Charting the Job Search Process for Individuals with Autism

Employment First: Expanding Job Opportunities and Pathways to Work Conference

June 11, 2019
Today’s Topics

• Getting Started
• Job Search and Matching Considerations
• Resume Writing and Job Applications
• Framing Expectations
• Interviewing
• Disclosure & Accommodations
• Starting and Maintaining a Job
• Executive Functioning & Tools
• Stress and Anxiety in the Workplace
• Dealing with Rejection
• Accepting a less preferred job
Getting Started: What to think about and what to ask

• Strengths, Desires, Goals

• What are the non-negotiables

• How will a new job impact my life. What are my expectations?

• Write it down
Job Search & Matching Considerations

• What kind of job, industry, and environment is ideal? What is acceptable if not ideal?

• Conduct individualized searches rather than gravitating toward typically available options such as retail.
Job Search & Matching Considerations

• What are the appropriate settings and might there be potential accommodations? Consider: number of people at employer, whether employer site is open to the public, loud noises, bright lights, etc.

• Have an understanding of where an individual might thrive. Some might do better with predictable, defined duties and few distractions. Others might enjoy fast-paced environments and multiple job functions.
Resume Writing & Job Applications

• Many companies post applications online that can be printed via print option or by taking a screen shot. Printing applications to fill out by hand can provide practice for when applications need to be completed at employer sites.

Framing Expectations

• Celebrate the success of being chosen for an interview.

• Employers see many applications and resumes to fill one job. More than 20 people could apply for the same job.

• Employers might interview 5-10 people for one open job.
Framing Expectations

• What’s realistic?

• Understanding the individual’s skill set and growth potential
Framing Expectations

*Corporate culture*

*It’s not just about the skills...*

- Helping employers see the benefits of hiring our individual’s
- Cost/Benefit Analysis
Interviewing

• Role play

• Practice mock phone or Skype interviews

• Interview questions: Practice novel, expected, and nuanced questions with family/friends/coach.

• Practice small talk

• Review calming techniques and coping skills
Interviewing

• Research and preparation

• Interviewer: “Do you have any questions for us?”
  – Be prepared with a go-to question.

• Do a dry run of transportation and travel time prior to the interview.
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990. Title I focuses on Employment. It helps people with disabilities access the same employment opportunities and benefits available to people without disabilities. Employers are required to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants or employees. The act also defines disability. Source: https://adata.org/factsheet/ADA-overview
Disclosure

• Disclosure is a personal decision

• What to say

• Who to talk to
Disclosure

• When to disclose
  - Before or after the interview...
  - After receiving a job offer...
  - Anytime during employment...

• Accommodation needs
Disclosure & Accommodations

• When disclosing, express what you might need to help you be most successful at the job. “For time-management, a written schedule with the allotted time for each task would be helpful.” or “Please help me prioritize my daily tasks.”

• Make your supervisor aware of your learning style. “When being taught new skills, I learn best from modeling, pictures, and written emails instead of speaking face-to face”

• “Please provide me with a map/layout of the office”
Starting & Maintaining a Job

• What are the social expectations of the job?

• Individuals can set expectations with coworkers without disclosing. It may be helpful to let co-workers know if you like to eat lunch by yourself but that you would also be interested in socializing after work.

• Figure out a place to go for refuge in or around the building for quiet place when anxiety builds.

• Transfer employment supports to natural supports in the workplace.

• Maintaining a job coach for occasional check-ins can be helpful.
Executive Functioning & Tools for Success

Problem Solving, Organization, Attending, Working Memory

• Task Analysis (TA)
• Checklists
• Organizers
• Instruction sheets
• Notebooks
Stress & Anxiety in the Workplace

Let a supervisor know what’s helpful, such as:

• Clear Directions
• Clear Feedback
• Email instead of face-to-face conversation (if possible)

Sensory sensitivities in the workplace can increase anxiety

• Ask for a work station in a desired location
• If disclosing, let a supervisor know how they can help
Dealing with rejection

• The job search process for any job seeker is a numbers game.

• Interviews that don’t result in jobs...

• Interviewing provides valuable experience
Accepting a less preferred job

Questions to ask...

• Is an individual being set up for disappointment if they accept a job they don’t want or don’t feel comfortable with?

• If an individual goes to a job they don’t like or they find difficult to tolerate, is there a greater likeliness of being fired?

• To build a resume and gain experience, does it make sense to accept a less desirable job while looking for a better fit?
DDS Autism Program Coordinators

• Northeast Region – Lea Hill
  – Lea.Hill@MassMail.State.MA.US

• Metro Region – Maria Stefano
  – Maria.Stefano@MassMail.State.MA.US

• Southeast Region – Shannon Hubley
  – Shannon.Hubley@MassMail.State.MA.US

• Central/West Region – Pamela Ferguson
  – Pamela.P.Ferguson@MassMail.State.MA.US
Resources

http://connectpro97884399.adobeconnect.com/p808d5mnflg/

WEBINAR: Making a Good Match - Introduction to Employment for People with Autism (February 24, 2015)
http://connectpro97884399.adobeconnect.com/p95pb2erxca/

WEBINAR: Making the Best Impression: Using Visual Resumes for Success (June 29, 2017)
http://connectpro97884399.adobeconnect.com/psat7180r2r6/
EmploymentFirstMA Resource Library Home
https://employmentfirstma.org/pages/resource_lib.html

Institute for Community Inclusion: Supporting Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Quality Employment Practices:
https://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=266&type=topic&id=3

An Overview of the Americans With Disabilities Act
https://adata.org/factsheet/ADA-overview