



# Program FAQ's

## Bergen County's Project | SEARCH<sup>®</sup>

*Great things happen when a partnership exists for the benefit of others.*

Project SEARCH in Bergen County is driven by a collaboration with the following community partners:



Hackensack  
Meridian Health  
Hackensack University  
Medical Center



BergenWDB  
BUILDING STRONGER BUSINESSES AND CAREERS

HolyName  
Medical Center



Bergen County Special Services School District

The Arc  
of Bergen & Passaic

North Jersey  
FRIENDSHIP HOUSE  
BUILDING SKILLS FOR PRODUCTIVE LIVES



Division of  
Developmental  
Disabilities

New Jersey Division of  
DVR  
Vocational Rehabilitation  
Services

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is Project SEARCH?

The Project SEARCH Program is a unique, business-led, one-year, transition program that takes place entirely in a host business. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration and relevant job-skills training through strategically designed internships.

### How long has Project SEARCH existed?

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. Project SEARCH has grown from one original program site at Cincinnati Children's to nearly 400 programs across 45 states and four countries.

### How are decisions made for admission?

An application must be completed entirely and submitted by each year's deadline. Applications are reviewed for eligibility and then an assessment is conducted by the Project SEARCH staff and Advisory Committee. The final step is participation in the "Skills-Assessment and Selection Day". Information from the application, assessment and selection day are taken into consideration when the Advisory Committee chooses interns for the program. Applicants are informed of admittance by early June. Applications must have an open case with DVR and a long-term funding source.

### What is the skill level needed?

The intern must have basic number and word recognition skills. He/she should have the ability to learn systematic work routines and be able to communicate his/her needs. Interns must have completed all high school credits necessary for graduation.

### Is there a wait list to get into the program?

Project SEARCH can accept a maximum of 12 interns for each location. Those who are not selected for the program may be placed on a wait list in the event that an opening becomes available. Previous applicants can reapply the following year, provided they are 21 years of age or younger and are have not graduated high school.

### Is transportation provided?

Each intern is responsible for his/her transportation to and from the program. Travel training will be provided before the program begins.

**What is the intern's daily schedule?**

The student interns arrive directly to the host business via public transportation or other independent means (i.e. not a school bus). They begin each day in the training room for about 1 hour of employability skills using the approved Project SEARCH curriculum and building specific job related skills needed for each rotation. The interns work in their internship departments for about 5 hours (including lunch) and return to the training room for journaling and daily wrap up for about 30 minutes before adjournment.

**What is the program year?**

Project SEARCH in Bergen County follows the Bergen County Special Services School District calendar.

**How are interns assigned to rotations?**

Project SEARCH staff assess the skill sets, prior to experience and career goals of each intern to match department needs. After a brief introduction to each rotation, the intern expresses his/her interests and those are taken into consideration when assigning their rotations.

**Are these paid internships?**

No, unpaid internships are common in trade for real work experience.

**How are internships/rotations developed?**

After a department expresses an interest in hosting an intern, Project SEARCH staff conducts a thorough job and task options analysis to understand the expectations, skill sets and needs of each department. Available rotations options may change throughout the year depending on the department workflow needs.

**Do we rotate the interns through the same departments?**

The goal is for each intern to complete three different rotations during the year. An intern may be placed in a rotation twice if the team decides that is best to meet his/her career goals. We utilize a wide variety of departments. Most departments host an intern once or twice per year.

**Are interns ever left alone?**

The expectation of the job coach is that interns will become independent in the workplace. A mentor who works closely with the intern is selected by the department manager and Project SEARCH staff.

**Is there an evaluation process to gauge their progress while in each rotation?**

Project SEARCH and department staff communicate daily regarding the intern's work production and progress. Daily check-ins as well as brief weekly meetings to discuss development are held with each intern. Interns also have a monthly meeting with DVR, Project SEARCH staff and parents.

**What is the job placement process?**

During orientation, the Project SEARCH intern agrees to actively pursue employment. Project SEARCH program partners work intensely to help each intern seek and apply for appropriate jobs, develop a resume, prepare for interviews and request letters of recommendation from department management. Our goal is 100% competitive employment.

**Will the student intern be hired by the host business?**

The host business has the option of hiring any one of the interns at any time. If a student is not hired by the host business, a job developer will help the student look for employment in their community.

**What is competitive employment?**

Competitive employment is defined as 16 hours/week in an integrated setting making prevailing wage for that position.

Project SEARCH in Bergen County is coordinated by the  
**Bergen County Workforce Development Board**  
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or visit [bergenworkforce.org/projectsearch](http://bergenworkforce.org/projectsearch)