



Autism Speaks thanks QBE for their generous support of the organization's employment initiatives.

Have more questions or need assistance? Please contact the Autism Response Team for Information, Resources and Tools.

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A Guide to Employment for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs)



Practical Advice: How You Can Help Your Adult Child Find and Keep Employment

As a parent you may often worry about your child's future - particularly when it comes to employment. Having a job or a career is a major contributor to quality of life that often does not come easily to adults on the spectrum. As the parent of an adult, it may be difficult to know when you should step in to help and when you should let your son or daughter be independent. The following document will give you some guidance on how to support your child during this process.



Collaborating with your son or daughter is beneficial to them. Remember, you are a partner in this process even though your child may be an adult. Your role can include helping them articulate their strengths and challenges, teaching them how to advocate for themselves and giving them encouragement and guidance to what their rights are regarding employment. Your support will be valuable to them both practically and emotionally. Even though you should not go on the job site to intervene on his/her behalf, you are a key player in your son or daughter's employment.

Working with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services



Parents have more knowledge about their child's skills and employment strengths than anyone else. However, this information is often overlooked because those skills have been demonstrated at home, school or in the community but not specifically on the job site.

It will be helpful to work with your son or daughter to assist them in articulating their strengths, talents and challenges to their vocational rehabilitation counselor or anyone else who is working with your child. An ongoing dialogue is crucial to ensuring that everyone is aiming for the same employment goal.

Encourage your child to request a career assessment from the school's transition coordinator or a vocational rehabilitation counselor. This assessment should include on-the-job learning experiences such as job sampling, internships, apprenticeships and/or volunteering. It is most helpful to start this process while your child is still covered under their educational entitlement and the school district is obligated to provide appropriate services. It is never too early to start preparing for his/her employment.

Supported Employment



Supported employment is a service that can help your child gain competitive employment in integrated work settings, and then provide ongoing support services to help him/her maintain a position. Job coaches, co-workers, business supervisors, and mentors have all been utilized as employment supports for people with autism.

It is essential to research potential supported employment providers in your area and to help your son or daughter determine the support and job options that are most appropriate for him/her. State VR programs can assist you with this process of identifying and selecting a service provider.

There have been many interventions developed in supported employment. You can review what interventions may work best with the job coach working with your son or daughter. There are online resources to assist with this task, many of which can be found at the following websites:

www.worksupport.com
askjan.org

Job Development

Families often have networks that can lead to a job. It is important to encourage your child to network at community and family events. Potential employers are everywhere.

Encourage your son or daughter to think about their hopes, dreams, interests and strengths as a way to start planning for employment. One of the most valuable resources for adults with autism is peer support and mentoring.

There are several good websites that provide information and forums for adults with ASD and can serve as a resource for peer support and networking.

Two of these sites are WrongPlanet.net and [Global & Regional Asperger Syndrome Partnership \(GRASP\)](http://Global & Regional Asperger Syndrome Partnership (GRASP)).

Skill Development at Home and at School

Encourage learning “soft skills” at home and at school if your child is still a student. These skills should include:

- "active" listening
- speaking at appropriate times
- proper manners at lunch and/or breaks
- problem-solving
- planning
- time management
- teamwork
- communicating in your most effective way

The development of self-advocacy skills, are critical to your son or daughter successfully entering adulthood and employment. Information how to effectively build these skills can be found in our Employment Toolkit along with many other helpful tools.



Other Areas to Think About in Guiding Your Child Towards Employment

Appropriate hygiene and personal appearance is required on most job sites. Maintaining a clean and professional demeanor and dressing appropriately can mean the difference between success and failure during the interview and on the job.

Learning how to handle conflict is critical. Practice and plan for this skill. You can do this through role-playing or modeling.

Planning for transportation to and from the job site can be one key to a successful job placement. Helping your son or daughter to access public or private transportation is incredibly helpful in determining which jobs are available and accessible.

Safety skills training in the community is essential. Information on safety skills training can be found on our website here: Autism Safety Project.

There are resources in your local community that can provide support. Using those resources will be vital to your son or daughter's independence. One valuable resource that is located in each state is the Center for Independent Living.

What Are Centers For Independent Living?

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are private, nonprofit corporations that provide services to maximize the independence of individuals with disabilities and the accessibility of the communities in which they live. Centers are funded in part by the Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, and Independent Living Branch, to provide several core services:

- Advocacy
- Independent living skills training
- Information and referral
- Peer counseling

For more information on the Centers for Independent Living and the Services they provide check out the following website.

Department of Education-Centers for Independent Living

There are several government websites which can you can use to research what federal and state programs your child may be eligible for. Be sure to remember that services for adults are based on eligibility and funding and are not entitlements, in most states. Those sites are listed here.

www.disability.gov

www.dol.gov/odep/categories/youth/

www.socialsecurity.gov/work/WIPA.html

