

Intern Success Guide



Project | SEARCH®
BLACK HILLS

August 2025

Table of Contents

Welcome	3
Attendance Policy	3
Internship Rotations	4
Curriculum and Instructional Outcomes	4
Progress.....	4
Discipline Policy	4
Types of Disciplinary Actions.....	5
Tobacco, Alcohol and Drug Use.....	5
Job Coaching.....	5
Meals.....	6
Technology – Email, Cell Phones, Electronics, and Personal Items	6
Computer/Technology Guidelines	6
Dress Code	6
Respectful Environment	6
Medication	7
Calendar and Early Dismissals	7
Grievance Procedure.....	7
Contact Information.....	7
Project SEARCH Intern Contract.....	8
Stipend Deduction	9

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 individual recommendations to establish and uphold the standards of our program. These expectations are designed to prepare interns for the competencies required in the workforce.

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

This guide will familiarize you with the details of our program. It is subject to change based on the needs of the program or decisions made by Project SEARCH 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 expected to attend Project SEARCH every day. If an intern cannot attend, they must inform both Project SEARCH and their job site manager or mentor directly by phone. *Texting is not acceptable unless permission for this type of correspondence has been given.* If the Project SEARCH team/manager or mentor are unavailable, the intern should leave a message with their name and reason for the absence.

Repeated absences will result in a reduction of the daily stipend.

For planned absences, interns must send an email requesting time off a minimum of three days in advance and submit it to the Project SEARCH team 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 Project SEARCH team, Parent, and lead VR Counselor to address the issue and develop a plan of action. A sample stipend deduction form is available at the end of this handbook.

Important Note

The following steps will be taken for more than two absences or for two no-call no-show absences:

- **First Offense:** A meeting will be held with the intern, mentor, and the Project SEARCH team. A phone call will be made to the family and the lead VR Counselor. The intern's family will be contacted, and a \$10 stipend reduction will be given.
- **Second Offense:** A team meeting will be scheduled to discuss the absences and develop a plan to ensure attendance meets program guidelines. The meeting will include the intern, Parent/Guardian, Project SEARCH team, lead VR 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 team 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 Project SEARCH team and manager/mentor. Progress will be communicated through newsletters, emails, phone calls, and meetings involving the Project SEARCH team, 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. The Project SEARCH team 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 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 and/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.
 - a. 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

The Employment Specialist or Skills Trainer collaborates with managers and mentors to support interns throughout their internship rotations. They assist interns in learning job tasks, understanding workplace expectations, and addressing any challenges that may arise. However, they do not provide continuous one-on-one support throughout the workday, as the primary goal is for interns to develop independence on the job. The Special Education Instructor is available to provide additional job coaching when needed.

South Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) helps cover some of the costs associated with internship participation and job coaching services. To maintain eligibility for these supports, interns are required to attend scheduled monthly meetings and complete all necessary paperwork. Failure to meet these participation requirements may result in a loss of services and/or a reduction in 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 with 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 manager/mentor. Interns must maintain personal hygiene, including daily bathing and teeth-brushing. Hair must be clean, combed, groomed, and maintained. Antiperspirants, deodorants, and products that eliminate body odor **MUST** be used. 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, 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 the Project SEARCH staff 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.

Grievance Procedure

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

After discussing the issue with the Project SEARCH Steering Committee and Black Hills Special Services Cooperative, 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 Black Hills Special Services Cooperative 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

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

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

Our goal is to help interns become more independent and ready for work and adult life. Parents and guardians should address any questions and concerns regarding an Intern's work experience to the Project SEARCH Team. **Please do not contact job site managers or mentors directly.**

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Project SEARCH Intern Contract

For my participation in the Project SEARCH program, I will receive a monthly stipend from South Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). 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 Project SEARCH 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 08:00 - 02:30, Monday – Friday*
 - *Exception: Unless otherwise directed by the Project SEARCH Team. Early release at 12:30 PM on the first Friday of every month.
- I will wear my Monument Health badge everyday – if badge is not worn, I will be responsible for getting or replacing badge at a cost of \$11.00.
- I will dress appropriately and follow the dress code.
- I will bathe/shower, brush my teeth, wear deodorant/antiperspirant, 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.
- I have received and understand the Project SEARCH Black Hills Intern Success Guide.

Intern Name (please print): _____

Intern Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian
Name (please print): _____

Parent/Guardian
Signature: _____

Date: _____

Stipend Deduction

Date: _____ Amount of Deduction: _____

Deduction:

- ☐ Hygiene and Grooming – \$5.00 go home first time and stay home second.
- ☐ Badge – \$5.00 Interns cannot be in the hospital without per policy.
- ☐ Excused Absence – \$10.00 taken after one day missed per rotation.
- ☐ Unexcused Absence – refer to Attendance Policy based on the amount of offenses.

1st Offense

\$10 will be applied.

2nd Offense

\$20 will be applied.

3rd Offense

\$25 will be applied.

4th Offense

\$50 will be applied.

- ☐ Uniform Code – \$10.00 be sent home due to improper uniform.
- ☐ Discipline Policy – \$15.00
- ☐ Late – \$5.00 every 3 minutes.
- ☐ Other: _____

Additional Notes (attach document if needed):

Intern Name (please print): _____

Intern Signature: _____

Date: _____

Project SEARCH

Staff Name (please print): _____

Staff Signature: _____

Date: _____

VR Counselor

Name (please print): _____

VR Counselor Signature _____

Date: _____