



Autism Job Fair

Phoenix 2017

ARIZONA @ WORK™
Innovative Workforce Solutions

 **AUTISM SOCIETY**
Improving the Lives of All Affected by Autism
Greater Phoenix

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Vocational Training

Helen Wade
Hacienda Healthcare

Background

- * ASD Vocational Program started in May 2013.
- * Currently support 27 Trainees on the Spectrum, ranging from moderate to high functioning.
- * The aim of our program is to assist trainees develop the skill sets needed to increase their employability, self confidence, and ability to live independently.

Objective

To provide young adults living with Autism with the necessary vocational and social skills to obtain gainful employment within your community.

Helpful Tips

- * Facial cues and body language.
 - * Ex: May not recognize when to hold the door open or say excuse me.
 - * The expressions may not match their feeling.
- * Prior notice of changes when possible.
 - * Why? To help with processing information.
 - * Persons living with Autism may feel some anxiety and become overwhelmed with too many changes at one time.
- * Consistent schedule
 - * Individuals on the Spectrum tend to excel with repetitive and consistent work.
- * Clear and concise directions
 - * Written
 - * Visual Aids

Additional Supports

- * Job Coaches

- * Initial and on-going training for both employee and employer.
 - * Orientation (policies, employer expectations)
 - * Communication between employee and employer if needed.
 - * Training on new assignments.
 - * Re-training if needed

Maintain success for both employee and employer!

Silly Brilliant Caring Mysterious
Interesting Smart Funny Gifted
Exceptional Zany **I** Brave Happy
Intriguing **am** Talented Clever
Sensitive Keen **Intelligent**
Curious **more** Gifted Goofy
Unique **than** Charismatic
Blessed **Amusing**
Smart **Autism** Wise
Humorous Aware Bright Witty
Inspirational **Strong** Kind Lively
Loving Creative Spirited Human

Vocational Issues and Job Fair

James B. Adams, Ph.D.
Autism/Asperger's Research Program
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<http://autism.asu.edu>
www.phxautism.org

Always
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Adult Issues

- Vocational: 80% are unemployed, primarily due to lack of social skills, not work skills
- Residential: 80% are unable to live independently
- Social:
 - Anxiety;
 - Lack of friends -> loneliness -> depression



Temple Grandin

“Different, not less”

Temple used her insights into sensory challenges and her visual thinking to become the leading expert on designing cattle-handling facilities.

Wrote 6 books about autism, and is a professor at Colorado State.

Focus on strengths, not disability

“Some of the most successful people on the autism spectrum who have good jobs have developed expertise in a specialized skill that people value. If a person makes him-/herself very good at something, this can help make up for some difficulties with social skills. Good fields for higher functioning people on the spectrum are architectural drafting, computer programming, language translation, special education, library services and science. It is likely that some brilliant scientists and musicians have a mild form of Asperger’s Syndrome (Ledgin, 2002). The individuals who are most successful often have mentors either in high school, college, or at a place of employment. Mentors can help channel interests into careers.” Tempe Grandin, Ph.D., adult with autism

Examples of higher-functioning adults with ASD

- John –after high school, willing to work if offered a job, but discouraged from not being hired so now sits at home watching tv
- Joe – graduated from ASU summa cum laude with degrees in information science and accounting; unemployed for 5 years before finding job, but unhappy with job due to too many interactions with people
- Tom – graduated from ASU with MS in Education, but no school would accept him as student teacher (odd social affect), so unable to earn teaching certificate
- Karen – works as SLPA and habilitation provider for children with ASD
- Mike – BS in engineering, did CAD for 7 years, but when laid off worked as janitor for 2 years before finding another CAD job, now there for 10 years

Examples of lower/moderate functioning adults with ASD

- Daniel – 1 year internship with Project Search; now does laundry at hotel
- Mark – enjoys tearing paper into pieces at home; found ideal job shredding paper
- Kim: autism and intellectual disability; functioning at 3rd grade level; 2.5 years in WorkBridge in high school; 1.5 years at Chandler/Gilbert ARC sheltered workshop doing assembly (very fast); now intern (via DDD) at Hacienda Healthcare doing housekeeping, laundry. Likes repetitive work

Summary

Autism involves challenges in communication, social interactions, and behavior.

