

**MERCER COUNTY CAREER CENTER
COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM
STUDENT INFORMATION**



**Cooperative Education Coordinator
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What is Cooperative Education?

The Cooperative Education program works together with businesses and students enrolled in a state approved program of study at the Career Center.

Students gain real life work experience in place of their classroom instruction during the school day.

Student learners work under the guidance of a training supervisor and must be paid at least minimum wage and be covered under workers' compensation insurance.

Co-op students cannot displace employees that have been laid off.

How can I get into the Co-op Program?

- A student is currently employed by a company and the job is related to their Career Center program and the company is willing to enter into a Training Agreement with Mercer County Career Center.
- A student seeks out employers related to their program.
- Employers call the Career Center looking for a co-op student.
 - The instructor, co-op coordinator and the employer will select the candidate(s) that they believe are most qualified. The employer will make the final determination on who is hired if more than one student is eligible and recommended.

Cooperative Education Program Guidelines

- Co-op positions must be directly related to a student's field of study.
- Co-op students are required to be paid a fair wage.
- The business must carry Workers' Compensation insurance.
- Students are not eligible for unemployment insurance.
- Students must be scheduled to work a **minimum of three hours at a time**.
- A training agreement among the school, employer, parent and student must be signed.
- A training plan will be designed that includes specific details of what the student will accomplish and how their employment extends their education.
- All placements are subject to Federal and State labor laws and safety regulations.

Labor Laws and Work Permit

Employers of co-op students must adhere to the national and state child labor laws. These laws restrict number of hours that minors can work and also prevent them from being exposed to occupations that are deemed HAZARDOUS. All businesses are required to post an abstract of the child labor laws in a conspicuous place where any person under the age of 18 is employed.

- Every person under the age of 18 is required to obtain a transferrable work permit. This can be obtained from the student's home school. Employers are required to keep a copy of this on file in the event they need to verify a worker's information.

Hours of Employment – ages 16 and 17

- Co-op students must work 3 hours per day and at least 15 hours per week.
- Maximum of 8 hours per day.
- Maximum of 28 hours in a school week (Monday thru Friday) plus 8 hours on Saturday and 8 hours on Sunday.
- Must have 1 day off every 6 days.
- Maximum total weekly hours – 44 (4 seven hour days, 1 day off, 2 eight hour days).

Training Agreement

The Training Agreement is a contract between the co-op student, their employer, the school, and the parent/guardian. It includes guidelines that have been developed to comply with the state and federal labor laws. Students can be removed from a co-op placement if they or their employer does not adhere to guidelines.

Training Plan

The Training Plan is a list of specific skills that the student will accomplish at their place of employment. It is designed with the help of the co-op student's program instructor, their employer and the co-op coordinator. The training supervisor will review this with the student before the end of each nine-week grading period to document the student's accomplishments.

Training Supervisor

The employer will assign a specific qualified employee to be the student's training site supervisor.

Wage and Hours Reports

Co-op students **must** provide a copy of their wage and hour reports and paycheck stubs to the Career Center.

Student Log

Co-op students are required to keep a log of the basic activities that they complete each day.

Co-op Days at the Career Center

Co-op students are required to attend the Career Center cooperative education meetings at least one day every two weeks **for at least 90 minutes**.

Site Visits

The co-op coordinator will visit the work site to check in with the training supervisor once per month to monitor student's progress.

Employer Work Site Evaluation Form

The student's training site supervisor will complete an evaluation form for the student once per nine weeks. The co-op coordinator will provide this form and it will be used in determining the student's grade.

Cooperative Education Process

1. Interested students should submit a Student Conference Request to meet with the co-op coordinator.
2. The co-op coordinator will meet with the student to review the Cooperative Education program.
3. If the student is determined to be eligible and a placement has been found, the co-op coordinator will work with the CTE instructor, the employer and the student to develop a **Training Agreement** and **Training Plan**.
4. The co-op coordinator will visit the place of employment to meet with the student's supervisor to discuss the Training Agreement and Training Plan.
5. The co-op coordinator will meet with the student to complete the Training Agreement and Training Plan.
6. The student will obtain all required signatures and return the Training Agreement and Training Plan to the co-op coordinator. **All signatures are required before the student can officially start their co-op experience.**

