
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, December 13, 2013

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Secretary Newson Visits William S. Middleton VA Hospital, Celebrates Training Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities

Partnership between DWD and Veterans Affairs Hospital focuses on students with disabilities

MADISON – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Reggie Newson today visited William S. Middleton VA Hospital to recognize the role that Project SEARCH plays in helping high school students with disabilities to train for employment. A total of 57 students have participated since the program began at the VA Hospital in 2008. The Project SEARCH program has a total of 138 participants at sites statewide.

“Project SEARCH interns will gain valuable skills and work experience,” Secretary Newson said. “This is truly a win-win for all participants, and we thank William S. Middleton VA Hospital and all of the other partners who came together to help this program succeed.”

Each Project SEARCH intern completes nine to 12 months of training, which includes a blend of classroom instruction and on-the-job training. Students who successfully complete the program will also receive job placement services. The internships rotate throughout the training, so participants gain skills in almost every aspect of employment within a hospital. Career coaches work together with interns and hospital staff to problem-solve and plan for program success.

The interns at William S. Middleton VA Hospital join interns at six other Project SEARCH sites throughout Wisconsin in the program. Other sites include Waukesha Memorial Hospital, the University of Wisconsin Hospital in Madison, Ministry St. Joseph's Hospital in Marshfield, St. Elizabeth Hospital in Appleton, and the Wal-Mart Distribution Center in Eau Claire.

DWD's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is a key partner in the Project SEARCH program in Wisconsin. Other partners include the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, local job coaches and numerous public school districts.

Secretary Newson noted that Project SEARCH is one of many 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/>.