Co-morbid conditions may include intellectual disability, seizures, sensory sensitivities, GI problems, low muscle tone

Autism incidence is rapidly increasing, so soon many more adults with ASD will be applying to RSA.

Many barriers to work exist, but success is possible.

Vocational Survey of Adults with ASD in Arizona

James B. Adams

Devon Dale

Autism/Asperger's Research Program

Arizona State University

Background

- In summer 2015 Governor Ducey created an ASD Task Force on AHCCCS services
- Sub-committee on Adult Services includes Prof. Adams, who developed vocational survey
- Survey completed by 172 ASD families in fall 2015
- Results shared with DDD, RSA, and submitted to Governor

Goals

- Determine vocational status of adults with ASD
- Determine barriers to employment
- Develop recommendations on how to improve employment services

Demographic of Participants

Response Type

Parent/Guardian of an adult with ASD	73%
Adults with ASD	25%
Adult with ASD and their Parents/Guardian	2%

Participant Age

18-24	56%
25-44	31%
45+	13%

Highest Level of Education

Still in high school	9%
Dropped out of high school	1%
Completed high school	41%
Currently in vocational program	6%
Completed vocational program	2%
Currently a college student	12%
Completed several college courses	11%
Completed Associate's degree	5%
Completed Bachelor's degree	8%
Completed graduate degree	6%

Job Statistics

Current Job Situation

Student in high school	9%
Student in vocational program	3%
Student in college	4%
Center-based employment	4%
Group-based employment	5%
Regular employment with supports	9%
Regular employment without support	28%
Self-employed	1%
Unemployed, looking for work	27%
Unemployed, not looking for work, not a student	13%

