

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services  
600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck ND 58505**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**Meetings scheduled to establish new job internship program for youth with disabilities**  
***Parents, educators, employers and programs serving youth invited***

BISMARCK, N.D. – The N.D. Council on Developmental Disabilities and the N.D. Department of Human Services' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation are co-hosting informational meetings in Bismarck and Fargo the last week of May to discuss establishing a new internship program at two sites in North Dakota for students with disabilities. Called Project Search, the program will provide job internship opportunities for students age 18-21 in their last year of high school. Parents, educators, employers, and representatives from organizations serving youth are invited to attend.

The Bismarck meeting is May 27, from 2 to 5 p.m., at the Bismarck-Mandan Chamber of Commerce, 1640 Burnt Boat Drive. The Fargo informational meeting is May 28, 9 a.m. – noon, at the N.D. State College of Science-Fargo Skills and Technology Center at 1305 19th Ave. N.

“Establishing a Project Search internship program in North Dakota will benefit students with disabilities who want to explore a variety of careers and will benefit employers interested in a new, diverse and reliable talent pool for entry-level positions,” said council Executive Director Cheryl Hess.

Hess said the council wants to support the cost of licensing two sites in the state, and hopes to have the program operating next fall. While the informational meetings are being held in Bismarck and Fargo, other communities may be considered as sites and representatives are encouraged to attend or to contact Hess.

Hess said the program requires collaboration between agencies, local schools, and employers. Each participating student will work with a team that includes their family, a special education teacher, and a vocational rehabilitation counselor to create an employment goal and support the student as he or she transitions from school to adulthood and work.

Individuals with disabilities who need accommodations, including auxiliary aids, to participate in the informational meetings can contact Hess at 701-328-4847, ND Relay TTY 800-366-6888, or [chess@nd.gov](mailto:chess@nd.gov).

The council advocates for policy changes that promote choice, independence, productivity, and inclusion for North Dakotans with developmental disabilities. It also supports projects and activities that maximize opportunities in these areas for consumers and families.

For council information, go online to [www.ndcpd.org/SCDD/](http://www.ndcpd.org/SCDD/) or contact Hess at 701-328-4847, ND Relay TTY 800-366-6888, or [chess@nd.gov](mailto:chess@nd.gov).

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