

Preparing Young Adults with IDD for the Workplace

Video transcript

ERIN ROSS BURGESS

Project SEARCH is a one-year business-led internship program for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The interns they have an instructor on site as well as a skills trainer. So that skills trainer is with them in the internships to make sure they learn the skills that are given by each department.

They do have a mentor while they're on-site, who kind of helps them if needed, but they gradually are working independently. So where that skills trainer is there to help them learn the skills in the beginning, they slowly back away so they're working independently.

JASMIN WHITE

The transitional age is very challenging.

The transition is basically two different stages of life – a student versus an employee, a teenager versus an adult. Those transitions in skills and requirements and expectations of your role as an individual is the transition.

They're used to a certain type of schedule. The bus picking them up every day, and going to school, and having the same routine, the same teachers, the same students. Now you're in a work field working with multiple different people, staff, employees, mentors, customers. So that role is completely changed 360. So it's a lot for them to get used to, but with time they do get used to it.

ERIN ROSS BURGESS

Hudson County was fortunate enough to receive funding through the state two years. So the first year of funding we used it as a capacity building opportunity. We were able to create a comprehensive needs assessment. We had approximately 250 respondents, and approximately

half of those individuals self-identified as someone with a disability. So we were able to get information from individuals with disabilities on what they truly wanted Hudson County to address, which was expanding opportunities for individuals with disabilities as well as access to affordable transportation.

JASMIN WHITE

Project SEARCH is the ideal program to be in because it teaches them the life skills that they need to be within, you know, the adult workforce.

It could be the basic skills – how to take the train by yourself, how to just have a conversation with somebody, or just how to have eye contact with somebody.

Little things like that that we take for granted sometimes, our individuals need those skills heavily.

STEVEN PARDAL

I learned many things. I learned how to be independent, I grew maturity, and I learned how to manage my timing.

JOHAN HEREDIA

I learned how to be independent, work as a team as well, and also how to be flexible as well.

CAMILO HERRERA

I needed to know how to, like, answer a phone properly by reading the phone scripture. I did that on my first rotation. That was like the first department they put me in.

I learned, like, how to use computers, help people sign in, and learn how to restart a printer or a computer when people had to use them.

It turns out to be I was really amazing at signing students in for appointments and canceling appointments when needed and also stating which ones will be face to face or online.

ERIN ROSS

So the good thing about Project SEARCH is it does help them start a career, not just have a job. So in some instances they've received raises, they are receiving benefits, and they are receiving opportunities to grow. So Project SEARCH is not just for a job. It actually can help interns have a career.

CRAIG GUY

Project SEARCH is a bridge from our students to our workforce by providing them the opportunity to promote independence for the students, also providing ongoing services to ensure that the interns are successful in their employment.

JOHAN HEREDIA

I'm really happy for them being, Project SEARCH being in my life. They mostly helped me out, and I still remember their training every single day.