

What is Project SEARCH?

Project SEARCH is a nine to 12-month program that provides training and education leading to competitive employment for youth with disabilities. Project SEARCH is a collaboration that includes a local business, school district(s), and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). All partners are vital to the success of the program.

- The business provides a training classroom, a business liaison, and rotational internships for on-the-job training.
- The school provides an instructor.
- DVR works with a local vocational services agency to supply job coaches who support the students on their internships as needed and assist with final job placement. The disability services agency provides follow along services for any eligible student who is hired at the business site or in the community.

Project SEARCH was developed in 1996 by Nurse J. Erin Riehle, then the Director of the Emergency Department at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. As the flagship program, Cincinnati Children's Hospital provides technical assistance for replication and leadership worldwide.

The cornerstone of Project SEARCH is total immersion in a large business. Each day, the intern will report to the host business, learn employability skills in the classroom and job skills while participating in three non-paid work rotations during the year. Students participate in progress meetings to define their career goal and plan necessary steps to achieve that goal. Managers at the internship sites work with the Project SEARCH instructor and job coaches to support the students.

Benefits to the Students:

- ❖ Participate in a variety of internships within the host business
- ❖ Acquire competitive, transferable, and marketable job skills
- ❖ Gain increased independence, confidence, and self-esteem
- ❖ Obtain work based individualized coaching, instruction, and feedback
- ❖ Develop linages to vocational rehabilitation and other adult agencies
- ❖ Gaining complete community employment

Project SEARCH Sites in Wisconsin:

1. William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital/UW Hospital and Clinics
2. Marshfield Medical Center
3. University of Wisconsin-Stout
4. Children's Hospital of Wisconsin
5. Ascension St. Elizabeth Hospital
6. ProHealth Waukesha Memorial Hospital
7. HSHS St. Vincent/Bellin Hospital
8. Milwaukee County Zoo
9. River Falls Area Hospital
10. Sauk Prairie Healthcare and Hospital
11. Sentry Insurance
12. Froedtert Hospital
13. Kalahari Resort & Conventions
14. Aspirus Riverview Hospital and Clinics
15. Mayo Clinic Health Systems
16. Mercy Medical Hospital
17. Rice Lake Weighing Systems
18. Gundersen Health System
19. Howard Young Medical Center
20. Andis Company
21. Watertown Regional Medical Center
22. St. Joseph's Hospital
23. West Bend Mutual Insurance
24. Mitchell International Airport
25. Aspirus Wausau Hospital
26. University of Wisconsin-Platteville
27. Mercy Health Hospital and Trauma Center
28. Superior Business Center
29. ThedaCare Regional Medical Center
30. Aurora BayCare Medical Center

What are the outcomes?

As of 2021, Project SEARCH has over 640 programs internationally, with Project SEARCH Sites in 48 states, and 10 countries. Traditionally, healthcare facilities have been the most common sites, though in recent years new types of host sites have emerged including airports, manufacturing facilities, casinos, and even national parks!

In Wisconsin, a total of 1,313 interns completed Project SEARCH since the 2009-2010 school year, participating in programs held at 30 unique host sites throughout the state.

For more information about Project SEARCH in Wisconsin, email us or visit us at:

DVRProjectSearch@dwd.wisconsin.gov

[Project SEARCH \(wisconsin.gov\)](http://ProjectSEARCH.wisconsin.gov)