Job Types

Entry Level Job	82%
Professional Level Job	18%

Typical Hourly Wage

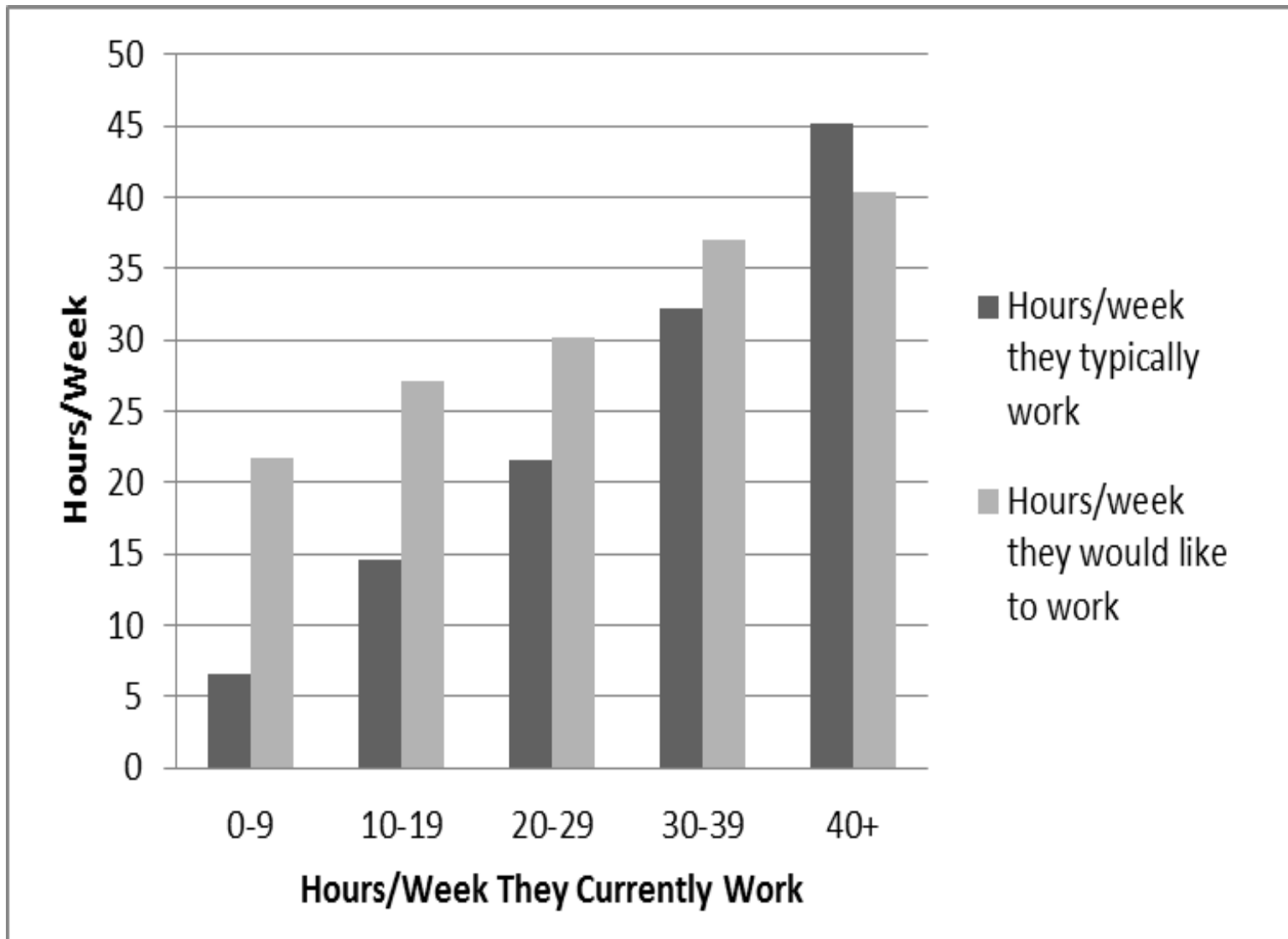
Average Hourly Wage	\$12.50/hour
Median Hourly Wage	\$9/hour
Percent under \$8/hour	19%

Hourly Wage Based on Type of Employment

Center-based employment	\$3/ hour
Group-based employment	\$3/ hour
Regular employment with supports	\$9/ hour
Regular employment without supports	\$16/ hour

