

Project SEARCH New Mexico

An internship program preparing students with disabilities for competitively-paid work



What is Project SEARCH?

Project SEARCH is an internship program for students with disabilities, ages 18 – 22, that prepares them for integrated, competitively-paid work.

Project SEARCH interns spend their final year of high school transition services fully immersed inside a business such as a hospital or large hotel. Here they complete three 10-week internships where they gain practical employability skills. At a hospital,

for example, students might rotate through internships in departments like Outpatient Rehab, Patient Transport, and Linens. At a hotel, students might rotate through internships in Housekeeping, Banquet Serving, Maintenance and Customer Service. Through these internships, students achieve the task-related skills and people skills that prepare them for competitive jobs in their community when the Project SEARCH internship is done.

Throughout New Mexico, roughly 70% of Project SEARCH interns obtain competitively-paid work at the end of the internship year.

How does it work?

Cohorts of 8-12 interns are supported on-site at the business by a teacher from their school district and a skills trainer from a local supported employment agency. The Project SEARCH year follows the school district calendar in terms of start dates, graduation dates, and holidays.

Students spend the first hour of the day in a classroom at the business learning employability skills. Then, each intern reports to their job rotation for four hours of hands-on job training. At the end of the day, students report back to the classroom to review what they've learned.

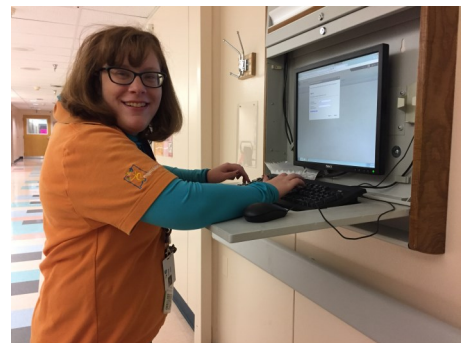
All interns are enrolled in New Mexico Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) services. DVR supports each intern's success with transportation training, uniforms and shoes, and a monetary stipend to cover internship-related expenses and to develop saving/budgeting skills. DVR works closely with the supported employment agency on job leads and job development for interns once they graduate from Project SEARCH and assists with Social Security Benefits training so that interns' benefits aren't negatively affected by employment.

Goals of Project SEARCH

- Learning real-world job skills and responsibility in a real-world setting
- Practicing tools for independent living
- Becoming familiar with one's strengths, interests, and abilities
- Obtaining a job at or above minimum wage, at or above 16 hours per week at the end of the internship year

"UNM Hospital employees and patients have both benefitted from this program. These interns have become great assets to our hospital and other businesses and organizations throughout Albuquerque."

Steve McKernan, CEO UNM Hospital



Harley doing rounds checking computers to make sure they are all working properly.

Project SEARCH New Mexico is a joint collaboration of the University of New Mexico Center for Development & Disability Partners for Employment, the New Mexico Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, the New Mexico Department of Health/Disability Services, local school districts, and local supported employment agencies including Best Buddies of New Mexico, Adelante, TAOS (Tohatchi Area of Opportunity & Services), and Community Options.

What might a typical intern day look like?

7:00 am – 8:00 am	Travel/Arrival
8:00 am – 9:00 am	Classroom training in employability skills such as team building, workplace safety, and problem-solving
9:00am – 2:00pm	Internship Rotation <i>Interns follow Department's designated break and lunch times</i>
2:00 pm – 2:30pm	Classroom debrief of the day
2:30 pm	Dismissal

What do Project SEARCH interns and teachers say about the program?



“What’s up homie” is Brandon Wilson’s standard greeting for members of the housekeeping staff at the Hilton Garden Inn. Brandon is quiet by nature; however he opens up whenever he works with someone on a consistent basis. He is the type of person that excels when given a specific task to complete. He is a quick learner and works just as effectively with others as he does on his own. Whenever Brandon completes his job, he is always looking to help the other interns complete their jobs. He is also very mindful of the time and re-

minds the interns whenever it is time to go to the morning huddle, or staff briefing. Brandon seems to have a bright future given his diverse skill set and overall positive demeanor.

“My overall experience here at Embassy Suites has been truly rewarding. Getting the hands-on experience that I received during my internship at Embassy has given me a chance to explore what it’s like to have a real job. My overall experience here at Embassy Suites...has rewarded me with newly-learned skills and exploration of areas both within and outside of my comfort zone.”

Kharis Sims, *Project SEARCH graduate 2017*



Where are the Project SEARCH Programs in New Mexico, and who do I contact to apply?

ALBUQUERQUE

The Nene & Jamie Koch Project SEARCH Training Program at UNM Hospital

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Embassy Suites Hotel

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