

# Transition and Post-Secondary Programs at Kennedy Krieger Institute

## Frequently Asked Questions for Host Department

Project SEARCH at Kennedy Krieger Institute is a 10-month, transition program for individual's 18 through 24 years of age that provides hands-on job training through worksite rotations, career exploration, innovative adaptations, and mentoring from experienced staff. Project SEARCH at Kennedy Krieger Institute is a total workplace immersion in which the intern participates in a combination of employment training workshops and three 10-week internship rotations. Project SEARCH is a non-paid internship experience. The Project SEARCH model was founded in 1996 at the Cincinnati Children's Medical Center and has been replicated throughout the U.S. and internationally.

Project SEARCH is driven by collaboration among the following community partners:

- ❖ Hospital or Business: hosts the program, supplies internships and space for a training room
- ❖ School: supplies the instructor, interns,
- ❖ Vocational Rehabilitation: funds skills training, job development, and provides vocational guidance
- ❖ Community Rehabilitation Partner: provides skills trainers and job development
- ❖ Developmental Disability organization: provides long-term support once student is employed
- ❖ Families: support the student through the process and assist with the job search

### What kind of jobs/task and departments can the interns perform?

Experiences through Project SEARCH programs tell us that student interns can perform well in many roles in a variety of departments and settings. They often excel at complex yet systematic tasks that are time intensive, equipment intensive, or paper/computer intensive. Some examples include organizing, cleaning and sterilizing equipment; stocking supplies, data entry, medical records, transporting patients; preparing clinic exam rooms between visits (this can include retrieving patient files); greeting families and escorting the patient to his or her room; registration of patients, electronic filing and scanning; working in nutrition services or customer service; building operations; information systems; and more. With training and minimal accommodations the interns can learn and perform complex tasks that lead to jobs in the community or at the host business.

### Where do the interns come from?

Project SEARCH interns are special education students in their last year of high school or young adults with a disability who have graduated from high school. Interns must interview and be accepted into Project SEARCH. Interns have to meet certain eligibility criteria based on their interests and prior experiences and skills. Applicants participate in a selection process, which includes hands-on assessments and an interview with representatives from the school and host business, and a final selection is made based on their performance and overall aptitude, and their desire to work in the community at the end of the program.

For more information, please contact Stacey Herman at 570-650-1853, email [HermanSt@KennedyKrieger.org](mailto:HermanSt@KennedyKrieger.org), or Tina Schmitt at 443-923-5815 or [Schmitt@KennedyKrieger.org](mailto:Schmitt@KennedyKrieger.org) visit [KennedyKrieger.org/ProjectSEARCH](http://KennedyKrieger.org/ProjectSEARCH)



# Transition and Post-Secondary Programs at Kennedy Krieger Institute

## **Who will train the interns?**

Each Project SEARCH program has a coordinator and skills trainer on site. These professionals work together to train the interns with input from staff in the department where the internship takes place. Before the program begins, the skills trainer and coordinator will develop a job description for each intern by identifying core tasks at each internship sites. The Project SEARCH skills trainer and coordinator are on site at the business each day to work with the interns, visit all of the internship sites, and give guidance and support where needed. If there are any problems with the interns during the rotations, the manager or mentor can contact the coordinator or skills trainer for immediate assistance.

## **How do the roles of the instructor and skills trainer compare?**

The instructor typically acts as the program coordinator and case manager for the interns. S/he also plans and delivers the employability skills curriculum, which consists of 12 different units that teach skills necessary to succeed on the job. The skills trainer will have primary responsibility for training the students at the internship sites so that the intern acquires marketable skills. However, the two work as a team and there is some overlap in their responsibilities so that the student can be successful in reaching the goal of employment.

## **What is the process for matching one of the interns to my department?**

The Director of Post-Secondary Services, Project SEARCH coordinator, skills trainer, and department managers will discuss strengths and interests of the students, and compare them to the skills to be learned in each possible internship rotation. The Vocational Fit Assessment should be performed on all internships and interns in order to have the best information on skills levels and mastered and assisting to make successful internship matches that result in competitive skill acquisition. In addition, each student will develop a career goal and training plan. Based on the goal, the team will identify possible internships that develop marketable job skills. With this information, the coordinator and skills trainer will make preliminary matches during the first few weeks of the program (the orientation period). Managers will interview the interns to give them an opportunity to screen potential interns and make a final selection. If the manager accepts the intern based on the interview and information from the team, s/he will call and confirm the internship appointment with the intern.

