



Project | SEARCH®













# INTRODUCTION

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- The Fort Eustis Project SEARCH program is a Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program grant-funded study Virginia Commonwealth University received to investigate the effect of the Project SEARCH employment training model, when combined with autism-specific instructional and behavioral supports, on employment outcomes for military connected and military dependent youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
  - We are currently in Year 3 of a three-year study investigating the PS+ASD intervention model.
  - The Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (VCU-RRTC) reached out to the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) here at Fort Eustis when applying for the CDMRP grant.
  - The number of military children with ASD diagnoses in the Hampton Roads area made Fort Eustis a logical setting for the program and research study.
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# OUTCOMES



- 83.3% of Fort Eustis Project SEARCH year 1 graduates were employed at 12 months post-intervention.
- 85.7% of Fort Eustis Project SEARCH year 2 graduates were employed at 12 months post-intervention.
- We have developed 25 unique internship experiences for interns across locations on the installation.
- Our internship partners include: the US Army Transportation Museum, The US Army Transportation Museum Foundation, the Soldier Support Center, Anderson Field House, Tignor Dental Clinic, the Auto Craft Garage, the Exchange Main Store, the Exchange Food Court, Starbucks, the Commissary, McDonald Army Health Center, the Eustis Club, Madison Child Development Center, and General Smalls Inn.



# VIGNETTES



- Several of our Project SEARCH interns have gone on to successful careers here at Fort Eustis. For instance, Chris was one of our first year interns in the program. His first internship was at the commissary, where we noticed Chris' attention to detail and his interest and strengths in interacting with customers. For Chris' next internship, we partnered with one of the installation's gym to build on Chris' customer service skills. Each day, Chris spent time working at the front desk, where he learned how to check in patrons to the facility, distribute workout equipment, and customer questions about the gym. At the end of the Project SEARCH year, Chris applied for and was hired into a full-time recreation assistant position at the gym. Chris has been happily employed there for over a year and a half now.



# VIGNETTES

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- We've also found that the Project SEARCH internship program has benefited the organizations who host interns in several ways. Managers and coworkers routinely tell us how working with a Project SEARCH intern has boosted morale within their organization and contributed to the organization's mission to support military families with members with disabilities.
  - There have also been more concrete benefits to hosting interns too. For instance, one of our interns worked at the commissary, checking expiration dates. He did such a great job that there was a huge spike in the commissary's reports on damaged/expired items during the three months he worked there ... which required a bit of explaining!
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