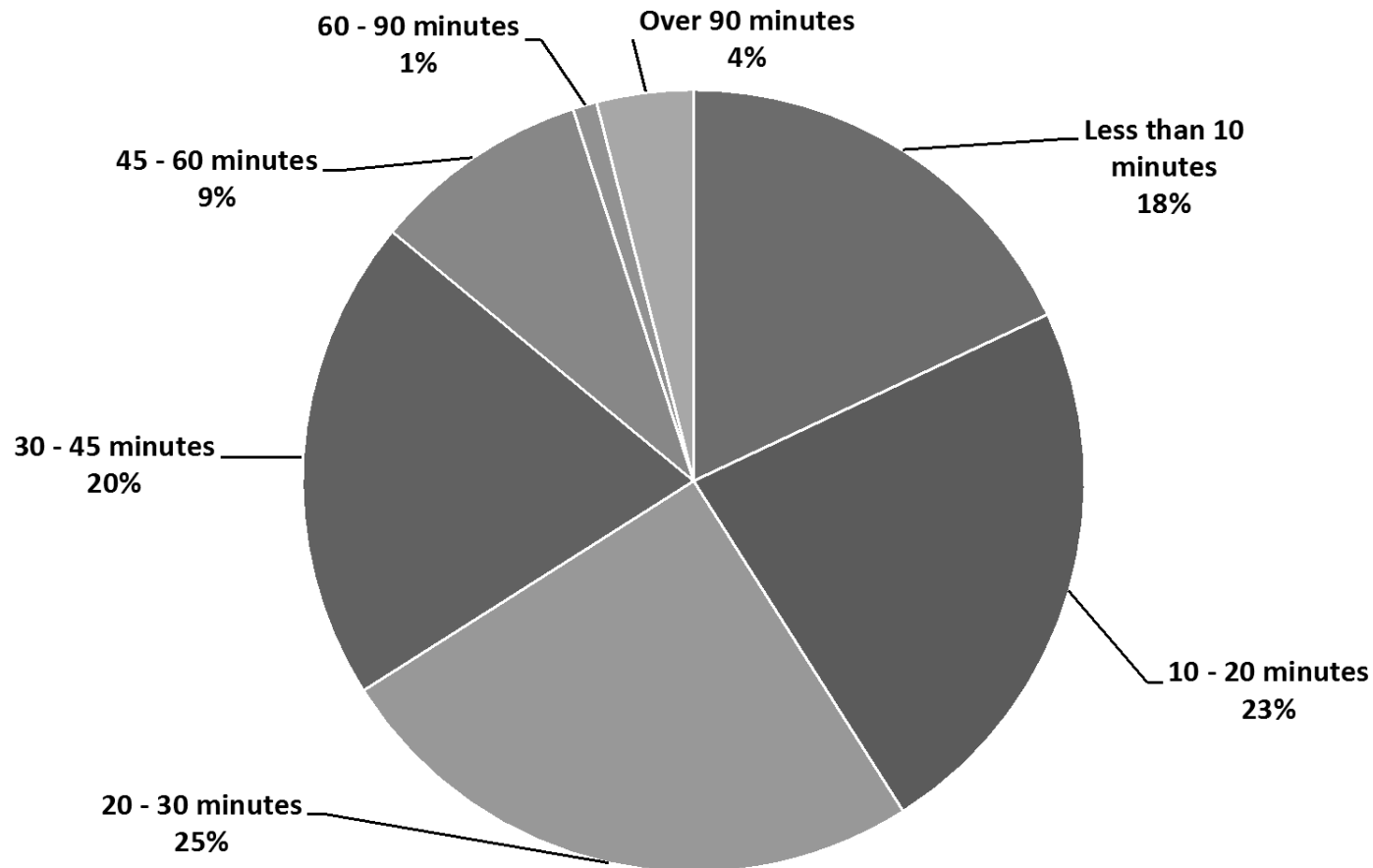
Average Hours per Week

Typically worked	25 hours/week
Would like to work	33 hours/week

