

How to Support Employment Goals of Youth with Autism

At-a-Glance:

Researchers examined positive employment outcomes for youth with autism to learn if self-determination, social skills, job search skills, and transportation were all critical to supporting them to get and keep jobs. Although they believe that all four factors are important, they found transportation to be the only one with statistically significant data showing it as a critical support.

Key Findings

- Young people with autism who had a driver's license, or who independently used transportation, were five times more likely to be hired as their peers who didn't.
- Low self-determination skills did not prevent youth with autism from getting or keeping a job.
- Employed youth with autism were found to have scored higher in "psychological empowerment" than their unemployed peers.
- Social skill deficits were not found to be statistically significant enough to explain a lower rate of employment for youth with autism.
- Students with autism and those with other disabilities both scored low on job search activities that involved personal initiative.

Putting It into Practice

- Explore with youth independent transportation options like walking, biking, driving, or taking the bus.
- Encourage schools to help raise awareness about independent transportation options within the community.
- Provide social skills, self-determination, and job search training.

- Teach youth how to take initiative during the job search, including reaching out to employers, searching ads for job opportunities, and leveraging their networks to find jobs that fit their skills.
- Involve youth in transition planning to ensure that sheltered employment is not a default choice.

More About this Research

The authors emphasized the importance of more comprehensive data collection measures for this population, as they believed the NLTS-2 data set used in this study excluded several factors that would have provided a clearer picture of factors affecting youth with autism.

Learn More

Zalewska, A., Migliore, A., & Butterworth, J. (2016). Self-determination, social skills, job search, and transportation: Is there a relationship with employment of young adults with autism? *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 45(3), 225-239. doi:10.3233/jvr-160825

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