



SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH
IN TENNESSEE SCHOOLS

Intern Handbook

2024 - 25
School Counseling



Table of Contents

Intern Requirements, Commitments, and Benefits.....	3
Application Timeline	3
Identifying an Internship Site	4
Contract/Agreement.....	5
Stipends.....	5
Compensation.....	5
Payment Schedule	5
Relocation Funds	5
Payment—University of Tennessee System Students.....	6
Payment—Non-University of Tennessee System Students	6
Job-Embedded Placement	6
Other Funding Sources	6
Repayment	7
Extended Term	8
Extenuating Circumstances	8
Liability.....	8
Participation in Trainings, Meetings, and Events	8
Kick-Off Event.....	8
Community of Practice.....	9
Professional Development Series	9
Participation in Project Evaluation Processes	9
Benefits.....	10
Membership in the Tennessee School Counselor Association.....	10
Registration to attend the School Counselor and Administrator Leadership Institute .	10
Building a Network of Support	10
Access to Experts	11
Confidentiality.....	11

Introduction

Project RAISE (Rural Access to Interventions in School Environments) grew as a response to the critical need for mental health professionals in rural Tennessee school districts. Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) staff developed a proposal to the School Based Mental Health Services Grant program at the U.S. Department of Education. The Tennessee proposal was funded in 2023. TDOE partnered with University of Tennessee Center for Literacy, Education and Employment to support the goals of the project: to recruit and retain additional mental health professionals in identified rural Tennessee school districts. The grant supports stipends, training and more for school psychology, school counseling and school social work interns.

Intern Requirements, Commitments, and Benefits

The Project RAISE school counseling internship experience is based on standard requirements for students who are enrolled in Masters/Specialist-level programs and are required to complete an internship in the last/two semesters of their program. Requirements may differ between programs, but an intern will generally be required to complete 600-hours¹ in a school setting over one or two semesters².

Application Timeline

The prospective school counseling intern will apply for/seek an internship site on a rolling basis throughout the year due to the fact that internships may span one or two semesters.

The intern can begin a Project RAISE internship during the fall or spring semesters.

The intern can identify/secure an internship site with a Project RAISE district prior to or after submitting the Project RAISE application. Application to the school district does not guarantee a Project RAISE spot. Application to Project RAISE does not guarantee an internship placement with a Project RAISE district.

¹ Total number of hours determined by the university program, school district, and/or licensing board, not specified by Project RAISE.

² The duration/length of the internship is determined by the academic program, not specified by Project RAISE.

Identifying an Internship Site

The prospective intern is responsible to identify the internship site³ following procedures outlined by their respective university program and in accordance with the necessary steps identified by the school district/internship site. If a university program requires a Field Coordinator or Program Advisor to identify/approve an internship site, the prospective intern must comply with those university requirements.

The internship site/school district will be responsible to identify/provide a qualified⁴ field-based/site supervisor⁵. The university program will be responsible to identify/provide a university supervisor, as determined by program standards/procedures. Project RAISE, including the TDOE, do not assume any responsibility in vetting the qualification/experience of the field-based/site supervisor, nor will Project RAISE provide any reference/background checks.

The prospective intern will be required to follow the school district's protocol to apply for/communicate interest in an internship opportunity. The prospective intern will submit materials (e.g., resume, transcript, letter of recommendation) directly to the school district, if/when requested. The prospective intern will also comply with other protocols/requirements (e.g., Human Resources, TDOE), as requested/deemed necessary by the school district.

There is no guarantee for employment with the district after the internship. The intern is encouraged to discuss the potential availability of an employment opportunity and their obligation to provide school-based mental health services in Tennessee Public Schools for two years after completion of the internship (at least one year must be in a Project RAISE/rural school district) with the school district contact/coordinator and/or the field-based/site supervisor during their site search/selection process.

³ The internship site must be the school district, not a contractor who provides services in the school district.

⁴ Qualified supervisor is defined by school district, licensing board, and/or university program requirements/procedures.

⁵ The field-based/site supervisor will also be affiliated with Project RAISE (see Handbook for Project RAISE Supervisor).

Contract/Agreement

Confirmed Project RAISE interns may be provided with a University of Tennessee Standard Payable (UT Pays Supplier) Agreement or Memorandum of Agreement to document the term of the agreement, scope of the project, compensation⁶, and reimbursement for travel-related costs. Applicable forms may vary based on the intern's home institution.

Stipends

Compensation

The school counseling intern will be paid a stipend of \$20,000 to complete their 600-clock hour internship experience⁷.

Payment Schedule

Payments will be made to the intern after the start of and through the internship experience. The first payment should be expected the first month after beginning the internship and continue each month⁸ through completion of the experience. The total number of payments will be based on the length of the internship (i.e., one or two semesters).

