

Frequently Asked Questions about Project SEARCH in Wisconsin

What is Project SEARCH?

Project SEARCH is a program designed for students with an intellectual or developmental disabilities to provide real-life work experience to help youth with disabilities make successful transitions from school to work and adult life. The project supports students in learning employability skills by completing rotations in workplace internships during the final year of school transition services. Individuals 18-24 years of age no longer in school who qualify for services from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and have long-term supports in place are also eligible. Project SEARCH originated at Cincinnati Children's Hospital and now has sites at a variety of businesses across the United States and in the United Kingdom, Holland, Bahrain, and Ireland. The primary objective is to help youth with significant disabilities secure **competitive integrated employment**, and the majority of interns achieve that goal.

The internship and rotations are led by the employer, which means students learn relevant, marketable skills while immersed in the business. Internships run each school day for about 4-5 hours with a classroom component of 1-2 hours per day for the entire school year. Project SEARCH partners provide consistent on-site staffing, including a licensed special education teacher and skills trainers (formerly called job coaches) funded by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). When it is the right fit for a student, Project SEARCH can be an invaluable part of transition services, providing high quality services, collaborating with the DVR, meeting requirements under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and supporting positive employment outcomes. Individuals interested in participating in Project SEARCH must complete an application and attend an assessment day arranged at the host business. Project SEARCH strives to find a good fit for both applicants and the host business, so not everyone who applies will be accepted for an internship.

What are Project SEARCH Employment Outcomes in Wisconsin?

Project SEARCH has a track record of very positive results for employment. The 2019 Post School Outcomes (PSO) survey of former high school students with disabilities, found that just about 27% of youth with an intellectual disability or autism were competitively employed one year after leaving school. The Project SEARCH statewide outcome is significantly higher at 77% individual employment at 16 hours per week or more.

	2019 WI PSO Survey Data Intellectual Disability + Autism	Project SEARCH Intern Outcomes 2018-2019
Competitive Integrated Employment	27%	77%

How does Project SEARCH Align with Transition Planning Requirements under IDEA and WIOA?

Based on IDEA Special Education Indicator 13, a student's Postsecondary Transition Plan (PTP) requires measurable postsecondary goals for education and training, employment and independent living, where appropriate. WIOA requires that students with disabilities be provided Pre-Employment Transition services. The Project SEARCH curriculum incorporates goal setting and age appropriate transition assessments conducted daily through observations in the classroom and the work environment. Pre-Employment Transition Services provided through Project SEARCH include **Work-based learning** experiences and **Social and Independent Living Skills** training.

What is the Role of a School District in Supporting Students to Participate in Project SEARCH?

The cost to a district of placing a student in a Project SEARCH internship typically ranges from \$7,000.00 - \$8,500.00 total for the 9 months, not including transportation costs. DVR, serving as another partner, can provide funding for transportation as well as a portion of the **systematic instruction** (job coaching) support required by student interns.

The expenses for the host district that hires the teacher are personnel costs and instructional supplies needed. These might be items such as timers, white boards, and iPads. Project SEARCH does not require an investment in infrastructure, such as office space, by the host district.

In addition to having its own students participate in Project SEARCH, the host district can enter into a 66.0301 cooperative agreement with other school districts to fill internship slots. Under a cooperative agreement, the host district would serve as the fiscal agent. A 66.0301 agreement allows for specific cost contracts versus a flat rate open enrollment fee. Under a 66.0301, the host district would claim the categorical aid and be responsible for sending a proportional share back to each participating district. More information about cooperative agreements can be found on the DPI website at <http://dpi.wi.gov/sfs/finances/fund-info/package-cooperative-funds>.

What is the Role of DVR in Supporting Project SEARCH?

Project SEARCH is a transition program that braids school and DVR funding to support employment outcomes. DVR pays on average \$5,168.00 per student for Project SEARCH Skills Training to assist students to learn job tasks and soft skills during the nine month period when students are interning with Project SEARCH. The DVR-funded skills training/systematic instruction is provided by a vocational support agency, or vendor working in conjunction with the special education teacher.

In addition, DVR funds job development to Project SEARCH interns to support the attainment of permanent employment after completion of Project SEARCH. The range of cost for this DVR-funded support is between \$1,500- \$2,100 for the job development plus \$800 a month for systematic instruction up to 6 months. Thus, DVR funding for these components of Project SEARCH bring substantial additional resources for student transition services.

Who Funds and Provides Transportation for Students in Project SEARCH?

Transportation decisions are made at the local level by IEP teams, including DVR staff and families, for high school students participating in Project SEARCH. The 66.0301 agreement can either include provision of transportation to all students participating in Project SEARCH by the host district or make students' home districts responsible for transportation to and from the Project SEARCH site. Transportation would remain an aidable cost. For some interns, DVR can also help pay for transportation if deemed appropriate based on the situation. Whenever available, public transportation, including use of cabs/ride service companies, should be considered with the goal of fostering independence for the future. Natural supports (family, friend, neighbor, co-worker) can also be an option.

What Additional Partners are involved in Project SEARCH?

True collaboration among partner agencies is built into the Project SEARCH model. This leads to seamless transition services and sustainability. In additions to the business, schools, and DVR, Long Term Support, Family Care/IRIS, families and community rehabilitation agencies (vendors) are also active partners to ensure student success.

How many Students can be involved in the Program and at what age can a Student become involved in Project Search?

