Autistic Adults and Employment

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Autism & Employment

“Since Richard has left school, he has always wanted to do work and make sure his skills and talents will be recognized and valued by his future employers. FTM, it found it difficult to understand his competencies and adaptively when he completed job applications or when he wanted to express his work ethic at job interviews, possibly due to some of his characteristics, associated with autism, that were not recorded or understood during his stay in high school. Richard’s knowledge in his field position as a customer service at a grocery store, especially since he didn’t receive any additional support from government bodies or from other support services. Unfortunately, his work and social compliance were made both to customers and Richard’s colleagues, waiting patiently about his manner, communicative style, and behavior. Clinically, it transpired that while Richard enjoyed the day-to-day tasks and the environment as coworker, he noted that his support from organizations in the community did not meet his particular needs, where the diagnosis with autism was very different. Therefore, choosing a job that meets his requirements is a positive option and would help him find a more suitable career path.”

Farkas, Kargas, & Mendy, 2021
Autism & Employment

... work is not a universally positive experience. Poorly designed jobs, work that is not organized well, difficult work environments, poorly trained managers and a lack of understanding of human behaviour in the workplace can create or exacerbate mental health conditions. For some people with physical or mental health conditions or disabilities, a lack of the right support at the right time from employers can make finding and keeping a meaningful job difficult. (Weinberg & Doyle, 2017, p. 3)

Employment Benefits

• Monetary compensation
• Social identity and status
• Social contacts and support: reduces isolation
• A means of structuring and occupying time
• Activity and involvement
• A sense of personal achievement
• Greater independence

Autism & Employment

• Unemployed (without a job)
• Underemployed (in jobs that underutilize their knowledge, skills and experience)
• 'Malemployed' (in jobs for which they are particularly unsuited)

Baldwin, Costley, & Warren, 2014
Correlates of Employment Outcomes

- Only 48% of youth received job placement services.
- Greater employment outcomes.
- Only 10% of youth received college services.
- Higher earnings.

Receiving college services & participating in postsecondary education

Migliore et al., 2012

Employment Outcomes

- 58% of young adults with autism ever worked for pay outside of the home between high school and their early 20s.
- A rate far lower than young adults with other types of disabilities.

- 42% of young adults with autism and other disabilities.
- 58% of young adults with other disabilities.

National Autism Indicators Report: Transition into Young Adulthood, 2015

Employment Outcomes

- A delayed launch: Only about one-third were employed during the first two years after high school.
- As time passed after high school, the percentage increased.

National Autism Indicators Report: Transition into Young Adulthood, 2015
Employment Outcomes

• The rate of employment during adulthood was over twice as high for those who worked for pay during high school.

What can we do to improve these outcomes?
Clinical Perspective: Communication Skills and Employment

Valeria Swartz-Diaz, MS, CCC-SLP
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Communication Skills and Employment: Meeting Communication Needs
Communication Skills and Employment: Areas to Support

- Answering and asking questions
- Conflict resolution
- Demographic information
- Goal setting
- Hygiene and self-care
- Interviewing
- Language organization
- Making a resume and applying to a job
- Problem solving
- Seeking assistance and clarifying instructions
- Self-advocacy
- Shopping and money management
- Transportation and mobility
- Understanding and maintaining interpersonal relationships
- Understanding non-verbal language
Transition Time

- Educate yourself on Developmental Disabilities, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Pre-ETS Services
- Complete Applications (i.e. DD services)
- Transition Plan
- Re-evaluate Student Needs and Related Services Regularly

Transition

- Work-based Learning
- Employment Training Programs (e.g. Project SEARCH, Project Access)
- Collaborative Process to Transition from School to Adult Provider Agency

Adult Services

- Person-centered Planning Process (needs and goals)
- Person-centered Plan Approval
- Begin Services with Agency

Creating a Meaningful Transition

- Focus on a Person-Centered Approach
- Apply and Eligibility of Services (DDA, DORS)
- Creating Integrated Settings with Natural Supports
- Consistent Communication with all Stakeholders
- Early Transition Planning Services
- Engage in Work-based Learning Programs at your School
- Build Partnerships Outside of School (network)
- Collaborative Approach
- Cellphone Etiquette
- Fill the Gap – DORS Services
- Be creative, have fun!