Payments may be paused/withheld, at the discretion of Project RAISE, if project-related obligations/requirements are not fulfilled. The intern will be notified of specific elements and/or concerns ahead of the next scheduled/final payment, if applicable.

If the intern is removed from their university program and/or internship site, they will forfeit receipt of any additional funding after the removal.

Relocation Funds

The intern is eligible to receive up to \$1,200 to cover relocation expenses for their internship experience. This is a one-time payment.

⁶ Total compensation amount, relocation funds not included, determined by Project RAISE in consideration of the expected/average total number of clock hours typically required in the field. The amount will not be adjusted based on differing requirements for individual interns.

⁷ All 600-hours must be completed in a Project RAISE district to receive the full amount.

⁸ Project RAISE is unable to provide a schedule of exact payment dates due to the nature of the payment systems/processes in place.

Payment—University of Tennessee System Students

An intern who is enrolled in a University of Tennessee System program⁹ will receive payments through the Financial Aid office of their respective campus. Receipt of a stipend may impact the ability to receive other financial aid monies that have been awarded, including from a loan, grant, scholarship, etc. *The intern is encouraged to contact their Financial Aid representative to understand the benefits/impact of receiving Project RAISE funds.*

The intern is encouraged to set up direct deposit with the Financial Aid office, as this payment method is typically the timeliest.

Payment—Non-University of Tennessee System Students

The intern will be paid as a contracted vendor¹⁰ with/by the University of Tennessee. Payments will be paid via PaymentWorks, a digital vendor management system. Once the Project RAISE spot has been confirmed, the intern will be sent an invitation via email (to the email address provided in the Project RAISE application) to register with Payment Works and is encouraged to set up direct deposit, as this payment method is typically the timeliest.

Project RAISE advises the intern to report this funding to the Financial Aid office at their home institution to determine any impact on their total financial aid eligibility.

Job-Embedded Placement

If the intern is offered/accepts a job-embedded internship placement directly with the Project RAISE district¹¹, the intern can continue as a participant of Project RAISE but will not be eligible to receive funds. See “Benefits” for details regarding other reasons to participate in Project RAISE without receiving funds.

Other Funding Sources

The intern is not eligible to receive Project RAISE funds if they have received other grant-funded money pertaining to the completion of the current degree program, especially if receipt of those funds was contingent on fulfilling a requirement to work in a school-based mental health position in a public school. Stipend recipients cannot concurrently fulfill obligations required by different funding sources. The intern can continue as a participant of Project RAISE but will not be eligible to receive funds. See “Benefits” for details regarding other reasons to participate in Project RASIE without receiving funds.

⁹ University of Tennessee Knoxville, University of Tennessee Chattanooga, University of Tennessee Southern, University of Tennessee Martin, University of Tennessee Health Science Center

¹⁰ Payments made to the intern will not include tax withholding. The intern is encouraged to consult a tax professional regarding their responsibilities.

¹¹ The experience must be with the Project RAISE district, not a third-party contractor who provides services in the school district.

Repayment

Receipt of Project RAISE funds is contingent on the agreement that the intern will provide school-based mental health services in Tennessee public schools¹² for **two years** after completion of the internship, of which **one year must be in a rural/Project RAISE school district**. Project RAISE will request the former intern to provide proof of employment at the end of each semester following the completion of the internship experience for a total of four semesters (anticipated end of the term will be outlined in the intern's contract).

The intern is not guaranteed employment in the district where the internship experience was completed and may seek employment in another district in Tennessee (relocation expenses will not be covered by Project RAISE) if/when a position is not available/offered.

The former intern does not have to remain employed by the same district throughout the duration of the two-year obligation but must fulfill at least one year in a Project RAISE/rural district.

Employment MUST be as a School Counselor.

If the intern/former intern elects or is unable to fulfill the total obligation, they will be responsible to repay funds to Project RAISE.

Leaving the Internship

If the intern chooses to leave their position prior to completing their internship requirements, the total amount of funds received to that point will be owed back to Project RAISE. The intern should contact Project RAISE if they intend to/have secured another internship site with another Project RAISE district (with an available Project RAISE internship position available) as continuation as a Project RAISE intern may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Leaving Employment with Tennessee Public Schools

If the former intern chooses to leave their position/employment with Tennessee public schools and/or does not complete at least one year of the two-year commitment in a rural/Project RAISE district, the total amount of funds previously received will be owed back to Project RAISE. The former intern should notify Project RAISE if this decision is due to extenuating circumstances (see Extended Term, Extenuating Circumstances).

¹² Tennessee public school requirement does not include charter schools in the state and employment must be directly with the public school district, not a third-party contractor who provides services in the school district.

Extended Term

If the former intern accepts a part-time position or elects to temporarily leave the workforce for a short period of time, the term of the agreement/timeline to complete the two-year employment requirement, may be extended¹³, pending approval from Project RAISE.