## **How does the manager get information about working with the intern? Can the manager ask about the intern's disability?**

Before the intern begins their internship, the Project SEARCH coordinator and skills trainer will share helpful information about interacting with and supervising the intern. Trainings will be provided to the department, managers, and mentors by the Transition and Post-Secondary Services team and Human Resources. Department meetings can be utilized to provide information on successful strategies for training young adults with disabilities. Managers cannot ask about a specific intern's disability; however successful training strategies and tools can be shared. Sometime an intern may wish to talk directly to the department staff about how he or she best learns information and acquires skills. This can be a dynamic engagement activity and provides a forum for people to get to know the intern better. It also gives the intern an opportunity to practice his presentation skills.

## **What will the interns wear?**

The interns will follow the same dress code as the employees in their internship department. If employees are wearing scrubs, the interns will also wear that attire. In departments where other workers wear business casual, the interns may wear Project SEARCH polo shirts and khaki or black pants.

For more information, please contact Stacey Herman at **570-650-1853**, email [HermanSt@KennedyKrieger.org](mailto:HermanSt@KennedyKrieger.org), or Tina Schmitt at **443-923-5815** or [Schmitt@KennedyKrieger.org](mailto:Schmitt@KennedyKrieger.org) visit [KennedyKrieger.org/ProjectSEARCH](http://KennedyKrieger.org/ProjectSEARCH)



# Transition and Post-Secondary Programs at Kennedy Krieger Institute

## **What if an intern needs a special piece of equipment to perform his/her duties?**

If an intern needs a special piece of equipment or a simple adaptation to perform his or her job duties, it can be purchased by one of the partners, such as the school or Vocational Rehabilitation agency. The manager will be consulted, and approval of the business must be obtained before any such equipment is acquired for use at the internship site. Implementation of equipment or adaptive technology, such as special voice-recognition software for someone with a visual impairment or a simple app for an iPad, will be facilitated by the skills trainer and practiced at the internship site so that the student can become proficient at the task with this accommodation.

## **How much time will I need to spend with the intern?**

Each intern will require varying amounts of support depending on their skill level and the complexity of the job tasks. The Project SEARCH skills trainer and coordinator will give support during the first few weeks of each internship. Over the course of the 10-week internship, the student will gain independence in some areas and may need continuing support in other areas. Each department will select a mentor from among its staff who will become the point of contact for the student intern and the skills trainer. The mentor can provide initial training and can support the ongoing teaching/learning process by offering regular feedback about the intern's progress and any concerns that the department has about the intern's performance. The mentor can also add new tasks to the intern's repertoire and tasks are mastered. The mentor will also help to identify and implement natural cues that can be used to prompt the student to perform the job with accuracy and efficiency and reduce dependence on the skills trainer. Other natural supports can be facilitated by including the intern in departmental lunches, staff meetings, holiday events, community service projects, etc.

## **Once the intern masters the core skills, can they be trained for additional skills and tasks?**

The goal for Project SEARCH interns is to gain employment using the skills they learn through their internships. Therefore, it is beneficial for students to become more marketable by learning as many complex and varied skills as possible. As the students become proficient at a given set of tasks, they work to increase their productivity, quality, and accuracy. It is also valuable for interns to be cross trained in other areas.

## **Are the interns employees of the business?**

Individuals participate in Project SEARCH as unpaid interns. If they are still in high school they may receive high school elective credit as well as learn valuable work and employability skills. This is a unique opportunity for them to experience the workplace in a quality organization, network with professionals, and gain marketable skills that will facilitate their employment in their community. To that end, the interns have agreed to follow the dress code and code of conduct of the business. This is a valuable piece of their learning, and the Project SEARCH coordinator and skills trainer, along with internship managers, will implement the same disciplinary procedures that are used for employees in cases of attendance problems or inappropriate behavior. Any drastic measures, such as possible removal from the program, needs to be handled by a team of people that includes the Director of Post-Secondary Services, internship manager, the Project SEARCH coordinator, the school's special education administrator, and a member of the intern's family. Also, if an intern is doing very well in their internship, they can be nominated for typical workplace awards and other recognitions. They should also be included in events such holiday luncheons, community service, team-building activities, etc. These are wonderful opportunities for interns to practice important employability skills such as appropriate workplace conversations, teamwork, and social skills.

For more information, please contact Stacey Herman at 570-650-1853, email [HermanSt@KennedyKrieger.org](mailto:HermanSt@KennedyKrieger.org), or Tina Schmitt at 443-923-5815 or [Schmitt@KennedyKrieger.org](mailto:Schmitt@KennedyKrieger.org) visit [KennedyKrieger.org/ProjectSEARCH](http://KennedyKrieger.org/ProjectSEARCH)



## Transition and Post-Secondary Programs at Kennedy Krieger Institute

### **How will the interns be evaluated and how is that evaluation communicated?**

The coordinator, skills trainer, and department mentor or supervisor will all use the same instrument to evaluate progress, document concerns, and add new skills. The intern will also use this tool for self-evaluation. In this way, the team gets a 360-degree assessment with constructive feedback for improvement. The department mentor will be selected by the manager as the single point of contact for the student, skills trainer, and coordinator. The department mentor will **not** interact with the family, guardian or other support personnel. The instructor and skills trainer will have sole responsibility for communicating directly with the families.

