Operations Memo 2026-26

To: DDS Qualified Providers and Inepended Practitioners

From: Sean Bannon, Director, Operations Center

CC: Jordan Scheff, Commissioner, Elisa Velardo, Deputy Commissioner, Katie Rock-Burns, Chief of Staff, Nicholas Jerard, CFO, Regional Directors, Private ARDs, Resource Administrators, The Alliance, The ARC CT

Date: April 1, 2026

Subject: **2026 Project SEARCH Pilot Notice of Opportunity**

Under the leadership of Commissioner Jordan Scheff, the Connecticut Department of Developmental Services (DDS) continues to vigorously promote Employment First. DDS has committed to be creative and persistent in establishing programs that provide support to help people with intellectual disability find, get, and keep competitive integrated employment. This cannot be accomplished without increasing the capacity of private providers to produce meaningful competitive employment outcomes for the individuals we support.

DDS is pleased to announce that it will continue its collaboration with Project SEARCH to expand its presence in CT. DDS will cover the cost of the Project SEARCH Host Business License Fee for up to 2 selected providers. The provider will be responsible for subsequent annual license renewal costs. It is expected that selected programs be operational for the 2027-2028 Project SEARCH year (beginning September 2027).

Preference will be given to proposals for programs in those areas of the state that do not currently have a Project Search option as well as programs that have exhibited oversight of viable Project SEARCH programs in CT.

Successful applicants will demonstrate:

- Commitment to Competitive Integrated Employment for all individuals
- Considerable knowledge of, and commitment to, the Project SEARCH model

• Agreement to work with other pilot participants to share learning experience and provide mutual support

• An identified Host Business. *If a Host Business has not been identified, sufficient community & business relationships to ensure reasonable match with a host business for the 2027-2028 program year must be outlined*

• Commitment to individuals earning real pay for real work

• A viable plan dedicating lead staff to participate in all project activities

• Collaboration with school systems and other appropriate agencies

• Endorsement of a customized approach to a myriad array of jobs/job duties

• Access to, and recommendation of, assistive technology when appropriate

• Ongoing training and teaching to host site business employees

• A Letter of Commitment from Agency CEO and Host Business (if identified)

Questions about the Project SEARCH Pilot Opportunity may be submitted electronically to the CT DDS Employment & Day Services Unit c/o Brian Gresko at dds.employment-dayservices@ct.gov until 5pm EST on April 8, 2026. A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document will be posted to the DDS website by April 14, 2026.

Project SEARCH Pilot Opportunity. Applications and Commitment Letters must be sent electronically to The CT DDS Employment & Day Services Unit c/o Brian Gresko at dds.employment-dayservices@ct.gov by 5pm EST April 24, 2026. Applicants will be notified electronically of their award status by May 1, 2026.

Application – Key Dates and Information

Notice of Opportunity Release: April 1, 2026

Questions regarding the application due by: April 8, 2026 5pm EST

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Document posting: April 14, 2026

Application Submission Deadline: April 24, 2026 5pm EST

Anticipated Funding Selection Date: May 1, 2026