



RRTC-EBP VR

Rehabilitation Research & Training Center
for Evidence Based Practice in Vocational Rehabilitation



Research Summary

research2vrpractice.org

Autism Spectrum Disorder and Supported Employment

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex, lifelong developmental disability that makes it difficult for individuals to understand social cues and facial expressions, express emotions appropriately, and adapt to change. Many people with ASD have difficulty forming relationships, using language, and interpreting and responding to the world around them. Although many people with ASD have the desire to work, an estimated 50-75% of adults with ASD are unemployed.

Supports

Studies have shown that people with ASD can work successfully when the right type, level, and intensity of support is available. Supported employment (SE) can be used to help people find the right “mix” of supports. When providing SE to a person with ASD, consider providing highly individualized support in the following areas:

- Career search and job interviews
- Disclosure
- Transportation
- Job customization
- Instructional support
- Developing compensatory strategies
- Co-worker education
- Change of management

Outcomes

In a recent study, 27 of 33 vocational rehabilitation (VR) clients with ASD were successful in getting and maintaining employment, with ongoing employment support from an employment specialist. The support time required to achieve this average was just over 100 hours, with support time needed decreasing over time and long-term supports provided to all employees with ASD.

Bottom Line

Research has shown that people with ASD can work successfully when provided with the right type, level, and intensity of supported employment.



Read More

Wehman, P., Lau, S., Molinelli, A., Brooke, V., ; Thompson, K., Moore, C., & West, M. (2012). Supported employment for young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Preliminary data. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 37 (3), 160-169.

Learn More

Use these resources to learn more about Autism Spectrum Disorder and Supported Employment:

- [The Apple iPod Touch as a vocational support aid for adults with autism: Three Case Studies](#)
by: Tony Gentry, Stephanie Lau, Alissa Molinelli, Amy Fallen and Richard Kriner
- Wehman, P. H., Schall, C. M., McDonough, J., Molinelli, A., Riehle, E., Ham, W., & Thiss, W. (In Press). Project SEARCH for youth with autism spectrum disorders: Increasing competitive employment upon transition from high school. Submitted to *The Journal of Positive Behavior Intervention*.
- [Autism Society of America](#)

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