



Project | SEARCH®

### **Project SEARCH model**

Since its inception, Project SEARCH has grown from a single program site at Cincinnati Children's Hospital to over 550 sites internationally. The **primary objective** is to secure competitive employment for people with disabilities.

Project SEARCH is a **business-led program**. This means that students learn relevant, marketable skills while immersed in the host business, and that the host businesses are active partners, participating without subsidies.

The **host business is often a large company** able to accommodate internship training in various fields and skill areas. Hospitals make up over 50% of Project SEARCH host sites due to their wide ranging variety of internal departments.

Program participants (interns) **attend the program for a full school year** in the host business. The host business provides access to an on-site training room that can accommodate up to 12 interns. The site is staffed by a special education teacher and one to three skills trainers to meet the educational and training needs of the interns.

**Once the program year begins**, the first few weeks are focused on intern orientation, hands-on skill assessment, and familiarization with the business environment. Interns develop a career plan, which guides the internship selection process and individualized job search.

**Employment Skills Curriculum:** Throughout the program year, the interns work on employability and functional skills for approximately one hour of their day. Training room activities are designed around these focus areas: Team Building, Workplace Safety, Technology, Preparing for Employment, Self-Advocacy, Financial Literacy, Health/Wellness, and Maintaining Employment.

**Internship rotations:** Through a series of three targeted internships within the host site, interns acquire competitive, marketable and transferable skills to enable them to apply for a related position in the community (or host site). Interns also build communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills important to their overall development. *Internships are unpaid work experiences.* Internship rotations begin a few weeks after the program start.

**During the last few months** of the program the emphasis is on refining skills, achieving the career goal, and carrying out individualized job development. The program is based on true collaboration among partner agencies. True collaboration requires willingness among partner organizations to share resources and adapt policies & procedures. **The following are active partners:**

- Businesses
- Education / Schools
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Community Rehabilitation Providers
- Intellectual and Developmental Disability Services
- Workforce Investment Board (where available)
- Family members

Project SEARCH **serves young people with significant** intellectual and developmental disabilities. Typically, these are high school students who are on an Individual Education Program (IEP) and in their last year of high school eligibility. **The program can also be adapted to serve out-of-school youth and young adults who are beyond school age.**

**Interns are typically referred** to the program through their schools, a family member, or Voc Rehab Counselor and apply in the winter or spring in the year prior to entering the program. A team representative of all the partners carry out the selection process. The process includes tours, student interviews, hands-on assessments at the host business, and scoring on a rubric related to entrance considerations.

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### Project SEARCH **expansion in CT**

There is currently one Project SEARCH in place in CT (FAVARH/**UConn Health**) and we are actively expanding to as many as 6 programs statewide. The expanded programs are anticipated to be:

- North region – **Goodwin College**/MARC of Manchester
- South region – **Mohegan Sun**/UCP Eastern CT
- West region – **Charlotte Hungerford Hospital**/LARC
- West region – **Greenwich Hospital**/Abilis
- West region – **Norwalk Community College**/Norwalk schools/Ability Beyond

Be advised, all of the above are *new programs* anticipating a start in 9/2019 **EXCEPT Norwalk Community College** which will start in 9/20**18**.