EMPLOYMENT FOR AUTISTIC ADULTS IN A NEURODIVERSE WORKPLACE: A WEBSITE OF RESOURCES

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SOSC Masters Project 2019
Neurodiversity
“Neuro” = minds
“Diversity” = variety

Autism Spectrum Disorder – ASD
(autistic)

Neurotypical
AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)
TRANSITION INTO ADULTHOOD
EMPLOYMENT
NEURODIVERSITY
IMPLEMENTING NEURODIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE
INSPIRED BY THE SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL MODEL BY URIE BRONFENBRENNER

Public Policy
laws and policies of local, state, and national levels

Community
relationship among organizations, institutions, and informal networks within defined boundaries

Institutional
characteristics of organizations or social institutions which include the rule and regulations

Interpersonal
A person's formal and informal social network and support systems which include family, employers, co-workers, and friendship networks

Intrapersonal
Individual's developmental history, attitudes, behavior, self-concept, skills, etc.
lower employment rates

Services and funding (transitioning into adulthood):
Limited | Insufficient Research Outcomes | Lack Funding

lower wages and work fewer hours

Neurodiverse work environment

Central information/resources are limited
AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)  
“AUTISTIC”

not always categorized so broadly

• 1952: DSM-I schizophrenic reaction, childhood type
• 1980: DSM-III pervasive developmental disorder (PDD)
• 1987: DSM III-R pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), or “atypical autism”
  • 1994 DSM IV & DSM IV-TR PDD w/subtypes:
    Autistic Disorder
    PDD-NOS
    Asperger Disorder
    Rett disorder
    Disintegrative disorder

2013 DSM 5 Autism Spectrum Disorder

Mahoney et al, 1998; Mintz, 2017; Volkmar & Reichow, 2013
“If you’ve met one person with autism, you’ve met one person with autism”

Dr. Stephen Shore | Lime Connect 2018
1 in 59 births
Baio et al. (2018)

Closer to 1 in 40
Kogan et al. (2018)

• focused on children.

• 4x in males than females

• represent about 1 percent of the population

ASD CONTINUED...

• data for prevalence among autistic adults/elderly limited
  (DSM, 2018)

“it’s that we’re finding them”
- Dena Gassner
  (Keynote Speaker 2018)

• autism is a lifelong condition

• twenty years from now an autistic person will be developmentally in a different place
  (Robinson, 2017)
TRANSITION INTO ADULTHOOD

“transition age”: adolescent ages 14-16 - adulthood at 24 to 26 (HHS, 2017)

graduate | postsecondary education | independent living/housing | gainful employment
(Hendriks, 2009; Pelt, 2008; Parsi & Elster, 2015; HHS, 2017; Bernick & Holden, 2018; Kandalaft et al., 2012)

Anxiety, mood disorders, ADHD, and depression
(HHS, 2017; Horowitz et al., 2017)

70% - one ‘comorbid mental disorder’, and 40% - 2+ (DSM-5)
79% at least once in their life
Horowitz et al. (2017) and Lever & Geurts (2016)

9x’s more likely to die from suicide and 5x’s as likely to attempt suicide than the general public
(Mandell, 2018, p.234).
Transitional plan (WIOA)

entitlement-driven system (i.e., special education) to multiple eligibility-driven systems (e.g., adult services, postsecondary education, disability services, housing supports)

2/3 of young autistics do not move onto employment or other education in the first two years after leaving high school (Abrams, 2016; HHS, 2017)


on lifespan issues: ONLY 2% Fed & Private funding
One way to enhance a person’s well-being and mental health is through employment (Modini et al., 2016; van der Noordt et al., 2014).

- increase in mental well-being, and a low incident rate of suicide (Modini et al., 2016)
- strong evidence employment reduces the risk of depression (van der Noordt et al., 2014, p.734)
EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment estimated: 70 and 90 percent %. (Abrams, 2016; Bernick & Holden, 2018; Harmuth et al., 2018; Hendricks, 2009; Sarrett, 2017).

Barriers:

Individual: communications, social skills, recognizing social cues, and developing and maintaining social norms; restricted or repetitive patterns of behavior (*SEM intrapersonal*) (Harmuth et al., 2018; HHS, 2017; Scott et al., 2015).

Organization: lack of long-term workplace support, negative attitudes, and the level of social expectations a work environment has (*SEM Institutional/Community*) (Anderson et al., 2017; Bernick & Holden, 2018; Harmuth et al., 2018; McLeroy et al., 1988).

