



CENTER FOR
DEVELOPMENT
& DISABILITY

Project SEARCH New Mexico

NEWSLETTER

March 2025

WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER!

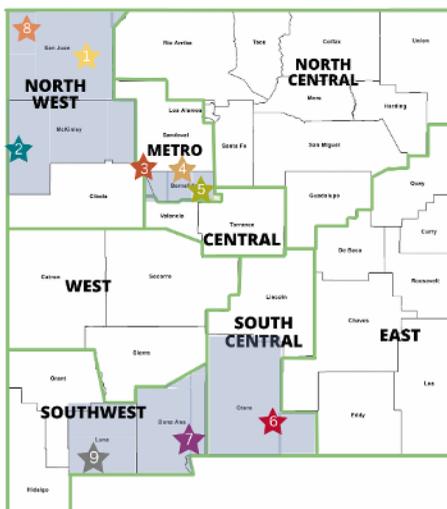


It is with great excitement that we share our first ever New Mexico Statewide Project SEARCH Newsletter! Each of our **nine Project SEARCH programs** are providing unique, person-centered career and independent living preparation for young adults with disabilities. We hope this newsletter will provide a valuable way to collectively share in each other's successes and foster more site-to-site collaboration. Wishing you all a triumphant intern recruitment and job development season!



Alex Rios, MPH, CESP, ACRE
Project SEARCH New Mexico Statewide Coordinator
University of New Mexico Center for Development and Disability

WHERE IS PROJECT SEARCH IN NEW MEXICO?



- 1. Farmington Municipal Services, Farmington**
- 2. Hilton Garden Inn, Gallup**
- 3. Presbyterian Rust Medical Center, Rio Rancho**
- 4. Embassy Suites Hotel, Albuquerque**
- 5. UNM Hospital, Albuquerque**
- 6. Holloman Air Force Base, Alamogordo**
- 7. The Hive Education, Sunland Park**
- 8. Central Consolidated Schools, Shiprock**
- 9. City of Deming, Deming**

SAVE THE DATE

April 10-11, 2025

Reaching New Heights in Supported Employment Conference

Santa-Ana Star Casino, Bernalillo

Register Here

July 14-18, 2025

Project SEARCH National Conference

Austin, Texas

Register Here

View a special conference message from National Project SEARCH on page 4



FEATURED GRADUATE



Kris Flack

City of Farmington Project SEARCH Graduate

Farmington's own Kris Flack, a proud City of Farmington Project SEARCH at Chick-Fil-A since October 2024.

His dedication and incredible work ethic recently earned him the prestigious title of Champion for the State of New Mexico Special Olympics Fundraiser—a testament to his passion both on the job and in Special Olympics.

Kris's hard work and perseverance continue to inspire our community, and we couldn't be prouder of his achievements. His journey is proof that dedication and determination open doors to incredible opportunities. Congratulations, Kris—keep shining!



[Story On Facebook](#)

HONORING THERESA GRIFFIN-GOLDEN A CHAMPION FOR PROJECT SEARCH



Theresa Griffin-Golden, Director of Secondary Special Services, has dedicated 23 years to Rio Rancho Public Schools in various roles, including as a Diagnostician, and six additional years with APS. A founding force behind Project SEARCH at Presbyterian Rust, she has been instrumental in shaping its success over the past decade.

Her unwavering dedication has not gone unnoticed. Fellow Steering Committee members unanimously agree that Theresa is highly deserving of recognition. Charlene Chavez of DVR noted, "Theresa worked tirelessly to launch this

program with a vision for long-term sustainability for RRPS students." Paul Luttrell, BAC Leader, added, "She's been a leader since 2015—there's no one more deserving of this honor."

Beyond advocacy, Theresa remains deeply involved—attending Steering Committee meetings, mentoring interns, conducting mock interviews, and ensuring every detail of the program runs smoothly. Her commitment has provided countless opportunities for interns and graduates, making a lasting impact on students, families, and staff.

Her contributions extend far beyond Project SEARCH. A two-time recipient of the Maggie Cordova Special Education Administrator of the Year award (2011, 2016), she is also a valued member of organizations such as the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the New Mexico Council of Administrators of Special Education (NMCASE).

Sandra Cartwright, the original Job Skills Trainer at Rust, sums up Theresa's impact: "Theresa, your dedication and guidance have been invaluable. You are not just an advisor but a true friend. I have learned so much from you and appreciate you deeply."

Theresa herself reflects, "I am incredibly proud of all our special education programs, but Project SEARCH holds a special

place in my heart. Its success is a testament to our amazing RRPS staff and the power of community collaboration."

Her legacy of excellence continues to shape futures—one student at a time.