### **What if the intern isn't a good match for my department?**

Interns will be encouraged to stay a minimum of two weeks at any internship, even if it doesn't seem to be a good match at first. If a significant problem develops in an internship, the Project SEARCH coordinator and skills trainer will brainstorm a variety of solutions with the manager and the rest of the student's employment planning team. If the issue cannot be resolved, Project SEARCH staff can find an alternate site for the intern that meets everyone's needs.

### **What if the intern's parent or guardian calls or wants to visit the internship?**

Communication from the families should flow through the Project SEARCH coordinator and skills trainer. Except in special circumstances, it would not be appropriate for a family member to visit the intern on the job. A lunch visit could be arranged through the Project SEARCH staff. If a family member calls regarding skill development, progress, an issue or problem, please direct them to the Project SEARCH on-site staff.

### **What happens if I want to hire an intern during the school year?**

The goal of Project SEARCH is employment, so if an intern gains marketable skills that match labor market needs in your department or organization, we encourage the host business to consider that Project SEARCH intern as a viable candidate. Interns can be hired at any time during the year and can continue to utilize the skills trainer and other supports that they used as interns, as needed. As a new employee, the Project SEARCH intern should receive market-value compensation if they are able to perform satisfactorily in the position.

### **In what other Project SEARCH events might I participate?**

There will be many opportunities to assist in endorsing and communicating Project SEARCH throughout the business as well the community. Managers will be encouraged to participate in Open Houses, tours, and information events about Project SEARCH to recruit the next class of interns as well as to promote awareness of the program to the community. Managers might also be asked to reach out to colleagues at other businesses in the community to encourage the specific hiring of an intern whose skill set is aligned with an available job. The business will also be asked to establish a Business Advisory Committee to encourage employment opportunities for the Project SEARCH interns. All managers and host business liaisons are invited to the annual Project SEARCH conference typically held in July. Department managers and mentors can be great assets to these action-oriented networking groups. All of these activities will help in achieving the goal of Project SEARCH: employment for each graduate.

For more information, please contact Stacey Herman at **570-650-1853**, email [HermanSt@KennedyKrieger.org](mailto:HermanSt@KennedyKrieger.org), or Tina Schmitt at **443-923-5815** or [Schmitt@KennedyKrieger.org](mailto:Schmitt@KennedyKrieger.org) visit [KennedyKrieger.org/ProjectSEARCH](http://KennedyKrieger.org/ProjectSEARCH)



Project | SEARCH®



Kennedy Krieger Institute  
UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

## Transition and Post-Secondary Programs at Kennedy Krieger Institute

### What are the interns' daily, weekly, and annual schedules?

Project SEARCH follows the Kennedy Krieger Institute school calendar. Students begin the program in August and end in late May or early June. The year will begin with a three-week orientation period in which the intern learns his or her way around the facility and is introduced to a variety of internships. During the orientation period, interns participate in typical onboarding activities and training sessions on issues such as safety, confidentiality, and the code of conduct. During the remainder of the year, each intern participates in three unpaid internships, each for approximately ten weeks, learning marketable skills with the goal of employment at the end of the year at the host site or with another employer in their local communities. Interns are not paid during the internships, but they do earn elective credits and gain experience for their resumes. To maximize their opportunities for career exploration, interns will move to a new internship about every ten weeks. In this way, they will gain three separate experiences through the program, which will allow them to learn a variety of new skills and reach their career goals. A department cannot be guaranteed a student for each rotation period, as this will depend on the number of interns, their interests, and the number of internships developed within the host business.

### A typical day will look like:

8:30 am: Arrival at Kennedy Krieger Institute Hospital

8:30 am – 9:30 am: Employability Skills curriculum in the Employment Training Center

9:30 am – 2:00 pm: Internship (with a 30 minute break for lunch)

2:00 pm – 2:30 pm: Review of the day: challenges, issues, additional employability skills curriculum

2:40 pm Adjournment and departure to return home via public transportation

The desired outcome and final goal of Project SEARCH is competitive employment. Some interns will reach that goal by the end of the year. For those interns who have not achieved employment by the end of the school year, the supported employment organization and Vocational Rehabilitation will continue to work with each intern until they secure a job at the host site or with another community employer using the skills they learned in the program.

For more information, please contact Stacey Herman at 570-650-1853, email [HermanSt@KennedyKrieger.org](mailto:HermanSt@KennedyKrieger.org), or Tina Schmitt at 443-923-5815 or [Schmitt@KennedyKrieger.org](mailto:Schmitt@KennedyKrieger.org) visit [KennedyKrieger.org/ProjectSEARCH](http://KennedyKrieger.org/ProjectSEARCH)

