



Project | SEARCH[®]

Transition to Work

A Program for Berrien County
Students with Disabilities

2026/2027 Program



Hosted by:



**Corewell
Health**TM

Sponsored by:





WHAT IS PROJECT SEARCH?

Project SEARCH is a unique **transition-to-work program** that challenges traditional expectations and empowers young adults with disabilities to achieve competitive employment.

This **1-year journey is designed to help students transition smoothly from school to the workplace.**

It takes place entirely in a real work environment, immersing participants in a blend of classroom instruction, career exploration, and practical hands-on training.

Project SEARCH is **a non-paid internship** experience that takes place **at Corewell Health Medical Center** in St. Joseph.





IMPORTANT DATES

Project SEARCH Program Contacts

Student/Parent Contacts:

Robin Snyder

Supervisor, Ancillary Health Services, Berrien RESA
robin.snyder@berrienresa.org
269-471-7725 ext. 3604

Julie Hess

Accountability & Transition Coordinator, Berrien RESA
julie.hess@berrienresa.org
269-471-7725 ext. 3247

Ken Fetke

Instructor, Berrien RESA
ken.fetke@berrienresa.org

Agency/Business Contacts:

**Bradley K. Heiple,
MA, LLCL**

Site Manager
Michigan Rehabilitation Services
heipleb2@michigan.gov
269-934-1406

Dahn Imasiku

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
LEO-Michigan Rehabilitation Services
imasikud@michigan.gov
269-934-1408

January 15

Applications available

March 20

Applications due

April 10

Skills Assessment & Interview Day

April 17

Letters of Acceptance mailed to applicants

May 4

Project SEARCH Intern Orientation Night

July

Project SEARCH "Career Camp" – TBD

August

IEP Meeting for Interns – TBD

August

First day of Internship

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS IF ACCEPTED

Flu Shot or Medical Waiver

TB (Tuberculosis) Test or Medical Waiver

Drug Test

Background Check

APPLICATION PROCESS

Step 1: Fill out an Application

Applications can be found at:
BerrienRESA.org/project-search

You and your parent/guardian can fill it out online or print it. You may also get help from your teacher.

Printed applications should be returned to your special education teacher or mailed to:

Project SEARCH
Attn: Robin Snyder
711 St. Joseph Ave.
P.O. Box 364
Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Completed applications are due on Friday, March 20, 2026.

Step 2: Gather Additional Info

The Project SEARCH selection team will:

- Review shot/immunization records, attendance records, transcripts, and other information from the school and agencies
- Review your application and documents and consider your strengths, needs, and eligibility
- Decide if you can move forward in the process
- Inform you and your parent/guardian of next steps

Step 3: Skills Assessment

If you are selected to move forward, you must participate in the Skills Assessment Day. See the next page for what to expect.

Step 4: Intern Selection

The Project SEARCH selection team will:

- Review your assessment and prior information again
- Contact you and your parent/guardian via letter to let you know if you have been accepted or not. Letters are mailed to your home in mid-April.

To Apply You Must:

- Be at least 18 years old
- Enrolled in school
- Have an IEP
- Want to work

Scan or go to
[BerrienRESA.org/
project-search](https://BerrienRESA.org/project-search)
to apply!





SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Skills Assessment Day

The Skills Assessment takes place at **Corewell Health Medical Center in St. Joseph**. The specific room location will be provided in a letter that is mailed to the applicant.

What to Expect

PART 1: Applicants rotate through various stations to complete a variety of tasks which may include stocking, filing, cleaning, and identifying and sorting medical equipment/tools.

THERE IS NOTHING TO PRACTICE OR PREPARE FOR THIS PART OF THE ASSESSMENT.

The goal for this portion of the assessment is to learn how applicants would react in certain situations, if they would feel comfortable asking for help and be able to identify who to ask for assistance.

PART 2: Applicants will participate in an interview where they will be asked questions by Project SEARCH and Corewell Health representatives. Questions will relate to the applicant's work experience, work ethic, attendance, future goals, and their social skills.

Applicants should prepare for this interview as they would a traditional job interview. They should wear business professional attire and

come prepared to answer and ask questions. Portfolios are welcome.

Are parents part of this day?

