

# Project Skills

Project Skills is a paid work experience program for high school students with disabilities. The program is a cooperative arrangement between the state vocational rehabilitation agencies and the local school districts. Project Skills provides students the opportunity to learn different skills in a variety of job placements, with the assistance of a job coach. Project Skills will help to build the student's work history, references, and help them move into different and better jobs as they mature and are ready to take on new challenges.

## Why is Project Skills needed?

Many times, students with disabilities don't get an opportunity to gain paid work experience while in high school. Although willing, most employers cannot afford to provide the training and supports students frequently require on their first job. By covering the cost of wages and additional supports, Project Skills enables employers to provide these students with valuable work experiences in a real work setting.

## How does it work?

Once an appropriate work experience site is located, the employer, student, vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor and school representative sign a Work Experience Agreement. The work experience can last from a minimum of 50 to a maximum of 250 hours, but students cannot work over 40 hours per week. During this time, students are paid minimum wage. Generally, students can participate in only one Project Skills experience per academic year, but they can participate in additional years.

## Who is eligible for Project Skills?

In order to participate in Project Skills, students must:

- Be 16 years or older.
- Be enrolled in a certified high school program and meet acceptable attendance requirements
- Have an employment experience as part of the Individual Education Program (IEP)
- Apply for and be determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services through either the Division of Rehabilitation Services or Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired.

## Who pays for the program?

The Division of Rehabilitation Services provides funding for wages, FICA, worker's compensation, and other costs. VR can also pay for other items needed for employment, such as uniforms, based on the individual student's needs. The local school district provides matching funds for Project Skills through providing job development, job coaching and on-site monitoring.

## What about Worker's Compensation?

Worker's Compensation is covered by the Division of Rehabilitation Services. There is no financial obligation of benefits or wages by the employer.

## What is the employer's role?

- Comply with the training plan and provide participants appropriate supervision and training; safe and healthy working conditions and adhere to all child labor laws.
- Maintain accurate time and attendance records and submit appropriately completed time cards.
- Provide adequate general liability and automobile liability insurance covering actions of the participant.
- For more information or to receive a Project Skills packet, please contact Dan Rounds, TSLP, 1-800-224-5336. Or write your request to Angela and send it to 221 South Central Ave., Pierre, SD 57501. [www.tslp.org](http://www.tslp.org)