



## Considerations in Employment Supports for Individuals with an Autism Spectrum Disorder

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February 2013  
Webinar



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## Learning Objectives

- Increase knowledge of...
  - how characteristics of autism spectrum disorders (ASD) can affect employment.
  - current status of vocational programming in ASD.
  - issues and considerations for supporting individuals with ASD in employment settings.

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## Employment & ASD

- Employment outcomes in ASD indicate.....
  - 50-75% unemployed.
  - Many underemployed.
    - Menial jobs relative to educational attainment.
  - Job instability common.
    - Social, behavioral and mental health problems.
  - Often earn less than other disability groups.

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## Employment & ASD

– 121% increase in Vocational Rehabilitation services in the past 5 years.

- Generic services, not ASD specific.
- Costly.
- Many denied services due to severity of the disorder.

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*Why these outcomes for ASD?*

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## Employment & ASD

- Several reasons often cited ...
  - ASD and related impairments.
  - Less than effective transition preparation.
  - Less than effective vocational preparation.

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## ASD & RELATED IMPAIRMENTS

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## Autism Spectrum Disorders

- Refers to a group of *neurodevelopmental* disorders characterized by...
  - Social impairments
  - Communication impairments
  - Restrictive, repetitive, & stereotyped behaviors & interests

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## Autism Spectrum Disorder

- | Social Impairment   | Possible Affect   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Non-verbal behaviors<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Eye contact</li><li>– Gestures</li><li>– Body position</li></ul></li><li>• Social interest<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Some may have little interest in others and their activities</li><li>– Some may be overly interested in others activities</li></ul></li><li>• Social &amp; emotional reciprocity<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Social understanding</li><li>– Perspective taking</li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May appear odd, aloof, and/or unsocial.</li><li>• May not establish cooperative working relationships<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– “Difficult to work with”</li></ul></li><li>• Viewed as too direct.</li><li>• May be unaware when behavior is perceived as offensive.</li><li>• May not recognize or follow organizational policy and procedure without direct instruction.</li><li>• May not be motivated by social factors.</li></ul> |

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## Autism Spectrum Disorder

<p><b>Communication Impairment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited functional communication</li> <li>• Poor conversational skills</li> <li>• Unusual or repetitive language or vocalization</li> <li>• Limited social or pretend play skills</li> </ul>	<p><b>Possible Affect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not communicate support needs or need for assistance.</li> <li>• May not bring issues or ideas to supervisor or project team.</li> <li>• May exhibit vocal behavior that is hard for others to understand or is disruptive.</li> <li>• May not communicate with co-workers when needed-may not initiate.</li> <li>• May not engage in appropriate behavior during 'down time' or 'break time.'</li> </ul>
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## Autism Spectrum Disorder

<p><b>Behavioral Impairment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repetitive and restrictive patterns of behavior and/or interests.</li> <li>• Routines and rituals.</li> <li>• Stereotypic motor movements.</li> <li>• Preoccupied with parts of objects.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Possible Affect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviors may interfere with task initiation and completion.</li> <li>• Interruption of rituals/routines may cause personal distress and behavior problems.</li> <li>• May have difficulty with object use due to over focus on parts of objects.</li> </ul>
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## Autism Spectrum Disorders

- High rate of co-occurring disorders.
  - Cognitive & neurocognitive.
  - Emotional & behavioral (anxiety/depression).
  - Medical (e.g., seizure, GI, sleep).
  - Sensory-motor.

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## Autism Spectrum Disorders

### Related Impairments

- Mental health symptoms and/or disorders.
- Neurocognitive impairments.
- Sensory-motor

### Possible Affect

- Low motivation.
- Poor coping skills.
- Poor problem-solving skills.
- Difficulty listening to and understanding directions.
- Difficulty with multi-step directions.
- Difficulty organizing and planning tasks or scope of work.
- Difficulty with learning new tasks.

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## Autism Spectrum Disorders

- ASD and related impairments affect....  
– development and use of skills needed for employment and independent adult living.



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Preparation for Employment.....

## TRANSITION & VOCATIONAL TRAINING

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## ASD & Transition Planning

- Inadequate or less than effective transition planning & preparation....
  - Lack of evidence-based transition guidelines for ASD.
    - Personnel may lack of knowledge of ASD and how to modify transition practices to improve outcome.
    - Current models may not be most effective for ASD.
  - Limited opportunity to develop essential employment skills.
    - Professional, parent, and/or student may not be knowledgeable of strategies and/or resources to assist in vocational preparation.