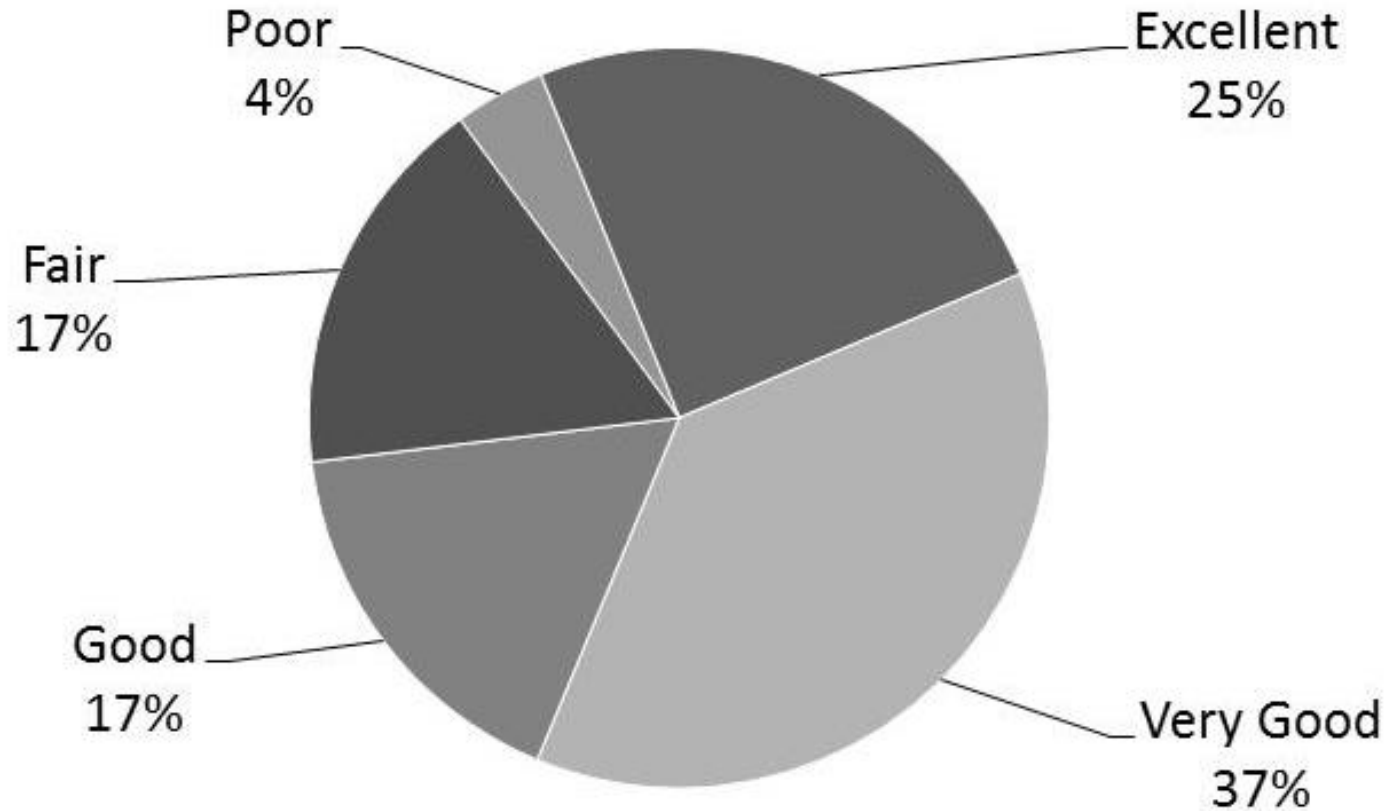


Those working few hours would like to work more, those at 40+ hours would like to work less

