



Project | SEARCH® BLACK HILLS

Welcome

Welcome to Project SEARCH Black Hills! Our team is dedicated to ensuring a successful year for everyone involved. We are committed to demonstrating professional conduct, providing impartial direction, offering objective advice, and delivering individualized recommendations to establish and uphold the standards of our program. These expectations are designed to prepare interns for the competencies required in the business world.

Project SEARCH Interns are expected to conduct themselves as employees and adhere to similar standards. Additionally, as students, interns must comply with their school's policies and procedures, unless otherwise specified.

This handbook will familiarize you with the details of our program. It serves as a guide and is subject to change based on the needs of the program or decisions made by the Project SEARCH Coordinators or cooperating agencies, including Vocational Rehabilitation, participating school districts, and our host business, Monument Health. With a clear understanding of our expectations and a committed, enthusiastic attitude, we are confident you will have a remarkable year.

Attendance Policy

Interns are required to attend Project SEARCH Monday-Thursday 8:00 am to 2:30 pm at the host site and via Zoom on Friday mornings 8:00-9:00 am. If an intern cannot attend, they must inform both the program coordinator and their job site supervisor or mentor directly by phone. Texting is not acceptable unless previously approved. If the program coordinator is unavailable, the intern should leave a message with their name and reason for the absence.

Interns are allowed one absence per 10-week rotation without a doctor's note. Any additional absences will require a doctor's note. Repeated absences will result in a reduction of the daily stipend.

For planned absences, interns must complete a "Request for Time Off" on the Intern recording board at least three days in advance and submit it to the Manager or Program Coordinator for approval. This applies to scheduled doctor appointments, agency meetings, and interviews.

Tardiness exceeding three minutes will result in deductions from the stipend. Repeated tardiness may lead to dismissal from the program. After the third instance of tardiness, a meeting will be

held with the Program Coordinator, Parent, and Case Manager to address the issue and develop a plan of action. A sample stipend deduction worksheet is available at the end of this handbook.

Important Note:

The following steps will be taken for more than two absences without a doctor's note or for two no-call no-show absences:

- **First Offense:** A meeting will be held with the intern, mentor, and the Project SEARCH coordinator. The intern's family will be contacted, and a \$10 stipend reduction will be applied.
- **Second Offense:** A team meeting will be scheduled to discuss the absences and develop a plan to ensure attendance meets program guidelines. The team will include the intern, Parent/Guardian, Program Coordinator, Case Manager, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, and School Representative. A stipend reduction of at least \$20 will be applied.
- **Third Offense:** A team meeting will be scheduled to discuss potential dismissal from the program. If dismissal is not agreed upon, an action plan will be implemented to prevent further absences. The outcome will be a team decision, and a stipend reduction of at least \$25 will be applied.
- **Fourth Offense:** A final team meeting will be scheduled to determine dismissal from the program. The Project SEARCH team will make the final decision, and a stipend reduction of at least \$50 will be applied.

Internship Rotations

Throughout the year, interns will participate in up to three 10-week internship rotations. These rotations are unpaid, but the Department of Rehabilitation Services provides a monthly stipend to each intern. Interns can express their preferences for each rotation, and the Project SEARCH staff will do their best to accommodate these requests. The main goal of Project SEARCH is to help interns develop transferable job skills to secure competitive employment.

Curriculum and Instructional Outcomes

Project SEARCH has created their own Employability Skills Curriculum. The instructional outcomes of the Project SEARCH program and curriculum include:

- **Team Building:** Developing effective teamwork and collaboration skills.
- **Workplace Safety:** Understanding and practicing safety protocols in various work environments.
- **Social Skills:** Enhancing communication and interpersonal skills.
- **Presentation Skills:** Learning how to effectively present information.
- **Technology:** Gaining proficiency in using workplace technology.

- **Interview Skills:** Preparing for and performing well in job interviews.
- **Money Management:** Learning financial literacy and budgeting.
- **Health and Wellness:** Promoting personal health and well-being.
- **Resume Writing:** Creating professional resumes.
- **Job Search Skills:** Developing strategies for finding employment.
- **Job Retention:** Learning how to maintain employment successfully.

