



## 2022 Have Dreams Academy FAQs

The goal of the Have Dreams Academy (HDA) program is to develop the critical **social, communication and independence skills** needed to be successful in **competitive** employment.

### Is this program a fit?

*The criteria are listed below. Our expert staff will conduct a skills assessment which will help determine if the program is an appropriate fit.*

#### Eligibility Criteria for Have Dreams Academy

- *Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)*
- *A strong desire to work and attain **inclusive, competitive, integrated employment***
- *A high school degree or higher*
- *Able to administer day-time medication **independently***
- *Level of independence to be successful in a 1:6 ratio*
- *Independent daily personal hygiene and grooming skills*
- *Able to access a reliable form of **transportation***
- *Demonstrates a willingness to **accept feedback and set goals***
- *Emotionally ready to work and able to **manage emotions** during stressful situations*
- *Appropriate self-regulation skills (**i.e. NO aggression toward self or others**)*
- *Shows a willingness to **work as part of a team** and treat all co-workers and supervisors with **respect***
- *Demonstrate an **ability to communicate verbally** with coworkers and supervisors when greeting, asking for help, light communication*
- *Experience in a real work environment outside of school (internship, volunteer, or paid work)*
- *Be able to pass pre-employment screening (drug test, background check- (NO CRIMINAL HISTORY)*

### What makes this program different?

*The Have Dreams Academy is a program specific to those with high functioning autism. Because our expert staff understand the core deficits of autism, we are focused on helping each individual learn and understand the social skills needed for success in the workplace. Learning the “hard skills,” such as how to complete a particular task, typically comes easily to our participants. What the Have Dreams Academy program focuses on are the “soft skills” (initiating, conversation skills, etc.).*



**What is the intake process?**

*An informational phone call and meeting will be arranged with the Program Director followed by a skills assessment that will be conducted by our expert staff to determine if the program is an appropriate fit.*

*If it is not, we can provide other resources.*

**What are the program logistics (location, time, session dates)?**

*The program runs three times a year. There are fall, winter, and spring/summer sessions offered. The commitment is Monday-Thursday 9am-3pm. The program is based at our Evanston location.*

**What is the cost of the program?**

*The cost is \$3000.*

**What if I cannot afford the program?**

*Through fundraising and grants, scholarships are available. A scholarship application may be requested and reviewed by our Scholarship Committee.*

**Are you able to be flexible with the dates and times?**

*In order to fully prepare for the demands of competitive employment, participants are expected to make a commitment to complete the program in full. A modified program is not an option.*

**What is the program sequence?**

*The first two weeks provide an orientation to the program and to the expectations for professionalism at Have Dreams and in the workplace. During this time, our team assesses each individual and determines which internship will be the most appropriate. Internships typically begin in the second or third week of the program and continue until the last week of the program.*

**What if I have a job already?**

*For participants who are already employed, work schedules need to be adjusted to accommodate the HDA program schedule. The skills learned in HDA can be used to grow within an existing job (adding more hours or responsibility) or in pursuit of a new position.*

**How do you determine what internship I get? What if I want a specific internship? What if I do an internship that doesn't align with my career goals and interests?**

- 1. Internships are assigned based on business availability and where our expert staff see the greatest potential for skill development for each participant. Our team conducts a*



variety of assessments during the first week of the program to determine which current internship is the most appropriate for you.

2. *Our internships include opportunities in manufacturing, retail, and office settings. Sometimes these align with participants' career goals and sometimes they do not. When possible, we take participants' references into consideration when assigning internships.*
3. *It is important to remember that the focus of the HDA program is on teaching **transferable skills** that can be used in any workplace, such as time management, accepting feedback, working as part of a team, etc. The focus of the internship is on learning these skills, not necessarily on preparing to work in that industry. We encourage each participant to keep an open mind and focus on the opportunities to develop critical social and communication skills at their internships.*

### **Can you customize an internship for me?**

*While we are continually developing new partnerships, internship assignments are based on **existing** business partnerships. We are not able to develop internship opportunities specific to one participant.*

*Have Dreams is fortunate to partner with many businesses that provide internship opportunities. Participants are assigned to internships based on where our expert team determines there is the greatest potential for growth. Within our evidence-based curriculum and program model, we are able to customize many aspects of the program, including the specific supports each individual needs for success.*

### **Can I get college credit for this internship?**

*Have Dreams Academy internships are not intended to provide college credit. Our goal is competitive integrated employment.*

### **Can you guarantee I'll get a job?**

*Our program is focused on employment preparation. As with any job search, nothing can be guaranteed, but we are committed to working with each eligible participant in obtaining a position that is a good match with their skills and experience.*

### **What is competitive, integrated employment?**

*Competitive employment includes positions that are accessible to all job seekers, not roles that are carved out for individuals with disabilities or other barriers to employment. Our program prepares individuals for the professionalism and performance standards needed in the competitive job market, where they work in teams of diverse employees, including those with and without disabilities.*



**What is my role as parent/guardian or family support person?**

*Family support is an important factor for each of our interns, and one that we greatly value. However, our primary communication will be with the participant as they learn to become confident and independent problem-solvers in the workplace.*

**What happens after I complete the program:**

*After completing HDA, you will leave with:*

- *A resource binder filled with materials you can review on soft skills, interviewing, managing workplace stress, and so much more!*
- *A Career Portfolio outlining your skills, experience, and employment goals*
- *Resume*
- *An Interview Script, which you can use when preparing for and conducting job interviews*
- *Tools to support your transition into whatever's next for you (i.e. starting job search, returning to school, etc).*

*Following HDA, customized Employment Services are available through Have Dreams:*

- *Meet weekly for one-on-one 60-minute sessions with a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor*
- *Services can be covered by insurance (we are in-network with Blue Cross Blue Shield PPO and Blue Choice) or by private pay*
- *During weekly sessions, your counselor can support you in exploring job opportunities, submitting applications, following up with employers, preparing for interviews, evaluating job offers, and transitioning into employment*
- *If Have Dreams' Employment Services are not the right fit for your needs, we can share additional resources*