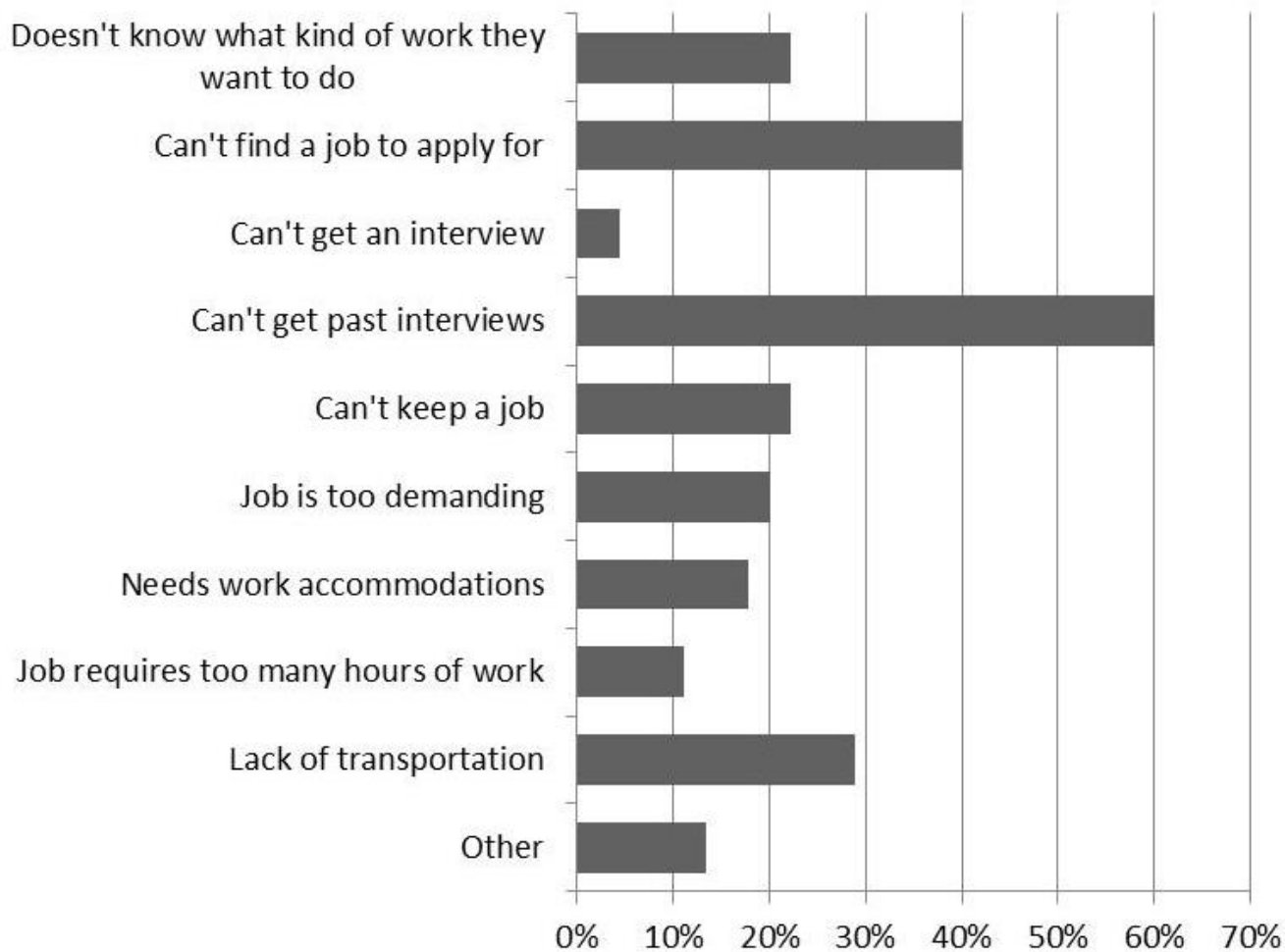
Time spent commuting to work (one way)



Job Satisfaction



Barriers to Finding Employment



Respondents were able to select more than one option and percentages are out of number of respondents who answered the question

Challenges to Finding/Keeping a Job

Autism Symptoms Inhibiting Job Acquisition	30%
Need Job Coaching/ Job Training	24%
Problems Getting or Getting Past Interviews	17%
Lack of support from DDD/VR agencies	11%
Employer's lack of understanding of ASD	9%

What Help is Most Needed to Find/Keep a Job

Job Coaching/ Job Training	43%
Teaching employers about how to work with individuals with ASD	24%
Teaching Interview Skills/ Application Skills	22%
Transportation	9%

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services

- Work Exploration
- Work Adjustment Training
- Psychological evaluations
- Vocational evaluations
- Functional capacity evaluations
- Job Coach
- Assistive Technology
- Supportive Education (tuition assistance)

**VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Create Autism-Knowledgeable Staff

- Train VR staff, VR provider agencies, and employers about autism

Raise Expectations

- People with ASD are often under-employed at tasks below their ability, resulting in lower salaries and lower job satisfaction. Recognize that some individuals with ASD have average or above average intellectual capabilities, and may have specific areas of vocational strengths.

