10 Autism - Employment Resources


This article examines current research related to long-term outcomes of individuals with Asperger Syndrome. The author reviews the employment impact of other issues often associated with Asperger Syndrome such as medical and health concerns, potential legal trouble, and communication barriers. Long-term suggestions focus on supporting a variety of adult life issues that will ultimately have a positive impact on long-term employment success.


The Environmental and Job Analysis Worksheet is a tool to help job placement counselors analyze a specific job as well as the corresponding workplace environment. The worksheet contains various workplace categories critical to employees with autism such as Sensory Variables, Communication methods, and Supervisory Style. The tool was developed through the Vocational Alliance – Employment Within Business Project, a three year study on internal business supports for people with social and communication barriers.


The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of a supported employment program on cognitive performance in adults with autism. The employed group of individuals demonstrated significant improvement in cognitive and executive functioning after an average of 30 months of community based employment. The unemployed group demonstrated no change. The study’s conclusion was that community based employment does improve the cognitive functioning of adults with autism.


This article suggests a critical need for schools and community organizations to re-examine they way that they help prepare learners with asd for the future. A few of the critical issues addressed for individuals with asd were to re-examine the concept of “work readiness” and consider all individuals to initially be
“employment ready”. The article recommends that first jobs be viewed as learning experiences and that job development be a creative process focusing on job carving and working in the new economy. The author also notes the importance of developing active relationships with local businesses and providing co-worker training and support to help job retention.


This study examined the outcome of specialized supported employment services for adults with autism or Asperger Syndrome. The study occurred over an eight year period and the majority of individuals found computer based, administrative, or technical work. Individuals supported by the specialized program showed an increase in salaries and claimed fewer government benefits. The article concludes that there is a dramatic need for specialized employment services for persons with asd and suggests that these programs utilize employment support strategies that are tailored specifically to this population.


This study examined the effects of a TEACCH based work system on the independent vocational skills of students with autism. A single subject design was used to evaluate the on task and behavior and work related skills of the students in both classrooms and employment settings. The study showed that students utilizing TEACCH based work systems improved their ability to finish work tasks and remain focused on task for longer periods of time. It is the conclusion that using TEACCH based work systems which focus on visual clarity and structuring tasks assists students with autism in improving work skills.


This study compared simulation training in combination with job site training for teaching job skills to workers with autism to provision of solely on-the-job-training. Results suggested that on-the-job training for workers with autism is likely to be more effective if supplemented with simulation training. The article recommended further research in improving simulation training in order to enhance overall vocational training for people with autism.

Hagner and Cooney interviewed the supervisors of 14 successfully employed individuals with ASD. They found that, when successfully and appropriately employed, people with ASD often get high evaluation marks from their supervisors and are regarded as friendly and sociable by co-workers. However, to achieve that successful employment, supervisors reported that they needed support from community rehabilitation providers and job coaches. They identified several common management techniques that were effective for supervisors of persons with ASD across a wide variety of employment settings, but did not make specific recommendations about VR service delivery.


Hurlbutt & Chalmers interviewed a small group of individuals with Asperger Syndrome for consumer perspectives on employment issues. They concluded that individuals with Asperger Syndrome are underemployed, are impacted by challenges with social and communication issues and with need for routines, that job coaches are important to successful employment, that there is a need for wider education about ASD, and that jobs should be tailored to client characteristics.


Schaller & Yang examined RSA outcomes data from 2001 to indentify variable related to successful employment outcomes for people with ASD served by state VR agencies. They found that clients were more likely to be successfully placed in supported employment than in competitive employment. They also found that, for competitive employment, provision of job finding, job placement, and maintenance services improved employment outcomes. For supported employment, job placement was the most significant case service variable.