

Project SEARCH

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Project SEARCH?

Project SEARCH is a nine month employment-focused educational program designed for jobseekers with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) who are interested in gaining employment in their community. Project SEARCH places interns in real-world work settings where they learn all aspects of gaining and maintaining employment.

A series of three internships lasting 9-11 weeks allows interns to explore careers and develop marketable job skills. They receive support from department mentors, skills trainers, and worksite accommodations and adaptations. The ultimate goal for each intern is to secure competitive employment within their community. The program provides individualized job development that is based on the intern's experiences, strengths, and skills.

What are the requirements to become a Project SEARCH intern?

To participate in Project SEARCH, prospective interns must meet the following requirements:

- Be 18 years or older and be in the last year of services from a school or have fully exited school services with an IDD
- Be a Johnson County Resident
- Meet eligibility requirements of Johnson County's CDDO
- Meet eligibility requirements for Vocational Rehabilitation and Kansas Workforce Partnership
- Able to pass a drug screen and background check
- Desire and plan to work competitively in Johnson County at the conclusion of the Project SEARCH program
- Have independence in personal hygiene, grooming skills, and daily living skills
- Maintain appropriate behavior and social skills in the workplace
- Able to take direction from supervisors and modify performance

What does IDD mean?

IDD means Intellectual/Developmental Disability.

An Intellectual Disability is defined as: a substantial limitation in present functioning; manifests during the period from birth to 18 years of age; is characterized by significantly sub-average intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior including related limits in two or more of the following applicable adaptive skill areas:

- Communication
- Self-care
- Home living
- Social skills
- Leisure
- Community Use
- Self-direction
- Health and safety
- Functional academics
- Work

A Developmental Disability is defined as: a severe chronic physical and mental impairment or a condition which has received a dual diagnosis of intellectual disability and mental illness; is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or a combination of physical and mental impairments; manifests before the age of 22, is likely to continue indefinitely; reflects a need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary or generic care, treatment or other services, which are life-long, or extend in duration and are individually planned and coordinated, and results in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following areas of life functioning; and:

- Self-care
- Understanding and use of language
- Learning and adapting
- Mobility
- Self-direction in setting goals and undertaking activities to accomplish those goals
- Living independently
- Economic self-sufficiency

What does CDDO mean?

CDDO means **Community Developmental Disabilities Organization**. The Johnson County CDDO is responsible for providing a single point of entry for people seeking Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) services in Johnson County.

How would I or a prospective intern determine if they are CDDO eligible?

To determine Community Developmental Disabilities Organization (CDDO) eligibility, please contact the following:

Gail Lauri

(913) 826-2509

Gail.Lauri@jocogov.org

Can an intern be employed before the Project SEARCH program is over?

The goal of the program for each intern is competitive employment. An intern can accept a job offer during second rotation if a good job match is found (at the host site or elsewhere in the community) and the IPE team is in agreement. At this time, the intern becomes an employee and assumes an employee's schedule.

Do interns have to rotate to other internships if they like the first one?

Project SEARCH is designed to give interns the opportunity to have a variety of work experiences, to explore different careers, and to learn competitive work skills in a wide range of settings. This process helps to refine each intern's career goal and to prepare each intern for employment. However, if an intern can gain additional marketable skills and if there is a strong possibility of being offered a competitive job, it is often productive for that individual to do multiple rotations at a single internship site.

How do interns get to the program?

Prospective interns have the option to get to Project SEARCH through their own means of transportation or utilize RideKC, which Project SEARCH partners with to create a specialized route for interns who are entering the program. For interns to utilize the public transportation option, interns must complete a RideKC application before or during an intake meeting after they have been accepted into the program.

What do interns wear during the Project SEARCH day?

Many Project SEARCH programs select uniforms that reflect the host business environment and have the interns wear a polo shirt with the Project SEARCH logo along with host business logo. Our Project SEARCH follows a similar standard. Interns are expected to wear business casual clothing that follows the Dress Code policy in the Intern Handbook unless their internships rotation has a different dress code. Interns are expected to bring their intern badges everyday as well as be properly groomed.

If an intern doesn't like an internship after beginning it, does the intern have to complete the internship?