Career exploration and job search

- Most jobs are found by social networking, but adults with ASD have a very limited social network.
- So, they need extra assistance with career exploration and with finding possible jobs

Pre-Interviews & Job Shadowing

- Job coaches need to help with finding a job, and to do a pre-interview with employers to explain ASD and their client's strengths and disability.
- Provide job shadowing prior to starting employment, to ensure that job is a good match for client's interest and ability, and to identify potential problems including sensory problems.

Worksite Peer Mentors to Partially Replace Job Coaches

- Ask each employer to assign a worksite peer mentor to spend 5-10% of their time to assist the ASD client with both work skills and social skills.
- Worksite peer mentors should provide regular feedback to the ASD client about problems so that they can improve and stay employed.
- Give the worksite mentor and the employer basic training about ASD, and brief explanation to co-workers if appropriate.

Worksite Peer Mentors

continued

- The worksite peer mentor has several advantages over a traditional job coach:
- Always present at the job, so immediately available whenever a problem arise;
- Knowledgeable about work requirements and social interactions/environment;
- No time wasted driving from one client to another.

Increased Communication with Parents/Caregivers

- Worksite peer mentors should communicate with parents/caregivers on a frequent basis, such as 1x/week.
- It is highly recommended that, if parents/caregivers are involved with the client that they also are informed of problems at work so that they can help work with the client to deal with those problems before they escalate.

Need Work Experience

- Young adults with ASD often have less work experience than others, due to stress of regular course load preventing them from seeking part-time work.
- Encourage students to do part-time or summer work, to ensure that they have work experience by the time they graduate.
- This might require taking a lighter course load to allow time for work, but will likely be important to help with job placement after graduation.

Individual accommodations

- Many adults with ASD may need individual accommodations, including possibly:
- Limited hours
- Increased time to learn tasks
- Occasional extra break time if stressed
- Explanation of social norms (hygiene, conversation)
- Evaluation of sensory challenges
- Visual cues/instructions
- Assistance with transportation
- Longer oversight period by job coaches
- Worksite Peer Mentor
- Medical issues – seizures, special diet

Common Advantages of hiring adults with ASD

- Strong work ethic (less time socializing)
- Low absenteeism, on-time
- Trustworthy
- Willing to do highly-repetitive tasks
- Attention to detail
- Different perspective/way of thinking
- Loyal to company -> low turn-over

Summary

- Some adults with ASD are employed, but many are unemployed or underemployed
- Many barriers to employment, including primarily interviewing and lack of understanding of ASD
- Several recommendations have been made to significantly improve job placement

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Employers

- Employers are receiving a 1-hour overview of autism
- Employers are here because they are interested in hiring someone with autism, if they can find a good match to their needs

Format of Job Fair

- If there is a parent or job coach, we suggest they talk to the employer first for 2-3 minutes
- Next, the adult with ASD can talk to the employer for a few minutes
- Everyone else should wait for their turn.
- If the employer tells you they need to move on to the next person, please be respectful

Good Luck!

We hope you are able to talk to several employers about possible positions, and hope that you can eventually find a position that is a good match for your interests and abilities.

Always
Unique
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Interesting
Sometimes
Mysterious



Not Your Typical Deli

Chef W

History

- Opened in Gilbert in Summer 2016
- Employ 15 adults with ASD, and 5 supervising staff
- Adults with ASD do almost all jobs, including food preparation, greeting, taking orders, serving, cleaning
- Adults typically work 3-hour shifts, and receive at least minimum wage
- Received over 170 job applications from adults with ASD who want to work

Strengths of ASD Adults

- Show up on time
- Almost never miss a day of work
- Enthusiastic and excited to work
- Very polite and respectful
- After 6 months, 0% turnover

Accommodations for ASD Adults

- Minimal job experience so requires training, but learn quickly
- Reduced work hours (typically 3 hour shifts)
- Sometimes need a break due to emotional stress
- Talk with parents about their work
- Other? Food handlers license?