

Project SEARCH® 17th Annual Conference
Pre-Conference All Day Sessions
Albuquerque Convention Center
Tuesday, July 16, 2024, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm (Lunch Included)



Business Liaison Session

This session is for Business Liaisons Only. Project SEARCH is a business-led model in supporting the employment of transition-aged youth with disabilities. The Business Liaisons play a critical role in the success of the Project SEARCH program. This pre-conference will provide a fun-filled day with exciting information, networking, and best practice sharing. During the session, the business liaisons will share strategies to improve their Project SEARCH programs, problem solve internship challenges, and network to increase their intern's employment outcomes!

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will learn the latest national and international data and trends for Project SEARCH.
- Participants will engage with business leaders across a variety of industries and discuss inclusion efforts regarding the employment of individuals with disabilities.
- Participants will discuss how internal support (employee resource groups or their affinity networks) assist intern progress towards competitive employment and successful onboarding.
- Participants will practice, hands on, with new tools and resources to help develop and maintain business engagement with Project SEARCH.
- Participants will gain a wide range of marketing and communication ideas to help support the continued integration of Project SEARCH within their host business and in compelling storytelling of the program's success.
- Participants will share robust internships, employment, & learning opportunities in the business.
- Participants will share strategies for dispelling myths about hiring people with disabilities.

Mitch Morgan, Vice President and Director of Inclusion, Fifth Third Bank, Cincinnati, OH



Bringing Lessons to Life: Strategies for Impactful Curriculum Delivery

Join some of the fabulous instructors who helped to create our Employability and Pre-Transition Curricula. Learn their personal teaching tips along with research-based strategies and how to adapt them to the Project SEARCH environment. You'll leave better equipped to engage your interns, motivate them to gain additional understanding, and improve their skill acquisition. A few of these strategies are:

- Distributed Practice –a research-based strategy to embed and recall learning successfully
- Motivational techniques for classroom management and learning
- “Pyramid of Skills” – stacking internship skills into basic, medium, and more complex
- Layering technology skills into all lessons and activities

Part of this session will explore the new Pre-Transition Curriculum: Lessons for Living, Learning, and Working. This free resource can be shared with your sending schools, community rehabilitation providers, Vocational Rehabilitation staff, and other organizations. The goal of these lessons is to get youth and young adults ready for Project SEARCH and other employment preparation programs.

Learning Objectives:

- The participants will learn evidence-based techniques for preparing interns for successful employment.
- The participants will practice these techniques for understanding and use in their programs.
- The participants will learn about “Lessons for Living, Learning and Working” and its role in preparing youth for the workforce.

Chelsea Chairion, Project SEARCH Instructor, City of Farmington, Farmington NM



Kelli Fenlon Wiinamaki, Project SEARCH Instructor, MyMichigan Medical Center, Sault Ste. Marie, MI



Tammy Hearon, Instructor, Hilton at Knoxville Airport, Knoxville TN



Healthy Relationships and Diversity Awareness: Critical Curricula

Join us for an interactive, engaging, and practical workshop! This workshop has two parts: the morning session will be on the “Building Healthy Relationships” curriculum, and in the afternoon you will learn about the “Diversity Awareness” curriculum.

Building Healthy Relationships in the Workplace: Learn how to teach interns the skills needed to form healthy workplace relationships, keep their jobs, and feel connected to others at work and in the community.

We all want to live full and satisfying lives with the ability to learn new skills, live independently, work, and have healthy relationships with friends and significant others. This is true for young adults with developmental disabilities as well, and one place they can form relationships with others is in their workplace or at a Project SEARCH host site. Many times, our interns and graduates lose their jobs due to their interactions with co-workers, managers, or even customers. Inappropriate conduct such as hugging, following others around, or too many emails can be problematic. Workplace relationships are unique in that they require certain ways of interacting; it’s critical that interns learn to navigate these relationships to achieve success to gain and maintain employment.

During this workshop, you will receive “Building Healthy Relationships in the Workplace and Community Curriculum” which includes 12 lesson plans. Topics include: “Who am I”; “Gender Expression and Identity”; “Types of Relationships”; “Public and Private”; “Friendships, Communication and Decision Making”; “Social Media and Relationships”; “Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships”; and “What is Abuse and Sexual Harassment?” Effective tips and techniques for teaching these topics are included and attendees will have an opportunity to practice teaching as well.

Participants in this workshop will gain the tools, resources, and skills needed to lead “Building Healthy Relationships at Work” classes in their Project SEARCH programs.

Learning Objectives:

- Explore the necessary skills for having healthy workplace relationships.
- Review the curriculum and teaching tools.
- Examine tips and techniques for teaching these topics.
- Practice teaching the curriculum lessons.