These outcomes aim to equip interns with the necessary skills to secure and retain competitive employment.

Progress

Interns' performance will be evaluated based on attendance, participation in training sessions, attitude, work evaluations, and IEP goals. Evaluations will be done by the Employment Specialist/Instructor and supervisor/mentor. Progress will be communicated through newsletters, emails, phone calls, and meetings involving the Program Coordinator, Instructor, Intern, Family Members/Guardians, school district representative and Vocational Rehabilitation counselor.

Discipline Policy

If Project SEARCH interns do not show commitment to the goals and expectations of the program, the Project SEARCH team and cooperating agencies (school district representative, vocational rehabilitation counselor, and business liaison) will decide if adaptations, suspension, voluntary withdrawal, or discharge from the program are needed. Immediate disciplinary action may be required in some situations. Project SEARCH staff will enforce program policies and help interns understand the Code of Conduct required by all Monument Health employees. Despite efforts to model appropriate behavior, disciplinary action may sometimes be necessary.

Project SEARCH staff can take disciplinary actions for reasons including, but not limited to:

- Rule violations
- Inappropriate behavior, including sexual harassment
- Theft or misuse of property
- Failure to report criminal charges
- Offensive or abusive language or conduct
- Insubordination
- Poor job performance
- Negligence in handling property
- Criminal convictions
- Willful rule violations
- Working under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Providing false information or falsifying records

Types of Disciplinary Actions:

1. **Verbal Reprimand:** Staff may verbally reprimand an intern for wrongdoing, noting the misbehavior and corrective actions. This will be documented and reviewed with the intern and their family in a meeting when appropriate.
2. **Written Reprimand:** Written reprimands will detail the violation and a corrective plan with timelines. These will be reviewed with the intern and their family in a meeting.
3. **Suspension:** For severe violations, an intern may be suspended. Documentation will be provided to the intern, their Parent/Guardian, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, school district, and other relevant agencies in a meeting. A corrective plan will be discussed.
4. **Discharge:** After consulting with the Project SEARCH Team, staff may recommend discharging an intern if attempts to correct violations fail. Depending on the severity, staff may start at any step of the disciplinary process.

Tobacco, Alcohol and Drug Use

Using tobacco or being under the influence of controlled substances or alcohol during program activities is not allowed and will result in removal from the program.

Job Coaching

Employment Specialists provide indirect support during internship rotations. They help interns learn tasks and understand expectations. Interns are expected to ask for help when needed and take directions from their Supervisor and Mentor. Employment Specialists **do not work** side-by-side with interns all day. The goal is for interns to become independent.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services covers part of the costs for interns to attend the program and receive job coaching. Interns must attend required monthly meetings and complete necessary paperwork to receive these services. Lack of participation could result in loss of services or part of the monthly stipend.

Meals

Interns can bring lunch from home or buy it from the cafeteria. Lunch breaks are 30 minutes but may vary based on site policy and workload. Interns are encouraged to eat with their coworkers/mentors and must return to work on time. Bringing healthy snacks is also recommended.

Technology – Email, Cell Phones, Electronics, and Personal Items

Personal cell phone use is not allowed during training or work time. Phones should be on silent or vibrate. **Bringing electronics and personal items to work is discouraged and at the intern's risk.** Project SEARCH and job site staff are not responsible for lost, misplaced,

damaged, or stolen items. Personal email, cell phones, and electronic devices may only be used during breaks unless otherwise specified.

Computer/Technology Guidelines

Interns will be issued appropriate technology at the start of the year. They are responsible for its proper use. Non-compliance with school district and Project SEARCH policies will result in disciplinary action. Electronic mail, network usage, and stored files are not confidential and may be monitored. The district and Project SEARCH cooperate with authorities in investigations related to computer crime laws.

Interns must agree to the following:

1. Use electronic media and communication to support training/education goals.
2. Use technology resources ethically and educationally.
3. Understand that access to technology resources is a privilege, not a right.
4. Do not transmit material that violates federal or state laws.
5. Do not alter data, computer configurations, or files without consent.
6. Do not access, use, or change files that do not belong to you.
7. Do not reveal personal information.
8. Understand that storage is not private or confidential.
9. Report access to inappropriate websites immediately.
10. Maintain appropriate email content and language.
11. Do not send mass emails, chain letters, or spam, and do not private chat during training.