Small % obtain community employment; low retention rates

Low wages, poor conditions, shortened hours, limited opportunities for growth, positions are a poor fit, and inadequate training for the job

Vocational Rehabilitation:

- largest public funder of employment (US)
  - 60% employed – 80% P-T & poverty
  - 48% exited with refusal and unknown reason (Roux et al., 2016)

- 63 of 64 gained CIE through CE (Wehman et al., 2015)
School-based internship = fewer intervention hours
Postsecondary education can also improve CIE
Wehman et al. (2015)

Programs, such as vocational rehabilitation, can help autistic individuals adapt their behavior at work and train employers to understand how basic accommodations can help autistic adults succeed (Abrams, 2016). - John Elder Robinson

Few studies show the perspectives of the employer and employers’ needs for the successful employment of autistic adults (Hedley et al., 2017).

autism-specific job environment
“neurological diversity” – better represented as its own political category (class, gender, race) (Singer, 2017).

equality, acceptance, and inclusion

excludes the perspective to be “fixed,” cured, or otherwise normalized

effort to bring awareness to society and public acceptance of neurodivergent differences and strengths of autistic persons.

IMPLEMENTING NEURODIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Specialisterne ("the specialist")

- “Team with “social partners” for expertise you lack”
- “Use nontraditional, no interview-based assessment and training processes”
- “Train other workers and managers”
- “Set up a support ecosystem”
- “Tailor methods for managing careers”
- “Scale the program”
- “Mainstream the program”

(Austin & Pisano, 2017)
To create a website of resources that promote meaningful employment for autistics.

- A tool for employers who may want to hire autistic, or other neurodivergent individuals, but are not sure how to meet their needs, or identify strengths.

- A tool for autistic adults, and other neurodivergent individuals, who seek employment and need resources to help them toward meaningful employment.
For Job Seekers
Assessments
Résumé and tool kits
Work experience and professional coursework
Communication
Programs and Community
Connect Online
Self care

For Community
Guides and tools
Professional coursework

For Employers
Neurodiverse companies
Creating a neurodiverse workplace
Advocates and leaders

Information
Fact sheet
Books
Articles
Conferences
Policy and government
Podcast (NEW!)
Reliability and Validity

Limitations

• Programs and services are limited
• New programs lack long-term research outcomes and may not be evidence-based (reducing the validity of the website content)
• Neurodiverse workplace and their effectiveness to address barriers are biased, most information is derived from self-reported information and neurodiverse company materials.
• Lack of research on the neurodiverse workplace setting
• Website limitations in accessibility - universal design
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS

Website helps address the issues

It is important that each level makes the contributions

Website components influenced by SEM

Create more awareness

Comprehensive resources listed in one location, with effort to increase access to services

Neurodiverse workplaces

• Develop an environment that addresses the barriers
• Bring more awareness of the neurodiversity concept and applying it to the workplace
• Decreased unemployment rates
• Provide a supportive work environment while utilizing strengths

Website

• Identify neurodiverse companies
• How companies can get onboard
• Effort to bring awareness
• Programs identified
RECOMMENDATIONS

Expand the website

Post-secondary education,
  Housing
  Healthcare
  Independent living

• Ethnographic approach to provide insight on neurodiverse companies and employees

• More research is essential – may promote more funding

• Gaps in understanding why success is low in transition period
Neurodiversity Network
Learn | Work | Connect | Achieve

www.neurodiversitynetwork.net
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severity level</th>
<th>Social communication</th>
<th>Restricted, repetitive behaviors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 3</strong></td>
<td>Severe deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills cause severe impairments in functioning, very limited initiation of social interactions, and minimal response to social overtures from others. For example, a person with few words of intelligible speech who rarely initiates interaction and, when he or she does, makes unusual approaches to meet needs only and responds to only very direct social approaches.</td>
<td>Inflexibility of behavior, extreme difficulty coping with change, or other restricted/repetitive behaviors markedly interfere with functioning in all spheres. Great distress/difficulty changing focus or action.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Requiring very substantial support”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
<td>Marked deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills; social impairments apparent even with supports in place; limited initiation of social interactions; and reduced or abnormal responses to social overtures from others. For example, a person who speaks simple sentences, whose interaction is limited to narrow special interests, and who has markedly odd nonverbal communication.</td>
<td>Inflexibility of behavior, difficulty coping with changes, or other restricted/repetitive behaviors appear frequently enough to be obvious to the casual observer and interfere with functioning in a variety of contexts. Distress and/or difficulty changing focus or action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Requiring substantial support”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td>Without supports in place, deficits in social communication cause noticeable impairments. Difficultly initiating social interactions, and clear examples of atypical or unsuccessful responses to social overtures of others. May appear to have decreased interest in social interactions. For example, a person who is able to speak in full sentences and engages in communication but whose to- and fro- conversation with others fails, and whose attempts to make friends are odd and typically unsuccessful.</td>
<td>Inflexibility of behavior causes significant interference of functioning in one or more contexts. Difficulty switching between activities. Problems of organization and planning hamper independence.</td>
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