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## ASD & Vocational Training

- Insufficient capacity in state/regional vocational rehabilitation services.
  - Personnel may lack knowledge of current recommendations for ASD vocational preparation practices.
    - Current service model may not 'fit' ASD needs.
  - Student, parent, and/or personnel not knowledge of resources to assist in vocational preparation.
    - Reduced opportunity to develop skills.
- Limited personnel to meet current demand.

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## IMPLICATIONS

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## ASD & Employment

- ASD and related impairments may result in barriers to learning needed skills...
  - expectations for learning work skills.
  - participation and engagement in learning work skills.
  - opportunity for learning work skills.

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## *Considerations to reduce barriers to successful employment*

*Vocational Rehabilitation Support  
Ecological Framework  
ASD Accommodations & Supports*

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## Rehabilitation Act & ADA

- Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973/1998.
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA; PL 101-336).

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## Rehabilitation Act & ADA

- Civil rights laws protecting against discrimination based on disability.
  - Individual must present evidence of disability and history of impairment in that area.
- Equal access & reasonable accommodations.
  - NOT a guarantee of appropriateness of services.
  - Reasonable accommodation-cannot place undue hardship on the employer.

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## New York State

- Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation, (ACCES-VR) is ...
  - a program of the NYS Department of Education
  - provides vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities.
    - per the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973/1998.
  - administers vocational rehabilitation, special education, and independent living programs.

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## ACCES-VR

- Requirements include ...
  - the individual has to apply for services.
  
  - the individual must meet the eligibility requirements.
  
  - the individual must work with a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor employed by ACCES-VR to determine eligibility.

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### ACCES-VR

- Acces-VR has a number of eligibility requirements including...
  - must have a physical or mental impairment.
    - documentation required.
  - the impairment is an impediment to employment.

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### ACCES-VR

- The individual intends to work.
  - ACCES-VR may discontinue service if it determines the individual is not motivated to work.
- The individual would benefit from and/or requires VR services to achieve his/her employment objective.
  - May be time limited assistance.

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### ACCES-VR

- ACCES-VR offers a range of services including...
  - assessment...
    - Identify skills, abilities, interests & limitations.
  - career counseling & guidance.
  - rehabilitation & assistive technology.
  - Training...
    - vocational school
    - community college
    - on-the-job

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## ACCES-VR

- ACCES-VR offers a range of services including (cont.)...
  - supported employment, job placement and job retention.
  - other services that may be needed to achieve the individual's employment objective.

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## EMPLOYMENT MODELS: A CONTINUUM

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## Employment Models

- There are a number of employment models currently described in the USA including...
  - Competitive Employment
    - Independently employed
  - Supported Employment
    - Individual, clustered (enclave), mobile crew
  - Entrepreneurial Supports
    - For-profit corporation
  - Secure Employment
    - Continuum of services
  - Sheltered Workshops
    - Factory setting, segregated

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### Employment Models

- No ASD specific model has been identified....*nor is one model likely to meet the needs of all individuals with ASD.*
  - Varied abilities require various models of employment.
  - Most models likely to also require considerations for specific accommodations.

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### Employment Models

- Little research to guide appropriate assessment and support practices, so....
  - Apply 'best clinical practice' to employment planning, including...
    - Assess interest & training needs.
    - Select appropriate employment model & site.
    - Evaluate employment site for needed accommodations & supports.
    - Apply needed accommodations and supports.
    - Evaluate outcome & revise as needed.

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### **CONSIDERATIONS IN ASD EMPLOYMENT**

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## Considerations

- The following should be considered...
  - Ecological framework to reduce barriers.
    - Ecological assessment.
      - Assessment of individual.
        - » current developmental levels.
        - » employment model and site selection.
      - Assessment of employment context.
        - » accommodations and supports.
    - Develop, implement & evaluate a training and/or support plan.
      - Revise plan accordingly.

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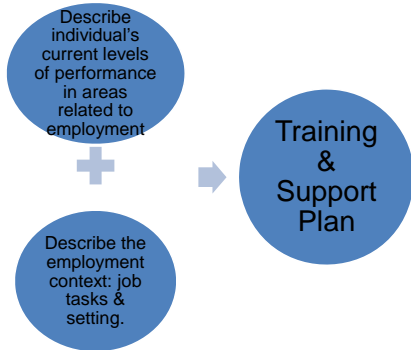
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## Ecological Framework



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## ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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## Ecological Assessment

<p><b>Individual</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocational interests &amp; skill set.</li> <li>• ASD symptoms.</li> <li>• Cognitive &amp; neurocognitive profile.</li> <li>• Adaptive skills.</li> <li>• Social communication skills.</li> <li>• Mental health status.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Work Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy &amp; Procedure.</li> <li>• Contextual assessment.</li> <li>• Job analysis.</li> </ul>
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## TRAINING & SUPPORT PLAN

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## Training & Support Plan

- 5 core components including...
  - Job Placement.
  - Personnel training.
  - Work Place Accommodations.
  - Worker Training.
  - Long Term Support.