Cooperative Education

Student Co-op Rules & Regulations: Reference Guide

1. **ILLNESS:** If sick, call your employer first, then contact co-operative coordinator. Submit excuses to the Career Center for any absences.
2. **REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION:** Wage and Hour Reports (paycheck stub) and Student Log. Take some time each day to write a brief entry about what you did (the student must work a minimum of 15 hours per week or 3 days Monday-Friday).
3. **DRIVING:** Have a discussion with your parents about driving in bad weather. Most employers do not have delays or snow days. Your health, safety and well-being come first above all things. Please talk with your employer in advance if your parents do not want you to drive under certain weather conditions. It is better that they know in advance if this were to become an issue. Never use electronic devices while driving. The student must have adequate automobile insurance coverage.
4. **FOLLOW COMPANY POLICIES:** Ask your employer if they have an employee handbook. Employers almost always have an orientation and employee handbook for new workers. Make sure that you read the handbook carefully and follow all of the procedures explained to you. If you have any questions, ask. If they do not have a handbook, ask if they could provide you with some written guidelines so that you are both on the same page in terms of their expectations of you. If something happens at work that does not seem right, do not hesitate to talk to your parents and inform the co-op coordinator as soon as possible.
5. **WORK SCHEDULE:** Provide the co-op coordinator with a copy of the work schedule. Co-op students need to report to the Career Center on “in session” school days that they are not scheduled to work. If you are too sick to go to school in the morning, then you are too sick to go to work in the afternoon. The exception to this would be a doctor’s appointment, scheduled in advance, that your employer and the school are aware of. The student will submit a written excuse signed by his or her parent for any days absent from school and work within (3) days of their return to school.
6. **NOCTI TESTING:** Co-op students must prepare for and take the NOCTI test, which has two components, Written and Hands-On/Practical. **There are no makeup days for the Hands-On NOCTI test. Proctors are volunteer employers from the across the county. They give up time from their business or employer to evaluate students.**
7. **Co-op Days at the Career Center:** **Co-op students are required to attend the Career Center at least one day every two weeks.** If you have a question or problem, ask the co-op coordinator. The day after you miss or forget about a “CO-OP” day is too late.
8. The student may not terminate his or her employment without the advanced approval of the Cooperative Education Coordinator.
9. If there is a temporary lay-off or suspension of work, the student will report back to the Co-op Coordinator.

FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE MERCER COUNTY CAREER CENTER OR THE HOME SCHOOL, COULD RESULT IN THE TERMINATION OF CO-OP EDUCATION ENROLLMENT.

JOB CHANGES

Students admitted to the Co-op Program will be expected to remain employed at the job of their choice for the entire school year. A student is not allowed more than two job changes per year unless all job changes were approved by the Cooperative Education Coordinator.

Job changes will be permitted only under the following circumstances:

1. Student is unable to fulfill the requirements of the job. Requests for removal from the job under these circumstances can come from either the employer or the student.
2. Student becomes ill and is unable to continue the job because of the illness.
3. Student's job is terminated due to seasonal fluctuations, layoffs, or by the employer going out of business.
4. Student loses his or her means of transportation to and from the job and is unable to secure other means of travel.

Any student desiring a job change for the reasons stated above, or any other reasons must follow the procedure outlined below before any action can be taken.

1. Submit a letter to the instructor stating the reasons for requesting a job change.
2. If the instructor feels the reasons are valid, the letter will be brought to the attention of the supervisor of the program who will approve the job change.
3. The student will be responsible for finding a new work station subject to the approval of the instructor. A time limit and regulations for seeking new employment will be the same as set forth in the guidelines, "Loss of Employment."

LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT

Students terminating their employment during the school year in the Cooperative Education Program, for whatever reason given, are subject to the following:

1. The student must meet the very next school day with the Co-op coordinator for complete evaluation to either commence a job search for new Co-op employment or transfer into a full-time academic or vocational schedule.
2. Whenever necessary, a parent conference will be held with regard to student's employment termination.
3. If the student is terminated for illegal or suspected illegal activity, the student will be immediately removed from the program.

REASSIGNMENT

1. The Coordinator will assist the students in seeking new employment; however, the responsibility of obtaining employment, rests with the student.
2. Students are to look for new employment with regard to the following:
 - a. The student has two weeks (10 school days) to search for and obtain employment. In doing so, the student must, prior to leaving the school each day, submit an itinerary to the Co-op Coordinator as to where he or she is going on the job search and the type of employment he or she is seeking. Upon returning to school the next day, the student must report the result to the instructor.
 - b. At the end of this process, if the student is without approved employment, he or she will be assigned a schedule of full-time academic or vocational classes for the remainder of the school year.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

We (Student and Parent/Guardian) acknowledge that we have received a copy of the Mercer County Career Center Cooperative Education Program Student Information.

We have read and understand the Mercer County Career Center Cooperative Education Program Student Information.

Student Name (Print): _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Name (Print): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Return this form with signatures to the cooperative education coordinator.