

Action Request Transmittal Vocational Rehabilitation



Howard Fulk, Policy and Training Manager

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Topic: Other

Subject: Oregon Project Search Requirements

Number: VR-AR 22-05

Issue date: 06/03/2022

Due Date: 06/03/2022

Applies to (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All DHS employees | <input type="checkbox"/> County Mental Health Directors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Area Agencies on Aging: {Select type} | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aging and People with Disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self Sufficiency Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> ODDS Children's Intensive In Home Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> County DD program managers | <input type="checkbox"/> Stabilization and Crisis Unit (SACU) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Support Service Brokerage Directors | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vocational Rehabilitation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ODDS Children's Residential Services | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child Welfare Programs | |

ACTION REQUIRED:

This transmittal provides updated guidance surrounding Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) requirements for clients participating in a Project Search Program:

- Identifying potential applicants for local Project Search programs
- VR Counselor responsibilities
- Steering Committee participation
- Development of the Individual Plan of Employment (IPE) and Authorization for Purchase (AFP) procedures

BACKGROUND:

Project Search is a nationally recognized internship-based model that provides individuals with disabilities the opportunity to gain employment skills in nontraditional, complex and competitive and integrated workplace.

There are currently four active Project Search sites around Oregon. Currently, these sites are Eugene, Salem and the Portland Metro area. Additional locations are tentatively anticipated to open in Fall of 2022.

For more information see:

[Employment First: Project Search Policies and Procedures](#)

[National Project Search site](#)

PROCEDURES:

Previously, Project Search site locations referred individuals directly to VR for application to the Project Search program. Then VR counselors completed the lengthy intake, eligibility determination and plan development process.

In collaboration with the Oregon Office of Developmental Disabilities (ODDS), the previous process is amended. Now ODDS and VR help identify eligible individuals whose vocational goal matches the Project Search internship work experiences.

VR staff must follow the new process to identify individuals who may benefit from the Project Search Program:

- The VR Statewide Project Search Coordinator coordinates with branch offices about upcoming Project Search opportunities.
- Counselors from each office located near the Project Search Program consider individuals from their caseload who might benefit or be interested in applying for an internship.
- VR counselors provide information about the Project Search program to clients (and their team) and assist with the application process for those interested in applying.

Information the VR counselor may consider sharing with potential participants:

- Videos of successful interns from the National Project Search site.
- Information regarding the specific tasks/job description for the Project Search opportunity.

- Invitation for the Project Search vendor to meet with the individual and their team to provide more specific information and answer questions.
- Potential tour of the host business to review the location and work environment.

Eligibility for Project Search Internship

Individuals with disabilities must meet these requirements to be eligible to participate in Oregon Project Search:

- Individuals must be eligible for both the Office of Developmental Disability Services (ODDS) and Vocational Rehabilitation, and,
- Students who graduate with a regular high school diploma, and are eligible for ODDS services, OR,
- Students who are no longer eligible for services under IDEA and have reached the age of 21 (or until a regular high school diploma is attained).

Internships are determined through an application and interview process. If an individual is accepted; they will be expected to:

- Maintain attendance and participation in the Project Search Program.
- Participate in the internship site for six hours a day, Monday through Friday.
- Upon completion of the Project Search program, individuals are encouraged to work a minimum of 20-25 hours per week.

Individual plan of employment (IPE) Development for Project Search participants

Individuals who are eligible for ODDS and VR, and who have applied for and been accepted to an eligible Project Search Internship must develop an IPE reflecting services provided during the Project Search internship.

NOTE: Project Search Sites each have a specific Community Rehabilitation Provider (contracted VR Job Placement vendor) who provides training and job coaching for interns.

Individuals accepted to complete an internship with a Project Search host site, **must:**

- **Discontinue** working with other contracted job developers
- An IPE must be developed or amended for the Project Search vendor

- Career Exploration for the Project Search Vendor must be added or amended to the plan
- The VR counselor must review the Project Search IPE Checklist prior to developing a plan. (See [VR-AR 22-05 Oregon Project Search Requirements](#))

IPE or plan amendment procedures for Project Search interns:

The individual must be accepted for Project Search internship and then a plan can be developed or amended:

- If a participant has an IPE with a new occupational goal, then a new plan must be developed to participate in the Project Search program. The new vendor must be added.
- If a participant has an IPE with a vocational goal that matches the task description for the Project Search program and file documentation demonstrates the selected vocational goal is of interest to the client based on informed choice, the plan must be amended to change vendors and add services.
- Case notes describing the reason and rationale for client choice to participate in Project Search is best practice.
- The VR counselor must review the Project Search IPE Checklist prior to making any plan amendments. (See [VR-AR 22-05 Oregon Project Search Requirements](#))

When individuals are hired by the Project Search host site:

- The IPE is amended to include Direct Placement and Direct Retention services.

When individuals exit the Project Search program and want competitive integrated employment:

- The IPE is amended to include job placement services.
- A referral payment is not necessary unless there is a change in vendors.

Authorization for Purchase (AFP) Procedures

Oregon VR pays for the instructional time for Project Search.

- **The current rate is \$23.00 per hour for one hour a day for five days a week.** VR does not pay for instruction time if the individual is absent or during holidays or breaks.
- An AFP should be issued prior to the start date for the internship. The AFP should be issued for one month of instructional time for Career Exploration.

Example of AFP language:

Career Exploration for Project Search for the month of March at \$23.00 per hour for up to five hours per week for 23 days.

Additional considerations required for branch offices with a local Project Search location:

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors:

Project Search is based on a fidelity model which requires ongoing monitoring of program performance, and regular performance reviews for interns.

- The VR counselor will attend quarterly performance reviews and the commencement ceremony for interns which is usually scheduled in June if applicable.
- The VR counselor will issue an AFP for Career Exploration prior to the first day of the month for the anticipated hours.
- The VR counselor will review monthly career exploration reports and billing invoice to ensure accuracy.

Steering Committee Representative:

Project Search requires staff from VR and ODDS to participate on the Steering Committee for each program site.

Branch Managers will appoint a VRC to participate on the Steering Committee.

The VR Steering Committee representative will:

- Participate in program planning, marketing and outreach, recruitment and selection.

- Participate on the selection committee during the skills assessment day and to help choose interns for the program year.
- Attend Project Search site meetings and report program and individual performance information to the counselor of record.
- Participate in ongoing quality improvement meetings as applicable

Contact the Statewide Project Search Coordinators for questions or concerns:

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REFERENCES:

[Employment First: Project Search Policies and Procedures](#)

[VR-AR 19-07 Project Search Rate Change \(12/1/2019\)](#)

[National Project Search site](#)

[ODDS Employment Services for Transition-age Individuals and Youth while Special Education and Related Services Remain Available under IDEA](#)

Field/stakeholder review Yes No

If yes, reviewed by: VR Executive team; VR- SRC Policy Legislation & Budget Committee

If you have any questions about this action request, contact:

Contact(s): VR Policy Team	
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Email: VR.Policy@dhsosha.state.or.us	