Employment Opportunities for Transition-Age Youth with Intellectual Disabilities

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Purpose of Today’s Presentation: To provide an overview of Project SEARCH at NIH, an innovative school-to-work transition program that provides workplace training and hiring opportunities to young adults with intellectual disabilities.
Why Did We Implement Project SEARCH?

- Aligns with NIH Mission
- Supports Executive Order to Hire Individuals with Disabilities
- Represents a Well-Organized Collaboration
- NIH Clinical Center has Spectrum of Entry Level Hiring Opportunities
NIH Clinical Center
America’s Clinical Research Hospital

Leading the global effort in training today’s investigators and discovering tomorrow’s cures.
The Project SEARCH Model

- School
- Employer
- VR System

Ivymount School and Programs
Exceptional Programs for Exceptional Students

SEEC
Seeking Equality, Empowerment, and Community for People with Developmental Disabilities
NIH Program Overview

- Provides 30-week unpaid internships for up to 12 individuals annually
- Each intern completes 3 ten-week rotations
- Demand-side model
- Interns matched to worksites based on skill and ability
- Monday-Friday: 1 hour classroom/5 hours work
- Full worksite immersion

**GOAL:** To generate an untapped recruitment stream for NIH and to secure paid employment outcomes for each intern...can use Schedule A for hiring!
Project SEARCH Nationally

• Established in 1996 at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center
• Currently 200 sites across 20 states and 4 countries
• Sites include:
  • Hospitals
  • Banks
  • Federal agencies
  • Businesses
  • Universities
Examples of Assignments

• Patient bar-coding
• Hand hygiene
• Hospitality
• Pharmacy
• OR sterilization
• Automating linen inventory
• Data analysis on NIH alumni tracking
• Supply management
• Information technology
## Our Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Year 1 2010-2011</th>
<th>Year 2 2011-2012</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interns Graduated</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interns Hired at NIH</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interns Hired in Community</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hires Still Employed</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
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</tbody>
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73% Hired

88% Sustained
Significance of Project SEARCH

• 30% lower national employment rate for individuals with disabilities (Kesler Foundation/National Organization on Disability, 2010)

• Employment gaps most problematic for transition-age youth (18-21) with intellectual disabilities (Butterworth, Smith, Hall, Migliore, & Winsor, 2010)

• Transition activities include:
  • completing secondary education
  • obtaining meaningful employment
  • gaining financial independence
  • making autonomous decisions
Societal Challenges

- Shifting the paradigm from segregated to integrated employment
- Increasing the notion of presumptive employability
- Moving from employer awareness to engagement
- Paying attention to factors that affect workplace assimilation
  - perceptions of fairness of and expense of accommodations
  - Other judgments about disabled employees
Reasonable Accommodation

Skill Level and Independence in:

– Intellectual Functioning
– Social Adaptation
Important Social Agenda

• Battling high unemployment levels for individuals with intellectual disabilities
• Overcoming stigma among employers and co-workers
• Understanding reasonable accommodations for individuals with ID
• Embracing organizational diversity
• Finding meaningful work
Meeting Business Goals

• Viewing businesses as vital partners in school-to-work transition planning
• Identifying important work that needs to be done
• Re-engineering the work so it can be accomplished
• Finding willing internal partners
• Understanding the value equation
• Managing organizational change
Ingredients for Success

• Collaboration across organizational boundaries
• Strong internal project manager
• Leadership support
• Employee accountability
• Coworker acceptance
• Continual learning
• Communication plan
Key Lessons

- To reject negative stereotypes
- A deeper understanding of the potential contributions of intellectually disabled people in organizations
- An appreciation of the remarkable skills of this diverse group of individuals
Next Steps

- Address sustainable employment
- Increase further participation within NIH
- Identify additional job sites