

## Florida Project SEARCH Adult Model Program Announcement Funded by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC)



The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc, National Project SEARCH, RESPECT of Florida, and the Florida Department of Education – Division of Vocational Rehabilitation are pleased to announce the implementation of four Florida Project SEARCH Adult models.

The FDDC entered into a contract with RESPECT of Florida to identify four Employment Centers that would partner with Project SEARCH and the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to serve the first adult cohorts in January of 2022. RESPECT of Florida has a long history of providing individuals with disabilities the opportunity to work on State contracts that provide a wide-variety of commodities and services and has recently funded multiple microenterprises to assist individuals with developing their own businesses. The Employment Centers identified for implementing the Florida Project SEARCH Adult Model are:

- The Arc of Putnam County - Palatka, FL
- ARC of Martin County – Stuart, FL
- Goodwill Suncoast - Clearwater, FL
- MacDonald Training Center – Tampa, FL

The FDDC also entered into an agreement with the international, award winning, National Project SEARCH program for program licensure, training, and technical assistance. Project SEARCH is a nine-month internship program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It is targeted for individuals whose goal is competitive employment. The program takes place in a quality healthcare, hospitality, or other large business setting where total immersion in the workplace facilitates a learning-lab environment. The interns will acquire employability and marketable work skills through their participation in three different 10-week internships, accompanied by a daily employability skills curriculum to reinforce critical competitive skills. The interns work with a team that includes their family, an instructor, a skills trainer, and local and state agencies to create and reach their employment goal.

## BENEFITS of the Project SEARCH Model:

### *Benefits to the Interns:*

- ❖ Participate in a variety of internships within the host hospital/business.
- ❖ Acquire competitive, transferable, and marketable job skills.
- ❖ Gain increased independence, confidence, and self-esteem.
- ❖ Obtain individualized coaching, instruction, and feedback.
- ❖ Develop linkages to Vocational Rehabilitation and other adult service agencies.

### *Benefits to the Host Business:*

- ❖ Access to a new, diverse, talent stream with skills that match labor needs.
- ❖ Interns and employees with disabilities who serve as role models for customers.
- ❖ Access to a demographic of the economy with intense buying power: people with disabilities represent one of the fastest growing market segments in the United States.
- ❖ Increased regional and national recognition through marketing of this unique program.
- ❖ Increased performance and retention in high-turnover, entry-level positions.

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation have a strong history of supporting the expansion of the typical Project SEARCH model, which serves young adults in their last year of high school participation. Because of their joint belief in the model and their overall commitment to competitive employment for all individuals with disabilities, they are both funding and supporting the development of the Florida Project SEARCH Adult Model.

In addition to supporting the planning, implementation, and staffing of these four new adult programs, the FDDC is sponsoring research by Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center to evaluate the program. CCHMC researchers will measure interns' progress and outcomes in employment and self-sufficiency. The study will include surveys and focus groups with interns, families, instructors, skills trainers, host business, and interagency personnel to measure the efficacy of these four new adult Project SEARCH programs.

Additional information on each partner can be found via the following links:

- FDDC: [www.fddc.org](http://www.fddc.org)
- Project SEARCH: [www.projectsearch.us](http://www.projectsearch.us)
- RESPECT of Florida: [www.respectofflorida.org](http://www.respectofflorida.org)
- Vocational Rehabilitation: [Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation \(rehabworks.org\)](http://Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (rehabworks.org))

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