



Resource Series provides MCOs with best practices, guidance and/or reference materials. This series does not include directions on contract requirements or directives from the Department.

Project SEARCH™ for Family Care and Family Care Partnership members

Purpose: This resource memo is intended to explain Project SEARCH, an evidence-based approach for vocational training, and the manner in which a Managed Care Organization (MCO) may be involved in supporting members in Project SEARCH. Typically, Project SEARCH students are supported through their school district and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). However, if a young adult Family Care member (ages 18-25) has already graduated from high school and would benefit from the employment training available through Project SEARCH, the interdisciplinary care team (IDT), including the member and his or her representatives, will determine whether to refer that individual to Project SEARCH and provide a portion of the funding. The Department of Workforce Development/Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) could also fund a portion of the Project SEARCH cost.

Project SEARCH Background

Project SEARCH was developed in 1996 by Nurse J. Erin Riehle, then the Director of the Emergency Department at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. All Project SEARCH sites must be licensed by Cincinnati Children's Hospital and must comply with program model fidelity standards. In Wisconsin, the Office of Family Care Expansion is the agency that assists Wisconsin sites in becoming licensed as Project SEARCH sites.

The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program is a unique, business-led, one year school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations. Project SEARCH provides real-life work experience to help young adults with significant disabilities make successful transitions from school to adult life. At the completion of the training program, students with significant intellectual disabilities are prepared for employment in rewarding jobs. The presence of a Project SEARCH High School Transition Program can bring about long-term changes in business culture that have far-reaching positive effects on attitudes about hiring people with disabilities and the range of jobs in which they can be successful.

For more information on Project SEARCH, visit www.projectsearch.us. If you have any specific questions regarding Project SEARCH in Wisconsin, please email DHSOFCE@wisconsin.gov.

Selection Criteria for Project SEARCH Participants

Each Project SEARCH site has a formal application process that must be followed by all applicants. Potential participants may obtain applications from the Project SEARCH sites. A selection committee comprised of program stakeholders reviews every application to identify young adults whose vocational goals will be well served by the program. Baseline criteria considered for Project SEARCH participants are that the young adult has appropriate hygiene, social and communication skills, must not be harmful to self or others, and should be independent in self-cares and in medication administration.

Project SEARCH participants must have an active DVR case upon starting Project SEARCH. Project SEARCH prioritizes participation for currently enrolled high school students. Some of those high school students may also be Family Care members since special education students are eligible to remain in school up to age 22. A Project SEARCH site may at times enroll young adults who have already graduated from high school (up to age 25), in order to have full capacity in the program. Most programs require 10-12 young adults to be sustainable. The MCO may determine, through the individualized assessment and RAD process, that Project SEARCH would be an appropriate and effective support for that member and then authorize those services. A young adult who is a Family Care or Partnership member may also approach their MCO and, with their IDT, to determine if Project SEARCH is appropriate.

The Project SEARCH Experience

Each day, young adults report to the host business, learn employability skills in the classroom and job skills while participating in three or four unpaid internships at the host business during the year. The classroom curriculum stresses employability and independent living skills; self-esteem, communication, career exploration and job search, interviewing skills, job retention, money management, and independent living. In the work internships, young adults build communication and problem-solving skills, as well as job specific skills. Participants are encouraged to use public transportation to the Project SEARCH site, if available.

The goal for young adults upon program completion is competitive, community employment at a minimum of 16 hours/week, at or above minimum wage, in non-seasonal, integrated employment.

In Wisconsin, there currently are seven Project SEARCH sites. The sites are William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital and University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics located in Madison; Children's Hospital of Wisconsin in Wauwatosa; Ministry St. Joseph's Hospital in Marshfield; the Wal-Mart Distribution Center #6025 in Menomonie; St. Elizabeth Hospital in Appleton and Waukesha Memorial Hospital in Waukesha. **Currently, only the programs at Ministry St. Joseph's Hospital, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and Waukesha Memorial Hospital will enroll young adults who are not in high school.**

Partners and Funders in Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH is based on a partnership and braided funding structure that typically includes a local business, school partners and DVR. All partners are vital to the success of the program.

The host business, such as a hospital, provides a training classroom, a business liaison and internships for on-the-job training, and orientation services.

The school partner hires and supports an instructor for each site. For a Family Care member who is no longer in high school, the MCO may decide to fund the portion typically funded by the school system.

DVR provides vocational counseling and coordination, in addition to funding a vocational service agency to support young adults in their internships and assist with final job placement. DVR may also provide other necessary services to assist individuals with their employment goals.

For the school district or the MCO, the cost per young adult member varies by site, but in 2013, cost averaged \$6,500 to \$7,000 per member for the school year. DVR contributes to the cost of Project SEARCH simultaneously along with the MCO or the school. In 2013, DVR contributed between \$6,700-\$8,000 per student for job support and other services.

Family Care Project SEARCH authorization for a young adult not in school

- The MCO pays for the training component of Project SEARCH, whereas DVR pays for the job coaching component.
- The MCO pays the instructor¹ portion of the costs associated with the young adult.
- The training component of Project SEARCH can be included in the Family Care benefit package as either community-based pre-vocational services or consumer education and training. The specific payment rate is negotiated by the MCO with the school to provide the trainer/instructor.

For Project SEARCH participants still in high school, the individual's school and DVR would pay for Project SEARCH. Once the individual is employed in the community (either at the Project SEARCH site or elsewhere) the MCO would provide individualized follow along services as determined by the member-centered plan. For young adults who are not in high school, care teams may decide (by using the RAD process) that providing funding for the Project SEARCH instructor and administrative support is the most cost-effective way to help meet the member's employment long-term care outcome. Once the member is employed and DVR closes the member's case file, the long-term care support agency would continue to provide their typical interdisciplinary care team support for the member and long-term job support as determined by the member-centered plan.

¹ The instructor must be a Certified Special Education Teacher with experience in school-to-work transition, which is a requirement of the Project SEARCH model.

Coding for Project SEARCH as a Family Care benefit

MCOs should code Project SEARCH services by using the correct procedure code and modifiers for community-based prevocational services or training and consumer education.

The following table provides further detail related to the correct procedure code and modifiers:

Service	Time Units	Procedure Code	Modifier	Project SEARCH	SPC
Community-Based Pre-Voc	15 min	T2015	UA/U8	HB	108
	1 hour	T2015	UA	HB	108
	per diem	T2014	UA	HB	108
	each	T2014	UA/U7	HB	108
Consumer Education & Training	15 min	S9445		HB	113
	each	S9445		HB	113

Primary Modifiers;

UA = Community Based Pre-Vocational

Secondary Modifiers;

U7 = Each

U8 = Periodic (1 unit = 15 min, 4 units = 1 hour, etc.)

HB = Adult Non-geriatric