



Program

The Project SEARCH Transition-to-Work Program is a unique, business-led, one-year employment preparation program that takes place entirely at the workplace. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations. The program culminates in individualized job development.

Transition to Work

Transition-to-Work Program

The goal for each program participant is competitive employment. To reach that goal, the program provides real-life work experience combined with training in employability and independent-living skills to help young people with disabilities make successful transitions to productive adult life. The Project SEARCH model involves an extensive period of skills training and career exploration, innovative adaptations, support of a skills trainer, and continuous feedback from teachers, skills trainers, and business site staff supervisors. As a result, at the completion of the training program, students with disabilities are employed in nontraditional, complex and rewarding jobs. In addition, the presence of a Project SEARCH program can bring about long-term changes in business culture that have far-reaching positive effects on attitudes about hiring people with disabilities and the range of jobs in which they can be successful.



Eligibility

Project SEARCH serves young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Locally, these are high school students who are on an Individual Education Program (IEP), completed high school

graduation requirements but want to extend learning services to increase employment skills. Success is developed by students who want to learn how to get and maintain employment before leaving high school. The most important criterion for acceptance into Project SEARCH is a desire to achieve competitive employment. As partners in this program, all applicants need to apply for services from the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD). The vocational rehabilitation counselor will work with the student to prepare a plan for employment and assist in determining future steps toward this goal.

Program Overview

Program participants (interns) attend the program for a full school year in the host business/hospital. 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 skills trainers (ratio of 4 students:1 skills trainer) 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.
- **Employment Skills Curriculum:** Throughout the program year, the interns are trained 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, Maintaining Employment, Self-Advocacy, Financial Literacy, Health and Wellness, and Preparing for Employment.
- **Internships:** Through a series of three targeted internships the interns acquire competitive, marketable and transferable skills to enable them to apply for a related position. Interns also build communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills which is important to their overall development as a young worker. These internships are unpaid work experiences since the program is school based. Potential internship sites are identified through a continuous collaborative process involving the instructor, skills trainers and business liaison. These internship rotations begin a few weeks after the start of the program. Interns are required to interact with their supervisors via telephone and written communications to arrange a job interview to secure each rotation. Each intern has a go-to person in the department for support on task training and evaluation. The go-to person interacts with the instructor, skills trainers, and the intern as a consistent source of guidance and feedback. Interns spend approximately five hours each day at the internships, which includes a thirty-minute lunch. Working from a task list, the interns acquire the core skills necessary to be hired in an entry-level position at the host business site or in the community. Skills trainers and department staff collaborate to provide support for interns. The Project SEARCH staff delivers the training and develops job accommodations and standard work procedures. Once the interns master the core skills, additional skills are layered on to improve their marketability.



Job Development and Community Connections

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 vocational rehabilitation counselor becomes an even more important part of the team as the job search process begins. Job development is based on the intern’s experiences, strengths, interests, and skills. Linkages to appropriate services in the community are critical at this stage, as interns prepare to graduate from the program, to ensure a successful transition to employment and adult life. Services are identified in the community that help with necessary adaptations required to perform a specific job. Job coaching and long-term follow along are usually arranged through the local Developmental Disability organization. Upon satisfactory completion of the program (95% or better attendance, good attitude, successful skill acquisition at each job site) interns receive a Career Portfolio. The portfolio contains a resume, letters of recommendation, a competency profile, and any awards or special recognition received while in the program.

Intern Selection

Interns are typically referred to the program through their schools, a family member, or Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and apply in the winter and spring in the year prior to entering the program. An application is completed that determines acceptance into the Project SEARCH program. The process concludes with a team decision on the change of placement at the student’s IEP meeting.

		
<p>Contact Info: Tina Martin Office: 513.636.5381 Mobile: 513.612.6231 Tina.Martin@cchmc.org</p>	<p>Contact Info: Tim Richmond Office: 513.358.0481 Mobile: 513.612.4959 RichmonT@greatoaks.com</p>	<p>Contact Info: Kevin Huss Office: 513.745.1057 Voicemail: 513.612.6279 Hussk@greatoaks.com</p>