Barriers to Employment

- Transportation
- Weight
- Self-Esteem
- Skill History and Experience
- Disability Awareness
- Respect
- Employment
- Special Skills
- Information Technology
- Social Skills
- Team Player
- Flexibility and Flexibility
- Communication and Teamwork
- Teamwork
- Time Management
My Employment Experience

Tyler Shallue
Health Screener, Kennedy Krieger Institute

- Participated during 2020-2021 academic year
- Worked in two main internships
  - Campus Security at Greenspring Campus
  - Training and eTracking Solutions
- Combination of in person and virtual formats
- Enjoyed learning new job development skills like communication, advocacy, and teamwork
- Opened the door to a part-time job with Training and eTracking
Worked virtually for Training and eTracking from July to November 2021
Now am currently a COVID-19 health screener for the 801 building
Began collaborations with the safety team by carrying out a fire drill for our building
Began exploring safety plans during my time as a health screener
Great experience in identifying potential career interests and improving job skills
Transition Planning

- Under federal law and regulations, transition planning for children with disabilities must begin at age 16 (more than half of the states begin at age 14).
- Transition planning should include the child with a disability and their parent or guardian.
- Transition planning should include postsecondary goals (or outcomes) for education or training, employment, and independent living (if appropriate).
- Transition planning should include linkages to other State agencies and organizations, who provide adult services and supports for individuals with disabilities.

Post-Secondary Education

- There is a shift from entitlement to services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to eligibility for adult services and supports.
- A student with a disability who needs accommodations or modifications from their college or university will need to provide documentation or evidence (e.g., a neuropsychological evaluation) of the need for accommodation(s) at their own expense.
- Most colleges or universities have a Disability Support Services office to support the student with a disability.
- Each semester, the student will need to meet with their professors to discuss their accommodations.

Disclosure

- Disclosure is voluntary.
- Individuals with disabilities are not required to disclose to their postsecondary educational institutions or employers that they have a disability, unless they require an accommodation(s).
- IDEA no longer applies; however, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and/or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) may apply to colleges or universities.
- The ADA may apply to employment settings.
- The individual should weigh the pros and cons to disclose in both postsecondary settings and their workplace.
Adult Guardianship

- The term may be referred to as a “conservatorship” in some states
- The state laws, regulations, and forms may vary from state-to-state
- Adult guardianship should be a last resort, when all other less restrictive alternatives have failed
- Adult guardianships are formal court proceedings that require the introduction of evidence
- The proceedings involve a judge, who evaluates the evidence, and issues a decision
- The proceedings involve attorneys, who represent the person seeking guardianship of a person and/or property, and an attorney representing the interests of the alleged disabled person
- The judge may grant guardianship of a person, property, or both, to one or more individuals or organizations
- There are court fees associated with guardianship proceedings

Alternatives to Guardianship

- Advance Directives – appoints someone to make decisions when they cannot
- Advance Directives for Mental Health – appoints someone to make mental health treatment decisions (e.g., medications, mental health programs, or psychiatric hospitals) when they cannot
- Statutory Powers of Attorney – allows someone to make financial decisions on their behalf
- Trusts – umbrella terms for a variety of trusts (e.g., living trust, special needs trust, or joint trust)
- Supported Decision-Making – a process that enables individuals with disabilities to make their own decisions whenever possible, with the support of a trusted family member or friend

Alternatives to Guardianship

Based on the literature, there are important considerations such as promoting the autonomy of the individual and their self-determination, while protecting them from harm in certain situations.

Resources

- ANCOR Report
- ODEP
- Person-Centered Planning
- Maryland DDA Eligibility Application
- Division of Rehabilitation Services Referral
- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
- Kennedy Krieger Institute Resource Finder
- http://www.supporteddecisionmaking.org/
Resources

- Job Accommodation Network: https://askjan.org/
- Job Applications: https://www.job-applications.com/

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