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Secretary Newson Congratulates Graduates of Project SEARCH, On-the-Job Training Initiative for Young Adults with Disabilities at Children's Hospital

Partnership involving Children's Hospital, Easter Seals, DVR, Milwaukee metro area schools helps achieve 83% employment placement rate

MILWAUKEE – During an awards ceremony at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Reggie Newson today congratulated the latest graduates of Project SEARCH, an on-the-job training initiative for young adults with disabilities, helping them overcome barriers to employment.

"With the skills, work experience and confidence they've gained in one year of on-the-job training, these 12 individuals, the latest Project SEARCH graduates, are to be congratulated for their remarkable achievements," Secretary Newson said. "Everybody wins with this initiative. Young adults with disabilities are empowered and job ready. Employers have young, capable, and well-trained individuals ready to work. And we as a community benefit when they connect, succeed and help sustain economic growth. This is a day with much to celebrate."

In 2011, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin launched Project SEARCH, based on a one-year transition program first established at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center in 1996. At Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, six interns ages 18 to 25 began training in a variety of jobs at the hospital. All graduated last June. Five are employed. The remaining intern began additional technical college instruction and recently entered the job market.

"Project SEARCH at Children's Hospital has an 83 percent employment success rate," Secretary Newson said. "That's a credit to the participants who worked hard, applied themselves and demonstrated their abilities. Children's Hospital and other partners with us in this project, Easter Seals Southeast Wisconsin and the participating schools, also deserve applause."

Of the 12 interns completing their training today, nine have had job interviews, and three already have jobs. The remaining three plan to seek additional training, either at Waukesha County Technical College or Milwaukee Area Technical College.

In addition to DVR, other partners in Project SEARCH include Easter Seals Southeast Wisconsin, IRIS, Community Care, and the following Milwaukee metro area school districts: Bay View and Whitefish Bay in Milwaukee County and Arrowhead and Menomonee Falls in Waukesha County.

The Project SEARCH program based at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin in Wauwatosa is one of four in Wisconsin. The others are at the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics in Madison, Ministry St. Joseph's Hospital in Marshfield, and the Wal-Mart Distribution Center in Eau Claire.

Secretary Newson noted that initiative is one example of on-the-job training, programs and services that the DWD Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provides. Last year, DVR helped 3,250 individuals achieve their employment goals, and their estimated annual earnings represent a 210 percent return on public funds invested in their services. For more information: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/>.