages, if any, that will be paid to the farm intern; any room and board, stipends, and other remuneration the farm will provide to a farm intern; and the total number of workers employed by the farm.

(4) Upon receipt of an application, the department shall review the application and issue a special certificate to the requesting farm within fifteen days if the department finds that:

(a) The farm qualifies as a small farm;

(b) There have been no serious violations of chapter 49.46 RCW or Title 51 RCW that provide reasonable grounds to believe that the terms of an internship agreement may not be complied with;

(c) The issuance of a certificate will not create unfair competitive labor cost advantages nor have the effect of impairing or depressing wage or working standards established for experienced workers for work of a like or comparable character in the industry or occupation at which the intern is to be employed;

(d) A farm intern will not displace an experienced worker;

(e) If subsection (2) (b) of this section applies, the farm has included in the application either: (i) An attestation from at least one farm intern stating that the farm intern is an individual who has direct experience working as a migrant farmworker or whose parent or grandparent has direct experience working as a migrant farmworker; or (ii) an attestation that the farm is employing only one intern and the farm did not receive any applications from individuals who meet the criteria set forth in subsection (2) (b) of this section; and

(f) The farm demonstrates that the interns will perform work for the farm under an internship program that: (i) Provides a curriculum of learning modules and supervised participation in farm work activities designed to teach farm interns about farming practices and farm enterprises; (ii) is based on the bona fide curriculum of an educational or vocational institution; (iii) encourages the interns to

participate in career and technical education or other educational content with courses in agriculture or related programs of study at a community or technical college; and (iv) is reasonably designed to provide the intern with vocational knowledge and skills about farming practices and enterprises. In assessing an internship program, the department may consult with relevant college and university departments and extension programs and state and local government agencies involved in the regulation or development of agriculture.

(5) A special certificate issued under this section must specify the terms and conditions under which it is issued, including: The name of the farm; the duration of the special certificate allowing the employment of farm interns and the duration of an internship; the total number of interns authorized under the special certificate; the authorized wage rate, if any; and any room and board, stipends, and other remuneration the farm will provide to the farm intern. A farm intern may be paid at wages specified in the certificate only during the effective period of the certificate and for the duration of the internship.

(6) If the department denies an application for a special certificate, notice of denial must be mailed to the farm. The farm listed on the application may, within fifteen days after notice of such action has been mailed, file with the director a petition for review of the denial, setting forth grounds for seeking such a review. If reasonable grounds exist, the director or the director's authorized representative may grant such a review and, to the extent deemed appropriate, afford all interested persons an opportunity to be heard on such review.

(7) Before employing a farm intern, a farm must submit a statement on a form made available by the director stating that the farm understands: The requirements of the industrial welfare act, this chapter, that apply to farm interns; that the farm must pay workers' compensation premiums in the assigned intern risk class and must pay workers' compensation premiums for nonintern work hours in the applicable risk class; and that if the farm does not comply with subsection (8) of this section, the director may revoke the special certificate.

(8) The director may revoke a special certificate issued under this section if a farm fails to: Comply with the requirements of the industrial welfare act, this chapter, that apply to farm interns; pay workers' compensation premiums in the assigned intern risk class; or pay workers' compensation premiums in the applicable risk class for nonintern work hours.

(9) Before the start of a farm internship, the farm and the intern must sign a written agreement and send a copy of the agreement to the department. The written agreement must, at a minimum:

(a) Describe the internship program offered by the farm, including the skills and objectives the program is designed to teach and the manner in which those skills and objectives will be taught;

(b) Explicitly state that the intern is not entitled to unemployment benefits or minimum wages for work and activities conducted pursuant to the internship program for the duration of the internship;

(c) Describe the responsibilities, expectations, and obligations of the intern and the farm, including the anticipated number of hours of farm activities to be performed by and the anticipated number of hours of curriculum instruction provided to the intern per week;

(d) Describe the activities of the farm and the type of work to be performed by the farm intern; and

(e) Describe any wages, room and board, stipends, and other remuneration the farm will provide to the farm intern.

(10) The department must limit the administrative costs of implementing the internship program by relying on farm organizations and other stakeholders to perform outreach and inform the farm community of the program and by limiting employee travel to the investigation of allegations of noncompliance with program requirements.

(11) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(a) "Farm intern" means an individual who provides services to a small farm under a written agreement and primarily as a means of learning about farming practices and farm enterprises.

(b) "Farm internship program" means an internship program described under subsection (4)(e) of this section.

(c) "Small farm" means a farm:

(i) Organized as a sole proprietorship, partnership, or corporation;

(ii) That reports on the applicant's schedule F of form 1040 or other applicable form filed with the United States internal revenue service annual sales less than \$265,000; and

(iii) Where all the owners or partners of the farm provide regular labor to and participate in the management of the farm, and own or lease the productive assets of the farm.

(12) The department shall monitor and evaluate the farm internships authorized by this section and report to the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 31, 2024. The report must include, but not be limited to: The number of small farms that applied for and received special certificates; the number of interns employed as farm interns; the nature of the educational activities provided to the farm interns; the wages and other remuneration paid to farm interns; the number of and type of workers' compensation claims for farm interns; the employment of farm interns following farm internships; and other matters relevant to assessing farm internships authorized in this section. [2023 c 269 § 2; 2020 c 212 § 1.]

**Findings—2023 c 269:** "The legislature finds that encouraging participation in agriculture is valuable. The farm internship program allows students to experience farming practices and get hands-on experience with farming activities. The internship program has existed since 2014 and was piloted in a few select counties. The legislature finds that this program is valuable, should be extended to all counties, and should continue without an expiration date." [2023 c 269 § 1.]

**Effective date—2023 c 269:** "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [May 4, 2023]." [2023 c 269 § 6.]

**Effective date—2020 c 212:** "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [March 27, 2020]." [2020 c 212 § 5.]