

INFORMATION ON PROJECT SEARCH CELEBRATION

FEBRUARY 26, 2010

11:00 UNTIL NOON

1250 EAST MARSHALL STREET

THE LEARNING CENTER

MAIN HOSPITAL, FIRST FLOOR

On February 26, 2010 at 11:00 AM, there will be a celebration of the implementation of Project SEARCH at the VCU Health System. The celebration will recognize the efforts of all parties involved to successfully implement a program to teach students with significant disabilities job skills for competitive employment. The celebration will include words of welcome from top representatives from the VCU Health System, Richmond Public Schools, Virginia Department of Education, Department of Rehabilitative Services, and the VCU Rehabilitation Research & Training Center located in the School of Education. Student participants will present certificates of recognition to several hospital department representatives attending the celebration. There will be a short tour of two internship sites.

BACKGROUND ON PROJECT SEARCH

Project SEARCH is a one year, high school transition program that provides skills training and work experience for young adults with significant disabilities ages 18 to 22. Originally conceived to solve hospital staffing challenges and to increase employment opportunities for qualified persons with disabilities, this program uses a business model that provides one point of entry for youth with disabilities, streamlines resources for schools and community organizations and becomes a win-win situation for all involved. The cornerstone of Project SEARCH is total immersion in the employer agency with a typical day involving onsite classroom

Why is the celebration important?

Project SEARCH provides employment and education opportunities for individuals with significant disabilities. The program is dedicated to workforce development that benefits the individual, community and workplace. This is critical for students with significant disabilities for their future employment opportunities. National statistics report that a low percentage of these students participate in integrated employment settings. More opportunities are needed for individuals with significant disabilities in the areas of employment and community living.

instruction in employability and independent living skills, participation at a worksite rotation, lunch with co-workers, and feedback from the instructor.

Project SEARCH was launched in the private sector in 1996 and currently has over 140 sites in 42 states with both private and public employers as well as the UK and Australia.

The ultimate goal upon program completion is competitive employment in the community utilizing the skills learned on the internships and throughout the program.

PROJECT SEARCH AT VCU HEALTH SYSTEM

The Project SEARCH site implemented in the city of Richmond is in collaboration between the VCU Health System, Richmond Public Schools, Virginia Department of Education (who provided funding for project implementation), VCU School of Education's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, and the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services.

The implementation of the project began in September 2009. Seven students with significant disabilities from Richmond Public Schools are on-site at the VCU Health System during the entire school year and will complete three 10-week rotations in a variety of departments. Students are given support through a job coach and work site accommodations to achieve independence.

Current internship sites for students include: Clinical Engineering Distribution, Ophthalmology, Patient Transportation, Rehabilitation OT/PT, Food & Nutrition Services, Aramark, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Ambulatory/Women's Clinic, Central Supply, Medical Surgical Nursing, Pediatric Research, and Central Sterile.

ROLE OF PROJECT SEARCH TEAM MEMBERS

- Virginia Department of Education provided start up funds to initiate the first year of implementation.
- VCU Health System provides the classroom, business liaisons and internship sites.
- Richmond Public Schools recruits students and provides an onsite classroom teacher.
- Virginia DRS provides individualized employment supports.
- VCU RRTC provides oversight and coordination to build an infrastructure and job coach assistance during the first year of implementation.
- The Project Search Advisory Team provides input and overall guidance for project implementation.