Project SEARCH
Possibilities

What is Project SEARCH?

Project SEARCH is a program that originated in Cincinnati Children’s Hospital in 1996. Individuals with disabilities were given the opportunity as interns to work in several different departments of the hospital. Through this experience the interns learned and mastered various skills that would transfer to obtaining and maintaining competitive employment.

Since its inception, Project SEARCH has grown from a single program site in Cincinnati to over 300 sites across the United States and Canada, England, Scotland, Ireland and Australia. On April 6, 2015 the first Project SEARCH class began here in Harrisburg, PA with Dauphin County Government serving as the host site. What is Dauphin County Project SEARCH?

It’s a unique business-led, 36-week internship program that takes place entirely at the workplace. The workplace is at the host site of Dauphin County Government where interns learn soft skills, curriculum based training, real-world work experience, interviewing skills and resume building. Interns develop the skills needed to obtain and maintain competitive integrated employment.

Project SEARCH Daily Schedule

The Project SEARCH program runs from April to December. A typical day at Project SEARCH would look like:

- 8:30 - 9:30 AM Classroom Instruction
- 9:30 - 10:00 AM Travel to worksites (Transportation provided for on-site locations)
- 10:00 AM - 2:30 PM Working at worksite (30-minute lunch)
- 2:30 - 3:00 PM Reflection/Dismissal

**Intern is responsible for transportation to and from Project SEARCH classroom. Travel Training will be offered.**
What is a mentor?

A mentor is an individual who works in the same department as the intern and provides on-the-job support as needed. Each intern starts with a Job Skills Trainer who will help them learn the tasks needed by the department. As the Job Skills Trainer fades out, the Mentor is their person available to the intern for questions. If additional training is needed the Mentor would be able to reach out the Job Skills Trainer.

What kinds of jobs/tasks and departments can the Interns perform?

Our experience tells us that student interns can perform well in many support roles in a variety of departments and settings. Interns often excel at complex yet systematic tasks that are time intensive, equipment intensive, or paper/computer intensive. With training and minimal accommodations, the interns can learn and perform complex tasks that lead to jobs in the community.

### County Departments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clerk of Courts*</th>
<th>Commissioners Office*</th>
<th>Court Administrator/ Law Library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drug &amp; Alcohol*</td>
<td>Emergency Management Agency</td>
<td>Facility Maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children &amp; Youth*</td>
<td>Area Agency on Aging*</td>
<td>District ZoZo’s Office*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks &amp; Recreation</td>
<td>Mental Health/Autism/ Intellectual Disabilities*</td>
<td>Registration and Elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile Probation*</td>
<td>Human Services*</td>
<td>Human Resources*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehouse</td>
<td>Register of Wills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Departments used in 2019*
Who will train the interns?

Each Project SEARCH program has an instructor and skills trainer on site. These professionals work together to train the interns with input from staff in the department where the internship takes place. Before the program begins, the skills trainer and instructor will develop a job description for each intern by identifying core tasks at each internship site. The Project SEARCH skills trainers and instructor are on site at the business each day to work with the interns and give guidance and support where needed. If there are any problems with the interns during the rotations, the manager or mentor can contact the instructor or skills trainer for immediate assistance.

How does the manager get information about working with the student intern? Can the manager ask about the student’s disability?

Before the student begins their internship, the Project SEARCH instructor and skills trainers will share helpful information about interacting with and supervising the intern. Department meetings can be utilized to provide information on successful strategies for training young adults with disabilities. Managers cannot ask about a specific intern’s disability; however successful training strategies and tools can be shared.

Become a Mentor

Project SEARCH gives individuals an opportunity to gain valuable and marketable work experience. Becoming a mentor with Project SEARCH not only helps the interns, but also helps county departments. Since 2015, Project SEARCH Interns have demonstrated exceptional attendance. In the past, we have had 6 interns in 3 previous cohorts with perfect attendance and others only miss due to previous family commitments. Previous departments in the county have reported that Interns are capable of mastering tasks given by department mentors. They have consistently met expected performance standards. Project SEARCH Interns enjoy the fact that they are part of a team environment. They DO NOT want to be considered different or special. They want to work, earn money, and learn valuable skills for competitive employment. Persons with disabilities have a right to participate in the full range of human experiences including success and failure. Most workers with disabilities require no special accommodations. For those that do, the cost is minimal or much lower than the common belief. The accommodations needed by PS Interns have included: written instructions, checklists. Flip charts and access to their mentor to ask questions. Cost = $0.

Dauphin County Departments who are interested in hosting an intern should contact:

The Project SEARCH Program Instructor at (717)-780-7327

Or contact Bobbi Segin, Deputy Administrator A/DP (717)-780-7042