



Program Overview

Hudson County's

Project | SEARCH®

For more information contact:

Erin Ross Burgess
Office of Inclusion & Accessibility (OIA)
Administrator
201.369.5280 ext. 4142
eross@hcnj.us

Transitioning Students with Disabilities to Work

Project SEARCH is a one-year, business-led, unpaid internship program for students with disabilities in their last year of high school or between the ages of 23-30 that takes place entirely at a host business site. It provides students who want to work a chance to explore careers and develop transferable job skills. The combination of instruction and immersion in the workplace prepares young adults with disabilities to make successful transitions from school to productive adult life.

The Goal:

Independent adults working in a competitive environment

Internship Overview

Through the course of an academic year, Project SEARCH interns participate in employment related instruction and rotate through two to three internships that are individually crafted to capitalize on each student's individual interests, and vocational goals and potential. Each rotation lasts about 10-12 weeks.

Interns work closely with an on-site team, including an instructor, job coach and job developer. The team assists the intern until the task assigned can be performed independently. Agencies are available throughout the program year to provide vocational counseling and guidance. The on-site team, student, family, vocational rehabilitation counselor, and school representatives meet regularly to discuss issues, progress, and career goals.

Graduates are prepared to meet employer expectations and to move into a job development phase. They leave the program with a professional portfolio which includes a resume, solid professional references, recommendations, and real-world work experience.

Job placement is the final goal of the program. Students can accept a job offer at any time during the school year if a match is found (at the host site or elsewhere in the community) and the team is in agreement.

Once successfully employed, graduates receive follow-along services to retain employment. Project SEARCH has been instrumental in dramatically raising the bar for employment of individuals with disabilities. The Hudson County Project SEARCH program has placed over 60% of their graduates into employment.

Basic Eligibility Criteria

- 18-21 years old and in last year of high school (HS Program)
- 18-21 year old high school graduate that has been out of school for over one year (Post HS Program)
- 23-30 years old and approval from the NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities (Adult Program)
- All academic requirements for graduation met
- Agree to accept diploma at successful completion of program
- Basic communication skills (verbal or supported by technology)
- Appropriate social, grooming, and hygiene skills
- Able to pass drug screening and background check
- Updated immunizations and vaccinations
- Ability to access and willingness to use independent transportation options
- Have independent living skills and lunch routine
- Meet eligibility requirements for Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)
- Maintain appropriate behavior in the workplace
- Ability to take direction and change behavior if necessary
- Desire to be competitively employed