

Change is Good: Transitioning from Adolescence to Adulthood with ASD

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Disclosure Statement

- Dr. Gentry and Dr. Loudermill have no relevant financial or nonfinancial relationship(s) within the products or services described, reviewed, evaluated or compared in this presentation.

Learning Objectives

- The participants will discuss parental concern of individuals with ASD regarding the transition process.
- The participants will describe the challenges faced in the workplace by individuals with ASD.
- The participants will learn about resources to aid individuals with ASD in the transition process.
- **Employment Rates - Disabilities**
Shattuck, et. al., 2012

Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Significant disadvantages in the labor market
- Lack of understanding in employment setting
- Lack of support in the employment setting (Baldwin, Costley & Warren (2014))

Young Adults with ASD

- Often struggle with the abrupt transition from high school to adulthood
- Parents are concerned about uncertain futures of their adult child
- Limited vocational resources supporting adults with ASD
- "Individuals with ASD are ill prepared to obtain employment" (Bennet & Dukes, 2013)

Transitioning From High School to the Adult World

"Transitioning from high school to the adult world is a critical time in the lives of all students and their parents, but it is even more daunting for parents of children with ASD." (Holmes, 2007).

Workplace Challenges for Individuals with ASD

- Understanding complex job application materials
- "Thinking on their feet" in an interview
- Acclimatizing to new procedures and routines
- Remembering and following instructions
- Responding flexibly to unexpected situations
- Planning and juggling multiple tasks
- Communicating effectively with co-workers

- Interacting socially
- Managing sensory sensitivities in the workplace (Baldwin, Costley & Warren ,2014)

Services After Age 21

Because each young adult on the spectrum is unique it is important to get an individualized profile of the supports and social communication skills needed for the best outcome toward independent living (Hillier, et al, 2007; Wehman, et al, 2014).

- What are the Concerns of Parents?
- Transitioning from high school to adulthood
- Finding employment
- Independence

Method

Participants

- Ten parents of young adults with ASD over the age of 21

Procedure

- Participating parents were emailed a *Survey Monkey* link to a researcher developed questionnaire

Parent Demographics

Employment Status

Number in Household

- Mean = 2.7
- Range = 1-7

Member of Parent Support Group:

- "Yes" = 25%
- "No" = 75%

Prepared to Advocate for Child:

- "Yes" = 37.5%;
- "No" = 62.5%

Marital status:

- Married: 66.67%;
- Single head of household: 33.3%

Income:

- Less than \$25,000 = 22%
- \$25,000-\$50,000 = 33%
- \$50,000-\$75,000 = 22%
- More than \$100,000 = 22%

Young Adult Demographics

Gender:

- Males 80%

- Females 20%

Age:

- 40% 22-23 years
- 30% 24-25 years
- 10% 26-27 years
- 20% over 30 years

Severity:

- 10% mild
- 60% moderate
- 20% severe
- 10% profound

School:

- 90% Public
- 10% Private

Young Adult Employment

Does adult child discuss employment?

- "Yes" = 50%
- "No" = 50%

Is employment a reality?

- "Yes" = 78%
- "No" = 22%

Would parents like to see their child employed?

- "Yes" = 90%
- "No" = 10%

Current employment history

- Never employed = 40%
- Currently employed = 20%
- Previously employed = 20%
- Seeking employment = 20%

Results: Which type of employment would be most appropriate?

Results: Social Challenges

- **Other Social Challenges**
- Expressive language skills
- Limited vocabulary/cognitive/intellectual skills
- Misunderstanding employee via co-workers or customers
- Communication skills
- Young adult is in his own world

Young adult social skills ratings:

- Poor = 56%
- Average = 33%
- Above Average = 11%

Benefit from social skills group:

- Yes = 100%

Services Prior to Age 21**Results: How beneficial were services before age 21?**

Service	Mean Rating
• Speech therapy	3.00
• Social Skills	2.67
• Physical Therapy	2.50
• Occupational Therapy	1.50
• Recreational Therapy	2.50
• Behavior Therapy	3.33
• Prevocational Therapy	2.00
• *(1 = ineffective; 5 = exceptional)	

Results: Post-Secondary Services**Do you have access to information on services after 21?**

- Yes = 62.5%
- No = 37.5%

Results: Desired Post-Secondary Services

- **Speech Therapy**
- Financial Assistance
- Interactions with other young adults
- More companies for employment opportunities
- Self- advocacy
- **Social skills**
- Independent living
- Learning a skill
- Dental services for young adults
- Ongoing vocational training
- Planning
- Getting a job
- **Functional communication skills**

Tenets of a Prevocational Services

- Support services should start during high school (Westbrook et al 2013; Murray & Doren, 2013; Test, Smith & Carter, 2014).
- Services should continue after age 21 to learn and practice workplace social skills. (Richler, 2015).
- Get an individualized profile of the supports and social communication skills needed (Hillier, et al, 2007; Wehman, et al, 2014).

Clinical Implications

- What are the possibilities?
- Dr. Pamela Wiley' Prevocational Social Skills Program is an excellent model Success Story

Tenets of the Employment Readiness Program

- **On site placement opportunities** allowed students to work with children as classroom assistants in the center's social skills programs
- **Off-site placement opportunities** with a major corporation (AEG) allowed students to gain exposure to various aspects of corporate operations

Tenets of the Employment Readiness Program

- **Job coaches** were used to:
 - Collect performance data
 - Provide one-on-one internship training
 - Provide support to employee and company staff
 - To identify needed workplace accommodations.
 - Provide oversight and guidance for appropriate social interaction.
- A prevocational Training Program

Conclusions

- Teen Pragmatics Group
- Adult Pragmatics Group
- Easter Seals ACCE – (training site at UALR)
- Los Angeles UPS program
- Community Connections
- Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
- Several community programs/businesses that can be found on Autism Speaks
- What's Next?

Future research

- Larger scale study
- Nationwide