
Volunteering & Legal Employment

According to the Code of Federal Regulations 8 CFR 274 (a) (f) the term employee means an individual who provides services or labor for wages or other types of remuneration. Therefore, employment is work performed or services provided with the expectation that there will be compensation, either financial or other. When academic work requires a partnership with an outside company it is important to remember that the company cannot receive any services or benefit for the academic project.

“Volunteer work” on the other hand refers to philanthropic activity without financial gain. **Students should not accept a volunteer opportunity without first checking with OISS. In many cases volunteering will violate U.S. labor laws and potentially be seen as a violation of F or J immigration status.**

The most important employment issue that you always need to keep in mind is the issue of legal (or “authorized”) versus illegal (or “unauthorized”) employment. You must always make sure that any employment you plan to engage in is legal employment. Any unauthorized (i.e. illegal) employment - even for one day - even if you did not know it was illegal - poses a grave threat to your ability to remain in or return to the United States. You must always make sure that you have the necessary employment authorization before you begin work. Starting work without prior authorization-even if you receive authorization later-constitutes illegal employment. If you have questions, always [consult with an OISS adviser](#) [1] before beginning any employment. This is the only way to be sure that you won't engage in illegal employment, with all of its adverse consequences for your future in the United States.

Source

URL:<https://oiss.yale.edu/employment-taxes/employment-for-international-students/f-1-students/volunteering-legal-employment>

Links

[1] <https://oiss.yale.edu/about/connect-with-oiss>