We expect and encourage interns to complete their whole internship experience even if they dislike the tasks of the internship. Internships are experiences that help interns learn real-life situations such as, what happens when we do not like certain tasks of our jobs. For Project SEARCH, we do not pull interns from their internship experience unless it is necessary. When interns do bring concerns of the internship experience to the Project SEARCH Team, we look at each component of the internship experience and evaluate whether the intern still needs to proceed or it needs to be changed.

Who works with the interns?

Our Project SEARCH team works with the interns to ensure they are being successful in their rotation. Interns may work specifically with a Skills Trainer or Lead Instructor to have support when beginning or continuing through a rotation. Interns also work with employees, supervisor, or managers of the host business site.

How many interns are employed at the host site and what happens to the ones who are not hired?

Interns who become employed at the host site are supported through the process of gaining successful employment. Interns who do not gain employment at a host business site continues to be supported after Project SEARCH by an Employment Specialist with Johnson County Developmental Supports (JCDS).

Are interns on-site all day?

Yes! Interns participate in Project SEARCH the entire time Project SEARCH is in session.

What is the typical Project SEARCH daily schedule?

A typical Project SEARCH day is 8:30 am to 3:15 pm. Excluding our orientation and transition weeks, interns follow the schedule below:

Monday - Thursday

8:30 am - 9:30 am - Employability Skills Class
9:30 am - 11:30 am - Internship Experience
11:30 am - 12:15 pm - Lunch
12:15 pm - 3:15 pm - Internship Experience

Friday

8:30 am - 11:30 am - Employability Skills Class (with break)
11:30 am - 12:30 pm - Lunch
12:30 pm - 3:15 pm - Employability Skills Class (with break)

When does Project SEARCH start and when is Project SEARCH over?

Project SEARCH follows a schedule similar to a high school. The Embassy Suites and Johnson County Administration Building both follow an August - May schedule with varying dates for both months depending on the program year.

Although the program begins in August, interns are expected to attend a few Project SEARCH meetings during the summer prior to their beginning program date to complete the intake/onboarding process for the program.

Can an intern be “fired” from an internship?

Interns are expected to follow the expectations and policies of the Project SEARCH program. In the event an intern has not met the expectations and/or policies of the program and have continually been through a disciplinary action process, interns may be “fired” from an internship.

Can an intern be dismissed from Project SEARCH?

Interns are expected to follow the expectations and policies of the Project SEARCH program. In the event an intern has not met the expectations and/or policies of the program and have continually been through a disciplinary action process, interns may be “fired” or dismissed from the Project SEARCH program based on a team decision from the Project SEARCH team and the Steering Committee.

Do interns participate in internship rotations off-site?

During the Project SEARCH year after interns have completed a first and second rotation successfully, interns may choose to pursue an off-site rotation. Off-site rotations have an agreement with Project SEARCH similar to a host business site. Interns will participate in the off-site rotation for approximately the same amount of time as an on-site rotation.

Interns that participate in off-site rotations will be transported to the rotation by the Project SEARCH team and will have transportation changed to be picked up from the rotation.

What is an “off-site” rotation?

An off-site rotation is an internship which is not located on the host business site. Off-site rotations have a partnership with Project SEARCH and an agreement similar to one between Project SEARCH and the host business site.

Will interns be paid for their internship?

Project SEARCH is an unpaid educational internship program. At times, Project SEARCH may be able to have a paid rotation due to funding. This situation is not the same for every year and may vary. Prospective interns should not expect to be paid during the Project SEARCH program.

What does Project SEARCH expect from an intern?

Project SEARCH interns are expected to be active participants in the Project SEARCH program. Interns are expected to be ready to learn about employability skills and learn job skills in their internship rotation.

Project SEARCH expects all interns to follow the policies and procedures of Project SEARCH, the host business site, and Johnson County Developmental Supports (JCDS). Interns admitted to the program can revisit these policies and procedures in their Intern Handbook.

Who is a part of the Project SEARCH team?

The Project SEARCH team is comprised of a lead instructor and two skills trainers for each Project SEARCH site. Below is a list of our teams and where they are located:

Embassy Suites Hotel and Convention Center

Chris Donner - Lead Instructor
Bernadette Russ - Skills Trainer
Alexandra Shaw - Skills Trainer

Johnson County Administration Building

Forrest Austin - Lead Instructor
Tina Howard - Skills Trainer
Suzie Kary - Skills Trainer