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## Job Placement

- Two methods for job placement...
  - Job Match
    - Individualized, based on interests and skills.
    - Environmental supports.
    - Tasks.
  - Job Placement
    - Preference Assessments:
      - Exposure method.
      - Sampling method.

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## Personnel Training

- Provide ASD awareness training.
  - Supervisor and others, as appropriate.
  - Increase supervisor ability to problem-solve worker difficulties.
- Provide training to supervisors on how to modify the work environment and/or tasks to fit the individual.
  - Proactively plan reasonable accommodations.
- Promote policies of inclusion.

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## Workplace Accommodations

- Common ASD accommodations....
  - Reduce/eliminate distractions/sensory stimuli.
  - Clearly define work space=task specific.
  - Establish functional workspace.
    - Daily and Activity Schedules.
    - Various Visual Supports.
    - Social Communication supports.
    - Behavior Supports.

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### Workplace Accommodations

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Type</b>
• Scheduling Systems	• Daily & Activity (task specific).
• Visual Supports.	• Clarity, instruct & organize.
• Social Communication Supports	• Social Stories & Social Scripts.

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### Workplace Accommodations

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Type</b>
• Positive Behavior Supports	• Rules for pro-social skills necessary for successful worker relationships and job stability.
	• Contingency management.
	• Work site problem-solving.
	• Job coach.

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### Worker Training

- Training is likely to be needed on....
  - Job *specific* skills:
    - Task analysis of each required task.
    - Activity schedule for each task.
    - On-the job and simulation training.
      - Site specific context.

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## Worker Training

- Training is likely to be needed for....

- Job *related* skills:

- Participation in work routines.
- Self-management of work assignments.
- Social interaction and social integration.
- Functional communication.
- Behavior self-regulation.

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## Long-Term Support

- Identify and prepare natural job supports.

- Supervisors
- Project team members
- Co-workers

- Identify and prepare external job supports.

- Job coach/supported employment staff.
- Psychological or social services.
  - Focus on job related skills, problem-solving, anxiety/stress management, treatment of mental health problems.

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## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

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## Considerations

- Providing effective and appropriate employment supports requires....
  - knowledge of ASD and co-occurring impairments and their affect on the individual's vocational performance.
    - Professional development & training.
  - knowledge of how to establish and maintain an effective work environment by eliminating barriers.
    - Ecological assessment.
  - collaboration with worker, vocational personnel, and community providers for supports and to problem solve for work and behavior difficulties.

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## Resources

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## Resources

- To learn more about the ACCES-VR program, visit the following website.
  - <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr/do/home.html>
- To learn more about transition activities at the national level, please visit the following website, National Center on Secondary Education and Transition.
  - <http://www.ncset.org/>

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## Resources

- Visit the Institute for Community Inclusion's website for a One-Stop Disability Resource manual.
  - <http://www.communityinclusion.org/onestop/saction7.pdf>
- And, to learn about more about situational assessment for support planning.
  - <http://www.dads.state.tx.us/providers/supportdeployment/presentations/ICISituationalAssessFactSheet.pdf>

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## Resources

- To learn more about considerations in employment for individuals with ASD, visit the following websites.
  - [www.afa-us.org](http://www.afa-us.org)
  - <http://www.autism-society.org/living-with-autism/lifespan/adulthood/employment.html>

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## Resources

- To download a free copy of a supported employment guide by the Alpine Learning Group (publications tab).
  - <http://www.alpinelearninggroup.org/>
- To download a free copy of their Adult Autism & Employment guide by the Missouri Disability Policy & Studies.
  - <http://dps.missouri.edu/Autism.html>

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## Resources

- Autism Speaks provides multiple resources including a Transition Toolkit, Visual Supports, & an Autism Apps listing.
  - <http://www.autismspeaks.org/>
- The Organization for Autism Research provides multiple resources including a Guide to Transition.
  - <http://www.researchautism.org/>

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## Resources

- The Geneva Center provide various tip sheets for visual supports and a Choice Board (see Visual Aids Gallery).
  - <http://www.autism.net/>
- The Rochester Regional Center for Autism provides training DVD for Schedules & Direct Instruction for Social Skills.
  - <http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/childrens-hospital/developmental-disabilities/RRCASD.aspx>

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## Question & Answer

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