

**Having a Coworker
with Autism**

Your name, your agency

Presentation compiled by the Kentucky Autism Training Center. For more information, please visit www.kyautism.com.

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Today's Agenda

- What is a disability?
- What is autism?
- Working with a person with autism
- Our new co-worker!

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We all have disabilities...



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What does autism mean to you?

What context have you interacted with a person with a disability?

How is working with a person with a disability different?

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Employing a person with a disability is
NOT a charity gift.

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**Chances are you know
someone with a disability...**

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of the individual
- Almost 1/3 of Americans entering the workforce will be affected by a disability by the time they retire
- Over 51 million Americans - 18% of the population - classify themselves as fully or partially disabled.
- Can be congenital or caused during the lifespan

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What a disability is not.

- An inability to learn
- A sickness
- An unnecessary burden
- Something a person should be ashamed of


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What is autism?

- A complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life
- A neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain
- Not a mental illness



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Statistics

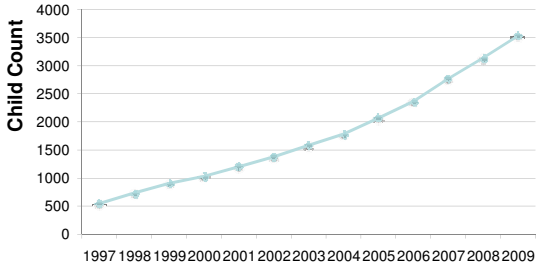
- Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) occur in approximately 1 in 110 individuals (Center for Disease Control, 2010)
- Knows no racial, ethnic, or social boundaries
- Four times more prevalent in boys than girls
- Varying degrees of severity in different individuals
- Over one half million people in the US today have autism or some form of PDD (Autism Society of America)
- Approximately 49,000 Kentuckians are affected by an ASD

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Kentucky Department of Education Statewide child count of ASD



Year	Child Count
1997	500
1998	750
1999	900
2000	1000
2001	1200
2002	1400
2003	1600
2004	1800
2005	2100
2006	2400
2007	2800
2008	3200
2009	3500

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“According to self-reports, vocational success relies not on the completion of job duties but on the person’s ability to handle the social aspects of employment.”

Not vocational skill levels!

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Supported Employment

- Helps a person who has had difficulty with work successfully enter and stay in the workplace
- Uses a job coach or employment specialist
- Increase productivity and decrease costs
- Increases diversity and increases consumer base
- Including individuals with disabilities in a workforce increases a business’ bottom line.

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Supported Employment

The partnership that SE establishes between individuals with disabilities and their communities has a lasting impact on the way the public perceives people with disabilities.

SE gives the public the opportunity to see the person for who they are rather than seeing the disability.

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Common Vocational Barriers

Characteristics of ASD can be challenging in the workplace, but they can also be assets in the right environments.

- Social Skills
- Communication
- Sensory differences
- Restricted interests and behavior



Like anyone else receiving services from OVR, vocational barriers and challenges will vary from individual to individual.

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Learning Social skills

If you've never worked in an office, how do you know how to act?

- Appropriate and inappropriate topics of conversation
- How social time (lunch, breaks) differ from work time
- Uniform
- Celebrations and special days
- Sexual harassment



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Communication

Communication should always be **clear, concise, and concrete**.

- Direction, expectations, and consequences of not meeting expectations
- Examples:
 - “Wow, these tables are dirty! Someone should clean them!”
 - “J, these tables are very dirty. I need you to wash them by noon.”

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Structured Workplace

Like most people, employees with ASD are more productive when they have a schedule that enhances strengths and minimizes challenges.

- Often thrive on routine and a predictable schedule
- Flex time- work when the employee has the most energy
- Visual schedule (written, picture, electronic) available in the workplace



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WHAT WOULD YOUR CHOICE BE IF YOU COULD HAVE DINNER WITH ANYONE IN HISTORY, LIVING OR DEAD?

LIVING.

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Uneven Skill Development


It is important to note that student with ASD may demonstrate **“islands of precocity”**. That is, they may be gifted in some areas while demonstrating severe deficits in others.

For example

The uniquely erudite plebeian disparaged the concatenation of vernacular squandered by the cosmopolitan statesman on the entreatments for benefactions

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What do I need to know?

- Use person-first language
 - “Woman with autism” is appropriate
 - Not “autistic people” or “autism person”
- Can the person learn what I need them to?
 - Chances are yes! Tasks may need to be modified.
- Does the person understand what is going on?
 - Absolutely, many times as clearly as you or I! Just because someone doesn’t speak, doesn’t mean they don’t understand what you’re saying.

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What do I need to know?


We’re all **partners!**

Treat the co-worker like any other co-worker

- Everyone is responsible for their work
- We all need help sometimes
- We are all working to get the job done

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What do I need to know?

Like everyone else, your co-worker has strengths and weaknesses

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The Golden Rule

You should treat your co-worker with respect and a positive attitude.

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What do I need to know?

- Less water cooler gossip!
- Treat the new person like a “new person”
- Make sure to include the new person in any social events

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Everyone has roles and responsibilities that match their strengths and interests

We all use our strengths to work together and get the job done

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How do I build a relationship?

- What do you say to a new person?
- What about non-verbal communication?
- No question is a stupid question!

We must build a culture of acceptance and mutual respect.

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Sometimes, it might take longer to learn a task

Sometimes, different supports are needed

If there are any upcoming changes, inform as soon as possible


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Working at XXXXX

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Working at XXXX

It's essential that we provide XXXXX with positive role models and create a positive environment for learning and growth.

It's a wonderful opportunity for the XXXXX to have an employee who has a different perspective and fresh ideas

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Working at XXXXX

NEW PERSON is now a part of the XXXXX team.

Every position on the team is important!

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NEW EMPLOYEE

- Some things about the new employee

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NEW EMPLOYEE

- How does the new employee work?

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What if you don't know what to do?

- Talk with management about what the plan will be! Outline it clearly for co-workers


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Questions?

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