

OASIS · AT A GLANCE

Project SEARCH and other Michigan employment pathways

A year spent training entirely inside a real workplace, not a classroom simulation, changes what employers see and what students believe about themselves. Five major Michigan employers already host it. Most families never hear about it until senior year is almost over.

BY JIM PALASTY · 10 MIN READ · A YEAR-LONG INTERNSHIP MOST FAMILIES NEVER HEAR ABOUT

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MAJOR MICHIGAN EMPLOYERS
HOSTING PROJECT SEARCH SITES

University of Michigan Health System, Beaumont Hospital, Henry Ford Health System, Meijer corporate headquarters, and MGM Grand Detroit all host Project SEARCH internship sites for students in their final year of eligibility.

How it works

THREE STEPS

STEP 1

The final year of eligibility

Students in their last year of school-based special education services are the target population for Project SEARCH.



STEP 2

A full year inside a real workplace

Rotating internships happen entirely on-site at a host business, not in a school building or simulated setting.



STEP 3

Placement is the actual goal

The program is built around competitive, integrated employment outcomes, not simply a resume-building exercise.

Michigan Project SEARCH host sites

University of Michigan Health System	Ann Arbor, healthcare-based internship rotations
Beaumont Hospital	Multiple metro Detroit locations
Henry Ford Health System	Metro Detroit, healthcare-based rotations
Meijer corporate headquarters	Retail and corporate rotations
MGM Grand Detroit	Hospitality and service-industry rotations

THE INTERNSHIP THAT BECAME A PAYCHECK

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Devon's senior year transition coordinator mentioned Project SEARCH almost as a footnote during an IEP meeting, and the application window was already tightening by the time his mother followed up. She pushed the enrollment through in time. Devon spent his final school year rotating through departments at a Beaumont Hospital site, and walked out with a part-time paid position in environmental services that the internship had built toward the entire year.

NOBODY PROMISED HIM A JOB. THE YEAR OF REAL WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE MADE THE OFFER POSSIBLE ANYWAY.

What matters, at a glance

MICHIGAN SPECIFIC

Year-long, workplace-based

The entire program happens on-site at a real business, with rotating internships across multiple departments.

Five major Michigan host sites

University of Michigan Health System, Beaumont, Henry Ford, Meijer HQ, and MGM Grand Detroit all currently host programs.

Enrollment windows close early

Applications need to happen well before senior year starts. Families who ask too late miss the window entirely for that year.

Built for complex support needs

The program specifically targets students who need significant support to access competitive employment, not just mild accommodations.

Beyond Project SEARCH

Customized employment through MRS, Michigan Career and Technical Institute, and IPS supported employment models all offer alternatives.

MRS partnership required

Michigan Rehabilitation Services works alongside Project SEARCH to fund job coaching and long-term follow-along support.

BRING THESE · CHECK AS YOU GO

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| ☐ Your family member's current IEP and years of eligibility remaining | ☐ Contact information for the nearest Project SEARCH host site |
| ☐ Michigan Rehabilitation Services' regional office contact | ☐ A list of workplace strengths and interests to guide internship rotations |
| ☐ A backup plan (MCTI, IPS, customized employment) if Project SEARCH isn't available | |

YOUR MOVE

When your family member is approaching their final year of eligibility, here is what to do

- 1 Ask your transition coordinator about Project SEARCH well before senior year.
- 2 Confirm which Michigan host site serves your region.
- 3 Apply within the enrollment window, which closes early.
- 4 Connect with Michigan Rehabilitation Services for coordinated funding.
- 5 Ask about job coaching and long-term follow-along support.
- 6 Explore customized employment through MRS if Project SEARCH isn't accessible.

A year inside a real workplace teaches things a classroom simulation never can. The application window doesn't wait for you to find out about it.

RESOURCES NAMED IN THIS POST

projectsearch.us · <https://www.projectsearch.us>
 michigan.gov/mrs · <https://www.michigan.gov/mrs>

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Jim Palasty is the founder of OASIS for Autism and a single father of an adult autistic daughter in Michigan.