Extenuating Circumstances

If the former intern should experience extenuating circumstances that impact their ability to fulfill their two-year obligation (e.g., no job vacancies, personal obligations) they should contact Project RAISE to discuss next steps, which will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Liability

Project RAISE and the TDOE do not assume any liability in the practice or provision of school counseling services for any intern, former intern, or supervisor affiliated with Project RAISE.

Project RAISE does not offer professional liability insurance coverage to any participant.

Participation in Trainings, Meetings, and Events

Project RAISE will offer various opportunities for professional and personal development. These opportunities are intended to help the intern enhance their professional skill set and build a network of support for their practice in rural schools. Although not all activities will require mandatory attendance/participation (see specific requirements in activities detailed below), the intern is expected to engage in a variety of activities throughout the time that they are affiliated with Project RAISE.

Kick-Off Event

Project RAISE will host a Kick-Off Event in the summertime to welcome each new cohort of interns and supervisors. During this event, the intern and supervisor will be introduced to their peers in the cohort and will experience a variety of informational and team building activities.

Attendance to/participation in this event will be mandatory (lodging and travel-related expenses will be paid/reimbursed).

¹³ Extended term of the agreement/timeline to complete the two-year obligation may require an amendment to the signed/executed contract/agreement.

Community of Practice

A project partner with experience in the field of School Counseling will lead a series of virtual community of practice meetings throughout the school year. Such meetings are intended to not only provide the intern with access to an expert in their field (in addition to their university professors and site supervisors), but to also engage with their peers who are working in rural school districts across the state. This is a unique and meaningful opportunity for the Project RAISE intern to learn, share ideas, and ask questions.

The intern is required to attend at least five community of practice meetings during the course of the internship year (at least three meetings if the intern will complete their internship in one-semester).

The intern will have continued access to these meetings throughout the duration of their participation with Project RAISE (during internship and while fulfilling the two-year requirement).

Professional Development Series

A series of professional development sessions will be offered throughout the year. Sessions will be presented virtually by leading experts on a variety of topics that pertain to the provision of school-based mental health services; some sessions may be specific to rural schools and communities.

The intern is expected to attend at least four of the training sessions offered throughout the internship year (at least two sessions if the intern will complete their internship in one-semester).

The intern will have continued access to training sessions throughout the duration of their participation with Project RAISE (during internship and while fulfilling the two-year requirement).

Participation in Project Evaluation Processes

Project RAISE will request that the intern participate in activities that support data collection for required annual reporting purposes. These activities, which are intended to demonstrate the impact of the project in Project RAISE districts and improve the experiences of those involved, will include surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc. and **may require** participation/response from interns.¹⁴ Information requested/collected has been determined to be a necessary component for project development and continued grant-

¹⁴ The intern will be notified of specific requirements for participation in or response to each activity with each request.

funding; Project RAISE will make every effort to obtain needed information in the most effective and efficient manner.

Benefits

In addition to receiving funding during the internship experience, the intern will be provided with other benefits in support of their practice as a school counselor intern in a rural Tennessee public school district. The intent of such benefits is to create an internship and early-career experience that is unmatched in the level of support of and connectedness to the practice of school-based mental health services in rural schools and communities.

Membership in the Tennessee School Counselor Association

The intern will have membership fees paid for as a student member of the Tennessee School Counselor Association. This is a one-time offer that will be available at the start of the internship experience.

Registration to attend the School Counselor and Administrator Leadership Institute

Project RAISE will pay the registration fees for the intern to attend the School Counselor and Administrator Leadership Institute (SCALI), which is typically held in September of every year. This is a one-time offer to attend the conference during the internship experience.¹⁵ This has typically been an in-person event (lodging and travel-related expenses will not be paid/reimbursed).

Building a Network of Support

The cumulative experiences offered to the intern by Project RAISE are intended to help build, maintain, and grow a network of support for the school counselor/intern. The Intern will have the opportunity to connect with other interns in rural school districts across the state in the fields of school counseling, school psychology, and school social work and is strongly encouraged to similarly engage with other school-based mental health providers in their school district and throughout the community. Building a network of support is beneficial to all school-based mental health providers, but connecting with Project RAISE offers a unique opportunity for the intern and professionals where access to such supports may be otherwise limited in rural schools and communities.

¹⁵ The intern may request to have registration fees paid for the next available conference if the conference is not offered during their internship semester.

Access to Experts

Project RAISE has been developed by and works together with a team of experts from school-based mental health professions. The intern will have access to state-level leadership and a counselor-educator/content expert to support their professional development. Access to such support is in addition to university program faculty members and field-based supervisors, which provides an exceptional level of experience and knowledge to the intern.

Confidentiality

Project RAISE will act in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act with regard to disclosure of the intern's information.