Parents are welcome to wait in the lobby area. You can expect the assessment to last about 2 hours.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does it mean to be a Project SEARCH Intern?

An intern is a student who has been accepted into the Project SEARCH Program, has a strong desire to work, has no behavioral/attendance concerns and is eager to gain employment through a work experience.

Students in the program will be referred to as interns. They will be expected to participate in Corewell Health's work culture and do their best to uphold Corewell Health's vision, mission and will abide by all policies/procedures.

Why is this considered a student's last year of school?

The goal of Project SEARCH is to provide interns with marketable and transferable skills that lead to employment opportunities. It functions as an employment preparation program and serves as a student's final year of educational programming.

Students who are working toward a diploma generally earn their final credit during their internship.

Students should anticipate earning employment opportunities and entering the workforce once they have completed their internship experience.

Will participants still be considered a student at their current school/district?

Yes & no. Interns are still associated with their **resident district**, but Berrien RESA will become responsible for implementing the student's IEP as the **operating district**.

What should a student do if they are interested in Project SEARCH?

Students should contact their high school special education teacher or district's special education director. They will provide you with an application, or you can find the application online at BerrienRESA.org/project-search

If accepted, what calendar schedule will interns follow?

Interns participating in the program will follow the Berrien RESA school year calendar.

What are the hours?

Interns are expected to work at their job placement site from 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM each workday.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONTINUED...

How do interns get to work?

If you/your student needs transportation, Berrien RESA will work with your **resident district** to arrange transportation to and from Corewell Health.

Are participants required to work with specific agencies?

Yes, interns are required to have an open case with **Michigan Rehabilitative Services** and understand that **Berrien RESA** will serve as their **operating district**. Based on the intern's needs, other agencies may provide additional support.

What do applicants do once they are accepted into the Program?

After receiving an acceptance letter, applicants will be invited to a New Intern Orientation meeting at Corewell Health Medical Center in St. Joseph, which will outline all the requirements (such as drug screening, tuberculosis testing, and background checks) and Career Camp.

What happens at the New Intern Orientation meeting?

Interns will be introduced to all the Project SEARCH partners, take a tour of Corewell Health Medical Center and walk through the requirements leading up to the first day of work at the hospital.

They will receive a student handbook that outlines expectations and procedures related to their conduct as a Project SEARCH participant. The handbook will cover topics such as dress code, attendance expectations, lunch options, and more.

Why do students need an “open case” with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) or the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP)?

MRS and BSBP are Project SEARCH partners and to receive their services, a case will need to be opened if one is not already. MRS or BSBP will be proactively supporting the student interns throughout their entire Project SEARCH experience.

Are interns required to complete an intake process with Riverwood?

Should an intern need to open a case with Riverwood, they would do so after they have started their intern year. An appointment will be made at a time that is convenient for the intern.

Why do interns need a flu shot?

As a Project SEARCH participant, student interns must follow Corewell Health's rules and expectations for their employees. According to their policies a flu shot and TB test or medical waiver are required.

Why do interns need to take and pass a drug test and background check?

As a Project SEARCH participant, student interns must follow Corewell Health's rules and expectations for their employees.

Why do interns need to have a new IEP meeting prior to starting Project SEARCH?

Project SEARCH is a school-to-work transition program. To comply with the program guidelines, all student interns must complete a new IEP before their first day. This ensures the internship experience and transition services are tied to educational outcomes.

What is the dress code?

Interns are required to wear a navy blue shirt with the Project SEARCH logo, khaki pants, and non-skid shoes. Each Intern is provided with 5 shirts. If needed, vouchers are available through Michigan Rehabilitation Services to help with the cost of pants and shoes.

If I have more questions regarding Project SEARCH, whom should I contact?

The county coordinator of the program is **Robin Snyder, Berrien RESA's Supervisor of Ancillary Health Services**. She can be reached at 269-471-7725 or email robin.snyder@berrienresa.org.



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"Project SEARCH has not just exposed the interns to valuable work life skills, but has also enhanced the lives and job performance of those who have had the pleasure to work with them!"

– Kathy Effa, Emergency Room Supervisor



This toolkit is presented by Berrien RESA's Special Education Transition Team in partnership with community agencies who promote and support student success.

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