

WHAT IS PROJECT SEARCH?

Project SEARCH is an internship program for students with disabilities, ages 18 - 22, that prepares them for integrated, competitively-paid work. Project SEARCH interns spend their final year of high school transition services fully immersed inside a business such as a hospital or large hotel. Here, they complete three 10-week internships where they gain practical employability skills.

At a hospital, for example, students might rotate through internships in departments like: Outpatient Rehab, Patient Transport and Linens. At a hotel, students might rotate through internships in Housekeeping, Banquet Serving, Maintenance and Customer Service. Through these internships, students achieve the task-related skills and people skills that prepare them for competitive jobs in their community when the Project SEARCH internship is done.

Throughout New Mexico, roughly 70% of Project SEARCH interns obtain competitive, integrated, employment at the end of the internship year.

GOALS OF PROJECT SEARCH:

- **Competitive, Integrated, Employment at End of Internship**
- **Total Workplace Immersion**
- **Internship Rotations for Career Exploration and Job Skills Acquisition**
- **Life Skills Development**
- **Customized Job Search Assistance**



HOW DOES PROJECT SEARCH WORK?

Cohorts of 8-12 interns are supported on-site at a host business by a teacher from their school district and a skills trainer from a local supported employment agency. The Project SEARCH year follows the school district calendar in terms of start dates, graduation dates, and holidays.

Students spend the first hour of the day in a classroom at the business learning employability skills. Then, each intern reports to their job rotation for four hours of hands-on job training. At the end of the day, students report back to the classroom to review what they've learned.

All interns are enrolled in New Mexico Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) services. DVR supports each intern's success with transportation training, uniforms, shoes, and a monetary stipend to cover internship-related expenses and to develop saving/ budgeting skills. DVR works closely with the supported employment agency on job leads and job development for interns once they graduate from Project SEARCH and assists with Social Security Benefits training so that intern's benefits aren't negatively affected by employment.

WHAT MIGHT A TYPICAL INTERN DAY LOOK LIKE?

- **7:00-8:00am** Travel to Internship Site
- **8:00-9:00am** Classroom Training: employability skills, team building, workplace safety, & problem solving
- **9:00am-2:00pm** Internship Rotations (Interns follow department's designated break & lunch times)
- **2:00-2:30pm** Classroom Debrief & Departure

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT PROJECT SEARCH

"UNM Hospital employees and patients have both benefited from this program. These interns have become great assets to our hospital and other businesses and organizations throughout Albuquerque."

-Steve McKernan

past CEO, UNM Hospital

"Project SEARCH has helped me learn new skills to obtain work. I have learned how to communicate, help others, and how to set life goals. [They] will also show you how managing finances affects lifestyle."

-Alyssa

Holloman AFB PS Intern, 2021-2022

"Project SEARCH has helped me learn what type of work I like & do not like. It has given me experiences to know what to expect mentally & physically to prepare yourself for transitioning into a job."

-Adrian

Holloman AFB PS Intern, 2021-2022

"Project SEARCH has helped me a lot. They showed me that I can do things even with a disability. My disability does not define who I am!"

-Destiny

Holloman AFB PS Intern, 2021-2022

Where are the Project SEARCH Programs in

New Mexico?

ALAMOGORDO

Holloman Air Force Base

Lisa Jones

lisa.jones@dvr.nm.gov

ALBUQUERQUE

The Nene & Jamie Koch Project SEARCH Training Program at UNM

Hospital

Brian Love

brian.Love@aps.edu

Embassy Suites Hotel

Terry Casey

teresa.casey@aps.edu

www.transitionservices.aps.edu

FARMINGTON

Farmington Municipal Services

Chelsea Chairion

cchairion@fms.k12.nm.us

GALLUP

Hilton Garden Inn

David Palenschat

dpalensc@gmcs.k12.nm.us

RIO RANCHO

Presbyterian Rust Medical Center

Theresa Griffin-Golden

theresa.Golden@rrps.net

Gadsden

La Clinica de Familia

Alex Rios

aerios@salud.unm.edu

Project SEARCH New Mexico is a joint collaboration of the University of New Mexico Center for Development & Disability Partners for Employment, the New Mexico Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the New Mexico Department of Health/ Disability Services, local school districts, and local supported employment agencies.