

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

**Project SEARCH** is a one-year unpaid internship program for students with disabilities who have earned the Applied Studies Diploma and are between the ages of 18-21.

The Project SEARCH Transition-to-Work Program is a unique, business-led, one-year employment preparation program that takes place entirely at the workplace. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations. The program culminates in individualized job development.

The goal for each program participant is competitive employment. To reach that goal, the program provides real-life unpaid work experience combined with training in employability and independent-living skills to help young people with significant disabilities make successful transitions to productive adult life. The Project SEARCH model involves an extensive period of skills training and career exploration, innovative adaptations, long-term job coaching, and continuous feedback from teachers, skills trainers, and employers.



## PROJECT SEARCH WEBSITE

To learn more about Project SEARCH, please visit their website at [www.projectsearch.us](http://www.projectsearch.us) Click “news” tab to learn how programs are being recognized nation wide. You will be amazed at what the interns are doing at other host business

For more information about Novant Health UVA Prince William Medical Center **Project SEARCH** in Prince William County Schools, contact:

Alana Walmsley at [walmslam@pwcs.edu](mailto:walmslam@pwcs.edu)

Deana Holinka with DARS at [deana.holinka@dars.virginia.gov](mailto:deana.holinka@dars.virginia.gov)

Stacy Chapman at Didlake [schapman@didlake.org](mailto:schapman@didlake.org)



# Project | SEARCH®



Prince William County Schools has partnered with Novant Health UVA Prince William Medical Center, Virginia Department for Aging & Rehabilitative Service (DARS), Didlake, and VDOE to provide Project Search to our students.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Project SEARCH serves high school students with significant intellectual and developmental disabilities who are on an Individual Education Program (IEP) and in their last year of high school eligibility.

An Information Night is held annually (in the winter) for potential students and family members. Application packets will be available after Information Night and through each high school's Transition Specialist. These applications will be due in the month of February. Input from students, parents, current case managers, and job coaches are all part of the application packet. A mandatory assessment/interview day will be scheduled in March for families and students to attend. Parents and students will be notified of selection in March/April.

Discussing all post-graduate options, including questions about the Project SEARCH program, the student's desire to work, and level of independence may be beneficial at the IEP meeting.

However, applying for the Project SEARCH program is not an IEP team decision.

Student selection is carried out by members of the Novant Health UVA Prince William Medical Center Project SEARCH steering committee.



## PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

- Students ages 18—21 years old
- Have an Individualized Education Program
- Graduated with an applied studies diploma before beginning program
- Willing to exit school services after Project SEARCH graduation
- Student must meet the eligibility requirements for and agree to open a case with DARS
- Follows direction and accepts constructive criticism
- Student must have a good attendance and behavior record
- Participated in community based instruction trips (CBI)
- Able to pass drug screen, criminal background check, TB test and have immunizations up to date (including Varicella)
- Can arrange own transportation each day to and from Novant Health UVA PWMC
- Have the desire to work competitively in the community at the conclusion of the program.



## PROJECT SEARCH CURRICULUM

Throughout the program year, the interns work on employability and functional skills for approximately one hour of their day.

Through a series of three targeted internships the interns acquire competitive, marketable and transferable skills to enable them to apply for a related position. Interns also build communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills which is important to their overall development as a young worker. These are unpaid work experiences-analogous to the clinical rotations that are part of every medical school or business internship program.



Interns spend approximately five hours each day at the internships, which includes a thirty minute lunch. Working from a task list, they acquire the core skills necessary to be hired in an entry-level position at the host business site or in the community. Skills trainers and department staff collaborate to provide support for interns.