Dress Code

Interns must follow a business casual dress code, including black or khaki pants and slip-resistant, closed-toe shoes. Shorts, sweatpants, t-shirts, tank tops, camisoles, and sweatshirts with graphics are not allowed unless approved by the Supervisor/Mentor. Interns must maintain personal hygiene, including daily bathing and teeth-brushing. Layered clothing is recommended for varying temperatures.

Respectful Environment

Project SEARCH promotes a respectful, discrimination-free, and harassment-free environment. Any offensive conduct, comment, or gesture will be addressed promptly. Interns must follow the harassment policies of their job sites. If an intern feels they are a victim of discrimination or harassment, they can file a complaint with: Monument Health Human Resources Department 605-755-5510

Medication

Interns who take medication during the workday must manage it themselves. Medications will not be stored in the Project SEARCH office. Notify a Project SEARCH Coordinator if special medication needs arise.

Calendar and Early Dismissals

Project SEARCH follows the Rapid City School District calendar; therefore, days off, early dismissals, snow days, etc. will all be in accordance with the district calendar. Interns and their Families/Guardians are directed to check the Rapid City School District website and local radio and television stations for weather-related announcements. Please see attached school calendar.

Grievance Procedure

Interns have the right to a grievance procedure if they believe a disciplinary action by Project SEARCH Staff is unfair. Interns can verbally present their grievance to a Project SEARCH Coordinator within five working days of the incident. All grievances will be reviewed with the intern's Vocational Rehabilitation counselor and School District Representative.

After discussing the issue with the Project SEARCH Steering Committee and the district representative, a written response will be provided within five working days of receiving the grievance. If the intern or Project SEARCH Steering Committee cannot meet the deadlines, either party can request an extension in writing.

Interns and their families can ask for help from their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor or School District Case Manager to file a grievance. If the intern or their representative is not satisfied with the resolution, they will follow the grievance policy of their home School District.

Contact Information for Families

At Project SEARCH, we want our interns to become more independent. We believe it's important for them to share information about their progress and activities with their families.

We will help students learn how to communicate effectively. We expect students to tell their families what's going on unless their parents or guardians have legal guardianship. In that case, we will talk directly with the guardians.

Our goal is to help students become more independent and ready for work and adult life. Parents and guardians should address any questions and concerns regarding a Intern's work experience to Project SEARCH Staff. **Please do not contact job site Supervisors or Mentors directly.**

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Program Coordinator/Employment Specialist
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Project SEARCH Intern Contract

For my participation in the Project SEARCH program, I will receive a monthly stipend from the SD Division of Rehabilitation Services and Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired. It is not to be considered a wage. I am not an employee of Monument Health or any other rotation site until an official job offer has been extended. I must follow the terms of this contract, or deductions may be taken from my stipend, and/or I could be removed from the program.

- I will call my Program Coordinator when I am absent or tardy. Being late or absent will reduce my stipend.
- I will complete my internship rotations unless I accept competitive employment that meets program guidelines.
- I will attend daily from 8:00-2:30 Monday-Thursday, and 8:00-9:00 on Fridays virtually, unless otherwise directed by Project SEARCH Staff.
- I will apply for support programs that may assist me in reaching the goals of the Project SEARCH program.
- I will dress appropriately and follow the dress code.
- I will wear my Monument badge everyday- if badge is not worn, I will be responsible for getting or replacing badge at a cost of \$11.00
- I will bathe/shower, brush my teeth, wear Deodorant, fix my hair in the morning, and wear clean clothes daily. If my hygiene is unacceptable, I will be sent home to clean up quickly, return to Project SEARCH, and lose part of my stipend.
- I am responsible for my meals. My stipend can be used for this cost. I may bring my own lunch or purchase it at the cafeteria.
- I will follow the rules of the host business and program.
- I will attend and participate in scheduled meetings with my team.
- I will actively seek competitive employment.
- My continuing participation in the Project SEARCH program may be reviewed at any time.

Intern: _____

Date: _____

Guardian: _____

Date: _____

Program Manager: _____

Date: _____