

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.

Some examples of internship sites at Holloman Air Force Base are the Child Development Center, the Ahrens Memorial Library, and the housekeeping and maintenance departments in Lodging. New internship sites are added each year to offer a wide range of opportunities for unique skill development. Through these internships, interns 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.

Interns 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, they 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. DVR also 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



U.S. AIR FORCE

*Integrity First. Service Before Self.
Excellence in All We Do*

-Air Force Core Values



"Project SEARCH has helped me out a lot. They showed me that I can do things even with a disability. My disability does not define who I am!" -Destiny

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 NNM Department of Health/Developmental Disabilities Supports Division, local school districts, community advocacy organizations, and local supported employment agencies.

What might a typical intern day look like?

8:00 am – 8:30 am	Travel/Arrival
9:00am – 11:00am	Work at Internship Site
11:00 am-12:00 pm	Lunch with Coworkers
12:00 pm-2:00 pm	Work at Internship Site
2:00 pm-3:30pm	Skill Building in the Classroom
3:30 pm	Dismissal

What do Project SEARCH interns say about the program?

“Project SEARCH has helped me learn new skills to obtain work. I have learned how to communicate, help others, and how to set life goals. Project SEARCH will also show you how managing finances affects lifestyle.” -Alyssa



“Project SEARCH has helped me learn what type of work I like and do not like. It has given me experiences to know what to expect mentally and physically to prepare yourself for transitioning into a job.”- Adrian



I have watched these Project SEARCH interns mature, become more confident, and are beginning to advocate for what they want for their future. Also, the Holloman Air Force Base (HAFB) site managers and mentors have embraced including the interns within their respective work sites and have encouraged them to further develop work related skills. Project SEARCH and HAFB have contributed to increasing each intern’s ability to become competitively employed.

-Lydia French, Project SEARCH Instructor

The Holloman Air Force Base Project SEARCH Team



For more information on how to apply please contact:
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Click [HERE](#) to watch a video about the Project SEARCH interns and their experiences interning at Holloman Air Force Base

-video credit: Sr.A Kristin Weathersby,
49th Wing Public Affairs, HAFB