

In 1996, while working as the Director of the Emergency Department at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center, Erin Riehle was frustrated with the high turnover rate in entry-level jobs that involved restocking supplies. While working to identify a solution to eliminating the high turnover rate, Cincinnati Children’s had adopted a major diversity initiative, taking a policy statement from the American College of Healthcare executives, which reads, “Healthcare organizations must lead their communities in increasing employment opportunities for qualified persons with disabilities and advocate on behalf of their employment to other organizations.” Erin wondered if people with disabilities could fill the entry level jobs she had. Not knowing anyone with a disability she turned to Great Oaks Career Campuses and the Hamilton County Board of Developmental Disability Services and asked if her idea was possible. Together with these organizations the idea of filling a handful of jobs in Cincinnati Children’s Emergency Department evolved into a comprehensive program model—**Project SEARCH**. (www.projectsearch.us)



An intern with department supervisors

Project SEARCH has grown from one original program site at Cincinnati Children’s to over 230 sites across the United States and four countries, including over 30 sites in Ohio and five in Northeast Ohio including: University Hospitals Parma Medical Center, Cleveland Clinic Main Campus, Lorain County Community College, Mercy Regional Medical Center in Lorain and Lake County Board of Developmental Disabilities (Deepwood) in Mentor.

Thank you to University Hospitals Parma Medical Center for providing the host business site.



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If you have any questions or comments, or are interested in being part of the Project SEARCH program at UH Parma Medical Center, please call the Project SEARCH classroom at (440) 743-4548.

Jeff Nahra, Project SEARCH Instructor
Alexis Vaitekunas, Project SEARCH Job Coach

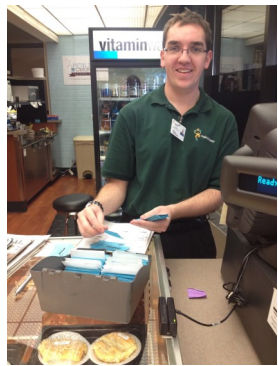


University Hospitals
Parma Medical Center



The Project SEARCH High School Transition

Program is a one-year internship program for students with disabilities, in their last year of high school. It is targeted for students whose goal is **competitive employment**. The program takes place in a healthcare, government or other business setting where total *immersion* in the workplace facilitates the teaching and learning process as well as the acquisition of employability and marketable work skills. Students participate in three internships to explore a variety of career paths. The students work with a team that includes their family, a special education teacher and a job coach, as well as the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, to create an employment goal and support the student during this important transition from school to work.



An intern working in Healing Grounds Coffee

Project SEARCH's primary objective is to secure **competitive employment** for young people with disabilities, while changing business culture to show the value of hiring persons with disabilities. **Competitive employment** is defined as:

- Employment in an integrated setting
- Year-round work
- 20 hours per week or more
- Minimum wage or higher

Benefits to the Students:

- Participate in a variety of internships within the host hospital/business
- Acquire competitive, transferable and marketable job skills
- Gain increased independence, confidence, and self-esteem
- Obtain work-based individualized coaching, instruction and feedback
- Develop linkages to Vocational Rehabilitation and other adult service agencies

Benefits to the Business:

- Access to a new diverse, talent stream with skills that match labor needs
- Gain intern/employees with disabilities who serve as a role model for customers
- Access to a demographic of the economy with intense buying power: people with disabilities represent one of the fastest growing market segments in the US
- Experience increased regional and national recognition through marketing of this unique program
- Performance and retention in some high-turnover, entry-level positions increase dramatically

The internships currently offered at UHPMC include:

- Cardiovascular Services
- Central Services
- Child Care
- Dietary Services
- Emergency Department
- Environmental Services
- Healing Grounds Coffee Cart
- Heart Center
- Human Resources
- Materials Management– Stockroom
- Medical Records
- Nursing Division– 6 Medical
- Patient Attendant/Security
- Pharmacy

Project SEARCH is a partnership between a host business, education and vocational rehabilitation. The goal is to provide on-site internship experiences, enabling young adults with disabilities to acquire necessary skills leading to competitive employment. Program partners will be:

Host Business (University Hospitals Parma Medical Center): provides a business liaison, an on-site classroom and a variety of internships that teach core skills related to that business or related industry.

Local school districts (Parma City School District) provide an instructor, employability skills curriculum and student interns from their affiliated schools. **North Royalton School District** provides interns from their affiliated school.

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency (BVR/BSVI/VRP3) provides individual career guidance, job coaching and other supports for each student to gain competitive employment.

UCP of Greater Cleveland provides job coaching and job development for student interns at University Hospitals Parma Medical Center and in their initial job.

County Board of Developmental Disabilities provides long term retention and support for eligible interns once they secure a job.



Interns from the 2013-2014 school year