

Improving Employment Outcomes for Students with ASDs Living in Kentucky

National Statistics

- In a national longitudinal study examining employment of students with ASDs, 66% of these individuals worked after exiting high school, but only 47% retained their jobs in the following years (Newman et al., 2009).
- Young adults with autism spectrum disorders are less likely to work than most other disability groups (National Longitudinal Transition Study, www.nlts2.org). In fact, only one disability group had a lower rate of employment participation. While 32.5% of young adults with autism spectrum disorders currently worked for pay, 59.0% of all other respondents worked for pay.

Kentucky Statistics

- In Kentucky, from 2002 to 2007, for every dollar employees with intellectual disabilities spent being supported in their community, they earned \$3.31 (Cimera, 2010).
- In a statewide survey facilitated by the Kentucky Autism Training Center, 80% of caregivers reported that their adult son or daughter with ASD was unemployed.
- Individuals with ASD indicated that their greatest barriers to obtaining or retaining employment were community awareness, communication skills, social skills, and past job history. Overall, participants indicated that social skills were a significant barrier in obtaining or retaining appropriate employment.

| Federal Fiscal Year | Total Eligible | # Eligible with Autism | % Eligible with Autism | Total PEO's | # PEO's with Autism | % PEO's with Autism |
|---------------------|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 2005 | 11,299 | 62 | 0.5% | 4,995 | 6 | 0.1% |
| 2006 | 10,812 | 74 | 0.7% | 5,012 | 17 | 0.3% |
| 2007 | 10,532 | 78 | 0.7% | 5,063 | 28 | 0.5% |
| 2008 | 11,766 | 126 | 1% | 4,948 | 22 | 0.4% |
| 2009 | 11,622 | 153 | 1% | 4,564 | 38 | 0.8% |

Figure 1. Percent of individuals with ASD referred to the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), qualify for services, then have positive employment outcomes. It is apparent that adults with ASD continue to be under-represented in this pool.

Benefits of Employment

- Regardless of the number of disabilities present, or the state someone received services, the benefits of working exceed the monetary costs (Cimera, 2010).
- Participation in supported employment improves cognitive performance in adults with ASD (Garicia-Villamisar & Hughes, 2006).
- Although people with ASD display deficits in social interaction and communication, employment skills are often strong, especially if employment is in an area of special interest. Muller et al. (2003) found through self-reports that vocational success was not related to completion of job duties, rather the person's ability to handle the social aspects of employment. (Hurlbutt & Chalmers, 2002; Muller et al., 2003).

Recommendations

- Promote person centered model of supported employment as a best practice
- Promote the inclusion of individuals with ASDs in the workforce
- Facilitate opportunities for employment professionals on effective instruction for individuals with ASDs