PROJECT SEARCH INTERNS SHINE AT THE STATE LEGISLATURE



A group interns and staff, stand together outside the state legislature building with the New Mexico State Seal above the entrance that reads "State of New Mexico 1912." The building has a beige stucco exterior with white columns and a large glass entrance door. The group is dressed in a mix of formal and casual attire, with some holding documents and a small box. The sunlight casts shadows on the ground, indicating a bright day.

This February, The Hive Education Project SEARCH interns made their mark at the New Mexico State Legislature, meeting influential leaders, including Representative Ray Lara, Representative Sarah Silva, Speaker of the House Javier Martinez, and Lt. Governor Howie Morales.

During their visit, they toured the State Capitol, engaged with lawmakers, and proudly participated in Disability Day, advocating for inclusion and opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Their presence showcased the power of Project SEARCH and the incredible potential of its interns.

Way to go, interns—you're making a difference! #FutureLeaders #ProjectSEARCH

EXCITING PARTNERSHIP ALERT!

We are thrilled to announce our new partnership with Fairfield Inn & Suites in Gallup and their parent company, Sun Capital Hotels, which operates hotels across New Mexico and Colorado! This incredible collaboration opens doors for Project SEARCH interns, providing them with invaluable hands-on experience and employability skills to launch careers in the hospitality and tourism industry.

A huge thank you to the Fairfield Inn & Suites team for their warm welcome and to all of our amazing business partners who continue to support our interns in achieving their dreams of competitive, integrated employment. Together, we are building brighter futures!

For more information about how other Project SEARCH Sites can Partner with Sun Capital please contact Alex Rios, Statewide Project SEARCH Coordinator at aerios@salud.unm.edu or Belle Morrow, Regional Director of Sun Capital Hotels at belle@suncapitalhotels.com



From Left to Right Annette Martinez, LSG Skills trainer; Victoria Chavez, General Manager; Rydonna Delgarito, Executive of Housekeeping; My Self; Liliana Sanches, Hired as Laundry Attendant; Aaron Paige, hired as Housekeeper; Sharon Torres GMCS Program Asst. A group of seven people pose indoors in front of a wall with a sign that reads "FAIRFIELD THEN & NOW." The group consists of individuals wearing work uniforms, casual clothing, and business attire. Some are wearing face masks, while others are not. They are standing close together, with one person making a peace sign. The setting appears to be a workplace or hospitality environment.

NATIONAL PROJECT SEARCH REMINDERS

- Please ensure that **third rotations** are updated as well as your contacts and organizations in the portal.
- Check your **My Training Page** for required trainings.
- View the **updated National Project SEARCH website: www.projectsearch.us**. Make sure to take note of the following resources on the website:

Find a Program Page

National Outcomes

Project SEARCH Alumni Association

Special National Project SEARCH Conference Message:

"We look forward to seeing you at our 2025 annual conference in the beautiful city of Austin, TX. We will be hosting this year's conference at the Hilton Austin located in downtown Austin. Your Project SEARCH National Team is planning a great week full of learning, continuous improvement for your program, and fun networking events! The conference will offer a Tuesday pre-conference session of your choice, an evening award ceremony, a general session featuring the annual "State of Project SEARCH" address, statewide meetings, and over 100 breakout sessions. We will also be treating conference attendees to a fun-filled evening event on Wednesday. We hope to see you there!"

BEST PRACTICE TIP: SKILLS ASSESSMENT DAY

All members of the Steering Committee should be present for the Skills Assessment Day and the Selection Process. The Skills Assessment is typically scheduled for 2-3 hours in the morning (depending on number of applicants) and the Selection Process happens in the afternoon on the same day. For more information on skills assessment day and possible station ideas, **[click here.](#)**

CALL FOR PRESENTERS

National Project SEARCH Alumni Association Meeting (Date TBD) We are seeking a New Mexico Project SEARCH graduate to present at a national Project SEARCH alumni association virtual meeting. Contact Jane Meister at Jane.Meister@cchmc.org for more information.

National Conference Call for Presentation Abstracts (July 14-18, 2025) Please submit here. The deadline for submissions is March 14, 2025. We welcome new and seasoned presenters. Notification of acceptance will be sent on or before May 2, 2025.

NEW MARKETING MATERIALS



Universal Project SEARCH
New Mexico Informational
Brochure **(English)**



Universal Project SEARCH
New Mexico Informational
Brochure **(Spanish)**

*We also are pleased to offer custom Info Night flyers and brochures for each of our sites. To access these documents or to speak about creating other custom materials with specifics about your program. Please email PFE education specialist, **Shiloh Burton at ShLBurton@salud.unm.edu***

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS!