Creating a Diverse, Inclusive Workplace Where Everyone is Valued and Appreciated: Learn how to teach interns the skills needed to help create positivity in an inclusive, diverse workplace so they can maintain their employment.

As the culture becomes more and more diverse, certain knowledge and skills are needed for anyone who is an employee in a workplace. Training in these areas is standard in most workplaces, and young people with IDD need it as much as anyone entering the workforce. However, existing training programs

are not suited to the needs of people with alternative learning styles. And unfortunately, we have seen interns lose their jobs due to a lack of sensitivity to other cultures and identities which may include negative and offensive language, gestures, or symbols.

This workshop will discuss what makes a good diversity and inclusion educator and will review lesson plans to teach these concepts. We will explore concepts such as what is diversity, inclusion, and equity; the benefits of a diverse worksite; what are social identities for self and others; being targeted; stereotypes versus facts; ways to be positive and respectful with our language, gestures, and symbols; and how to create an inclusive, diverse workplace where everyone is valued and appreciated.

Learning Objectives:

- Explore the necessary skills for creating a diverse and inclusive workplace environment.
- Review the curriculum and teaching tools.
- Examine tips and techniques for being a great diversity educator.
- Discuss effective techniques to get parents to buy in.

Katherine McLaughlin
Founder & Director of Training
Elevatus Training, LLC,
Westmoreland, NH



Fitting it All In: Building an Annual Calendar that Drives Intern Success

Every Project SEARCH site will look a little different, depending on your host business, your cohort size, and the needs and interests of your interns. But model fidelity requires several important components to ensure that every intern that completes the program is confident and prepared: a successful orientation period, internships that lead to skills acquisition, a daily schedule that includes curriculum and internship time, and transition weeks with supplemental activities. How do you fit it all in? Learning to put all the pieces and parts together is an art! This session will cover the following and more:

- Building the 3-week Orientation at the beginning of your program year. The Orientation is vital for wayfinding, onboarding, intern assessment, matching interns to internships, ensuring mentors are in place, finalizing task lists, and more!
- Scheduling the day to ensure that there is time for curriculum delivery and at least 4 hours of internship experience and ALL the other things that need to happen including problem solving and communication with partners and families.
- Developing internships where the managers/mentors are confident about working with your interns is critical. When everyone is prepared, interns can learn new skills and prepare for competitive, integrated employment. This includes building robust task lists that start with basic tasks and build up to more complex tasks over the course of the 10-week internship. It also includes honest evaluation and feedback from the team giving the intern the opportunity to grow.
- Scheduling “Employment Planning Meetings” is vital so that the full team is involved to support and coach the intern as they define and refine their job goal throughout the year.
- Celebrating the entire year with an intern-led graduation.

Come join experienced instructors and build a successful Project SEARCH year!

Learning Objectives:

- The attendees will learn how to put all the annual components together in a logical format.
- The attendees will learn strategies to incorporate the next year for marketing and recruitment purposes
- The attendees will discuss communication strategies during the year to keep partners, managers, mentors and families informed and involved.

Brooke Locher, Instructor
Spartan Project SEARCH
Michigan State University



Additional presenters TBD

Interns Wanted! Marketing Strategies for Recruitment, Retention and Employment

Marketing is on all our minds—whether you need:

- New marketing tools to boost recruitment
- Strategies to retain interns from the time they are selected until graduation
- Connections with quality employers
- Engagement with managers for additional internships
- A new host site due to lack of engagement

This will be an interactive session to learn from each other and walk away with a plethora of ideas.

The session will include these components:

- Developing a clear message for applicants, their families and your partners
- Creating written documents that are concise and visually pleasing
- Learning strategies for effective social media communication
- Exploring our best methods for intern recruitment and selection
- Developing retention strategies that keep interns engaged from selection throughout the program
- Sharing employer engagement techniques to expand meaningful employment opportunities

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will learn some basic print media tips about fonts, colors, photos, and more.
- Participants will learn to maximize the interns' and site's accomplishments through social media and other outlets
- Participants will learn from other Project SEARCH programs some effective methods to recruit interns

Joy Burress, Program Specialist,
Project SEARCH, Cincinnati
Children's Hospital Medical Center



Molly Michels, Program Specialist,
Project SEARCH, Cincinnati
Children's Hospital Medical Center



Launch Your Project SEARCH Journey with Confidence: Essential Preparation

Is your Project SEARCH program beginning in the fall of 2024? Will you be a new instructor or skills trainer this year? Are you new to a Project SEARCH team whether it's the first year of the program or you are joining an established program site? If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, this session is for you! Come and join us and take a deep dive into Project SEARCH to assist you in implementing the program successfully. We will explore the fundamentals and key topics to build a comprehensive Project SEARCH foundation. Topics will include:

- History and philosophy of the model
- Project SEARCH Model Fidelity components
- Partners, collaboration, and teamwork
- Student criteria, recruitment, and selection
- Program design and implementation
- Member Portal Tools

Join this opportunity to network with other new Project SEARCH sites and staff during the session and throughout the conference. It will also create a knowledge base for referencing other key information and workshops.

