



Intern Success Guide

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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.

Commitment to Program Expectations

I understand that Project SEARCH is a full-time commitment similar to a job. I am responsible for my own learning, behavior, and progress. I will work toward independence in my internship tasks and daily routines. I am not an employee of Monument Health or any other rotation site until an official job offer has been extended. I understand that failure to meet Program expectations may affect my participation or completion status.

Attendance and Punctuality

Interns are expected to arrive on time each day and follow the program's schedule. If I cannot attend, I will report absences or lateness to the Project SEARCH team and my internship before the start of the day directly by phone. Texting is not acceptable unless permission for this type of communication has been given. If the Project SEARCH team or internship mentor and manager 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 will send an email requesting time off a minimum of three days in advance to the Project SEARCH team for approval. This applies to scheduled doctor appointments, 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 intern, Project SEARCH team, Parent/Guardian, 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 guide.

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.

Dress and Appearance

Interns must maintain a clean, neat, and professional appearance at all times. Interns are required to wear the designated uniform in their internship or adhere to the host business's dress code, which includes black or khaki pants and slip-resistant, closed-toe shoes. The following items are not permitted: jeans, sweatpants, shorts, tank tops, graphic t-shirts, or sweatshirts.

Interns are expected to practice good personal hygiene, including showering, oral care, and the use of deodorant or antiperspirant. All interns must follow established infection control standards. Hair must be clean, combed, groomed, and properly maintained. Layered clothing is recommended to accommodate varying workplace temperatures.

Appropriate footwear must be worn at all times. Jewelry, fragrances, and accessories should be kept to a minimum. Hair must be secured, and nails must be kept short and clean.

Interns are required to wear and visibly display their identification badge at all times while on-site, in accordance with host business requirements. If an ID badge is lost, the intern is responsible for obtaining a replacement at a cost of \$10.00.

Professional Behavior and Workplace Conduct

Project SEARCH is dedicated to creating a respectful, inclusive environment free from harassment or discrimination. We take all concerns seriously and address any offensive conduct immediately. Please follow all workplace rules, safety procedures, and harassment policies established by Monument Health. If you ever feel you are a victim of discrimination or harassment, please file a report with: Monument Health Human Resources, 605-755-5510. We ask that you treat all staff, mentors, and fellow interns with kindness, maintain a positive attitude, and actively contribute to a productive and welcoming learning environment for everyone.

Skill Development and Training Room Participation

All interns are expected to participate fully in training sessions, lessons, and hands-on activities. All assignments and assessments should be completed to the best of your ability. Practice key workplace skills like communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and self-advocacy. We encourage you to embrace feedback and use it as a valuable opportunity to help you grow, learn, and improve your performance during the program.

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.

Internship Rotations

Throughout the year, interns will participate in up to three 10-week rotations and may share their preferences for each placement. Approach each rotation as a professional job experience and take an active role in your daily responsibilities. Focus on learning and mastering tasks in each department as you build confidence and independence. While internships are unpaid, each intern receives a stipend through South Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). If you feel unsure or need support, please don't hesitate to ask questions. Be sure to follow the guidance of department managers, mentors, and the Project SEARCH team.

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.

Employment Preparation and Job Search

As an intern, I will participate in job development activities such as resume building, mock interviews, and career planning while actively pursuing competitive employment opportunities with the support of the Project SEARCH team. I will attend scheduled interviews, hiring events, and employer meetings, and consistently communicate job search progress and outcomes.

Communication and Self-Advocacy

Communicate openly with the Project SEARCH team about any challenges, needs, or concerns, and keep the team informed of any changes that may affect my participation (such as transportation, health, or schedule). Practice self-advocacy by sharing my goals, asking for support when needed, and taking responsibility for my progress.

Family/Support Team Collaboration

My family or support team may be involved in meetings, planning, and communication to help me succeed. I am encouraged to share my goals and progress with them.

Performance and Progress

Intern performance will be evaluated based on attendance, participation in training sessions, attitude, workplace evaluations, and IEP goals, as well as VocFit assessments. Evaluations will be conducted by the Project SEARCH team and department managers/mentors.

Progress will be shared through newsletters, emails, phone calls, and meetings involving the Project SEARCH team, the intern, family members/guardians, a school district representative, and the 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 and Standards of Performance 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.

Confidentiality and HIPAA

Interns are expected to respect and protect the privacy and confidentiality of patients, fellow interns, staff, and everyone they interact with in the healthcare setting. This includes following all applicable privacy laws and regulations, such as HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act).

Interns should only access, use, or share patient information when it is necessary for their role and they have proper authorization. Confidential or patient information should never be shared or discussed outside of appropriate clinical or educational settings.

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.

Lunch and Break Times

Interns are welcome to bring lunch from home or purchase meals from the cafeteria. Lunch breaks are typically 30 minutes, though timing may vary depending on site policies and workload. Interns are encouraged to take their break with coworkers or mentors and should return to work on time. Bringing healthy snacks is also recommended to help stay energized throughout the day.

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.**

Pam Junek
Employment Specialist
(605) 381-8024
PJunek@bhssc.org

Michael Hauge
Skills Trainer
(605) 939-4832
MHauge@bhssc.org

Intern Success Guide Attestation

Program: Project SEARCH Black Hills

Site/Host Business: Monument Health

Intern Name: _____

I attest that I have received a copy of the *Intern Success Guide* for the Project SEARCH program. I understand that this guide provides important information about program expectations, workplace behavior, safety practices, and available supports.

I agree to:

- Review and follow the guidelines and expectations outlined in the guide
- Ask questions if I need clarification or support
- Participate actively in my internship experience

I understand that this guide is a resource to support my success and does not replace site-specific policies or employer requirements.

Signatures

Intern Name (please print): _____

Intern Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian

Name (please print): _____

Parent/Guardian

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Stipend Deduction

Date: _____

Amount of Deduction: _____

Deduction Details

- ☐ Hygiene and Grooming – \$5.00 Go home first time and stay home second.
- ☐ Badge – \$5.00 Interns cannot be in the hospital per policy.
- ☐ Excused Absence – \$10.00 Taken after one day missed per rotation.
- ☐ Unexcused Absence – Refer to Attendance Policy:
1st Offense – \$10.00 2nd Offense – \$20.00 3rd Offense – \$25.00 4th Offense – \$50.00
- ☐ Dress and Appearance – \$10.00 sent home due to improper uniform.
- ☐ Discipline Policy – \$15.00
- ☐ Late – \$5.00 every 3 minutes
- ☐ Other: _____

Additional Notes (attach document if needed):

Signatures

Intern Name (please print): _____

Intern Signature: _____ Date: _____

Project SEARCH Staff Name (please print): _____

Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____

Lead VR Counselor Name (please print): _____

Lead VR Counselor Signature: _____ Date: _____