Project SEARCH classes typically include 10-12 student interns. For a high school Project SEARCH program, the students need to be at least 18 years old to be considered for the program. Project SEARCH was originally designed for transition-aged youth, however at times young adults may be enrolled in the program to make the program more cost effective.

What does a Typical Project SEARCH Day look like?

The student interns are typically on site for at least 6.5 hours Monday-Friday. Ideally the Project SEARCH program has a training room at the host business that serves as their classroom for the entirety of the program. During class times, employability skills are taught. A **sample** schedule of an intern's day would look like this:

- 7:50 Arrival at host business site
- 8:00 Project SEARCH Employability Skills Curriculum
- 9:00 Internship Rotations - learning competitive, marketable skills
- 11:30 Lunch
- 12:00 Internship Rotations continue
- 2:00 Return to classroom, review of day, journaling
- 2:30 Adjourn for the day

Where is Project SEARCH available to Students in Wisconsin?

As of August 6, 2020 Project SEARCH sites will be operating throughout Wisconsin in urban and rural areas.

Project SEARCH Site	Instructor and School District(s)	Vocational Provider	Start Date
1. MADISON University of Wisconsin Hospital/Clinics William S Middleton Memorial Veteran's Hospital	Madison Metropolitan School District and Area School Districts	MARC – Responsive Employment Services	2008
2. MARSHFIELD Ascension Ministry Health Care (St. Joseph's)	Unified School District of Marshfield and Area School Districts and UW-Whitewater	Opportunity Development Center	2011
3. MENOMONIE Walmart Distribution Center #6025	CESA 10 Area School Districts	LE Philips Career Development Center	2011
4. WAUWATOSA Children's Hospital of Wisconsin	Easter Seals Southeast WI Area School Districts and UW-Whitewater	Easter Seals Southeast WI	2011
5. APPLETON St. Elizabeth Hospital	Appleton Area School District	Valley Packaging, Inc	2013
6. WAUKESHA Waukesha Memorial Hospital	Easter Seals Southeast WI Area School Districts and UW-Whitewater	Easter Seals Southeast WI	2013
7. GREEN BAY St. Vincent Hospital Bellin Hospital	CESA 7 Area School Districts	ASPIRO	2015
8. MILWAUKEE Milwaukee County Zoo	Goodwill Industries Area School Districts and UW-Whitewater	Goodwill Industries, SEW	2015
9. RIVER FALLS River Falls Area Hospital	River Falls School District and Area School Districts and UW-Whitewater	Bridge for Community Life	2015
10. SAUK PRAIRIE Sauk Prairie Hospital	Sauk Prairie School District Area School Districts	MARC – Responsive Employment Services	2015
11. STEVENS POINT Sentry Insurance	Stevens Point School District	Innovative Services, Inc.	2015
12. WAUWATOSA Froedtert Hospital	Easter Seals Southeast WI <i>Adult Only Program – UW Whitewater</i>	Easter Seals Southeast WI	2015
13. WISCONSIN DELLS Kalahari	MARC – Responsive Employment Services Area School Districts	MARC – Responsive Employment Services	2015
14. WISCONSIN RAPIDS Aspirus Riverview Hospital and Clinics	Wisconsin Rapids School District	Opportunity Development Center	2015

Project SEARCH Site	Instructor and School District(s)	Vocational Provider	Start Date
15. EAU CLAIRE Mayo Clinic	Eau Claire School District and Area School Districts and UW Whitewater	L.E. Phillips Career Development Center	2016
16. OSHKOSH Mercy Medical Hospital	Oshkosh School District	Goodwill Industries, NCW	2016
17. RICE LAKE Rice Lake Weighing and Manufacturing	Ventures Unlimited, Inc. Area School Districts and UW Whitewater	Ventures Unlimited, Inc.	2016

NEW PROJECT SEARCH SITES 2017 and 2018:

Project SEARCH Site	Instructor and Districts	Vocational Provider	Start Date
18. LACROSSE Gunderson Health System	La Crosse and Holmen School Districts	Riverfront	2017
19. MINOCQUA Howard Young Medical Center	Minocqua School District and Area School Districts	Headwaters, Inc.	2017
20. RACINE/KENOSHA Andis Manufacturing	Racine School District and Area School Districts	Easter Seals Southeast WI	2017
21. WATERTOWN Watertown Medical Center	Watertown School District	Bethesda Lutheran Communities	2017
22. WEST BEND St. Joseph Hospital	Easter Seals Southeast WI <i>Adult Only Program - UW Whitewater</i>	Easter Seals Southeast WI	2017
23. WEST BEND West Bend Mutual Insurance Company	West Bend School District	Threshold Inc.	2017
24. MILWAUKEE General Mitchell International Airport	Goodwill Industries, SEW <i>Adult Only Program</i>	Goodwill Industries, SEW	2017
25. JANESVILLE Mercy Health Hospital	CESA 2, Beloit, Janesville, Edgerton, Milton, and Parkview schools	Riverfront Inc.	2018
26. PLATTEVILLE UW Platteville	CESA 3 Platteville and Area School Districts	Hodan Community Services	2018
27. WAUSAU Aspirus Hospital	CESA 9	Opportunity Development Centers, Inc.	2018

New Project Search Sites for 2020-2021: **Three new sites were awarded for this year, however due to COVID, no host business as of yet. They are: Kimberly, Superior and Green Bay (Adult Only)

- For general information about the Project SEARCH job training program, please visit: <https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/programs/project-search/>
- For more information about Project SEARCH in Wisconsin and availability in your area, please contact: Paige Parr Paige.parr@dwd.wisconsin.gov 715 544 9171