Learning Objectives:

1. Learn about the key components of Project SEARCH including philosophy, model fidelity, and workplace immersion.
2. Learn about program design including the annual calendar and daily schedule.
3. Learn about the roles and responsibilities of the partner organizations including specific staff roles and how they collaborate to ensure intern and program success.
4. Learn how to use the member portal to enter key information about your site, take part in training opportunities, and access critical information about Project SEARCH.

Carly Detlefsen, M.Ed.

Program Specialist, Project SEARCH,
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical
Center, located in St. Augustine, FL



Holly Opatick, MS

Program Specialist, Project SEARCH,
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical
Center, located in Pittsburgh, PA



Mission Possible: How to Achieve High Employment Outcomes

Every Project SEARCH program should aspire to meaningful employment for each intern. This session focuses on using the entire year, all partners, and all available resources to achieve this most important outcome. During this interactive session we will explore roles, responsibilities, and tools to create an annual employment plan that leads to success. The following topics will be explored:

- Model Fidelity #1: Outcome of Employment
- Team member roles and their responsibilities for employment
- Employment Planning Meetings that change topics and focus as we move toward employment
- Project SEARCH forms and tools that enhance communication among all partners
- Employment-related activities to keep everyone engaged and working toward common employment outcomes
- Connecting the intern's skills, internships, and interests to an aspirational job

Learning Objectives:

- The participants will learn strategies to reach the goal of employment for every intern
- The participants will engage in thought provoking conversations using Appreciative Inquiry techniques to problem solve barriers to employment
- The participants will define team roles and their impact on positive employment outcomes

Cindy Burns, Program Specialist,
Project SEARCH, Cincinnati
Children's Hospital, Based in
Savannah, GA



Carmel McKeogh, Director
of Operations, DFN Project
SEARCH



Supporting Our Interns' Wellbeing: Mental Health Strategies for Project SEARCH

Many of our interns' experience anxiety as they prepare for their transition from school to work and encounter all the new situations that Project SEARCH involves. This session will offer a deeper dive into understanding and supporting interns with mental health challenges. It will also describe program elements that can have a positive impact on the emotional and mental state of interns. Participants are encouraged to bring their laptop.

The aim of this session is to give Project SEARCH staff a basic understanding of the mechanisms of work-related anxiety and how to manage it, and to teach them how to function successfully in the training room and internship experience of Project SEARCH.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the day participants will:

- Learn how neurobiology of traumatic stress impacts behavioral functioning.
- Learn about resiliency and ideas for fostering it
- Leave with concrete ideas for supporting mental health within their programs
- Learn from former Project SEARCH Program Administrator and current Statewide Director of Project SEARCH in Michigan about administrative and programming considerations regarding mental health supports
- Learn from former Project SEARCH instructor and current Director of Adult Transition Programs of Livingston County, Michigan about how mental health collaboration and support takes shape in the classroom

Michael Zivsak, School Social Worker, Ingham Intermediate School District, Mason, MI



Sarah Winslow, Project SEARCH Michigan Statewide Director, Ingham Intermediate School District, Mason, MI



The Secret to Successful Skills Training: Using Task Analysis, Adaptations, and AI

This session is designed for instructors and skills trainers who want to know more about basic skills training and teaching strategies. You will learn training strategies that can be used on-site at the internship. The following topics will be explored:

- Basics of Task Analysis for breaking down tasks into discrete steps
- Using words, pictures, videos, or symbols to create task lists
- Discern how and why interns are not successful in specific steps of the task related to quality or productivity?
 - Do we need to teach that specific task?
 - If yes, do we complete that part of the task or adapt the task?
 - Do we insert tools and/or prompts to find a different way to perform the task?
- Artificial Intelligence data and tools to help create task analysis and adopt plain language
- Accommodations that are simple to make and use
- Measuring skills gain using Project SEARCH assessment tools
- Working smarter with Artificial Intelligence tools to help your interns learn and grow

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will create basic task analyses using traditional and artificial intelligence methods.
- Participants will decide when and how to teach, adapt, or provide accommodation to support interns with task completion.
- Participants will construct simple modifications to facilitate task performance and success!

Dennis Cleary, Senior Researcher,
Cincinnati Children's Hospital
Medical Center, Cincinnati, OH



Jim Kelly, Director
Data, Systems, and Analysis
Ingham ISD, Okemos, MI

