

# **Supporting the Individual with Autism Spectrum Disorder to Succeed in the Workplace**

*Presenter/facilitator: Chris Filler*

## **When is this workshop?**

Monday, June 18, 2012 from 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM (full day)

## **What is this workshop?**

This full day workshop will be a combination of lecture, discussion, activities and resources that allow participants to identify:

1. Potential strengths and challenges that individuals with ASD bring to the workplace and
2. Strategies and supports to improve the individual's success in the workplace

On the following pages is a detailed overview of the session to assist the potential participant.

***Handouts will be provided for session participants on the day of the conference.***

## **What population is the focus of this workshop content?**

This session will include information and examples that can be used to support many individuals that have been identified with ASD. However, because autism includes individuals that demonstrate a broad spectrum of characteristics, the focus of this session will primarily include the range of individuals described as having mild/moderate intellectual disability in addition to classic autism, to those that may be described as having high functioning ASD. Many of the interventions that will be discussed can be modified for individuals that fall on the extreme ends of the spectrum; however, these individuals may require additional or unique supports. After reviewing the outline below, participants that may still be unsure as to the appropriateness of the session for their needs may contact the speaker, Chris Filler at [chris\\_filler@ocali.org](mailto:chris_filler@ocali.org) to discuss their specific situation.

## **Who will benefit from this workshop?**

This workshop is appropriate for many individuals that support individuals with ASD. This can include:

- Job Coaches
- Job Developers
- Transition Staff (example: teachers, paraprofessionals, related service professionals, psychologist, etc.) in high schools working with transition youth in community settings
- Behavior specialist working with youth and adults in employment settings
- Parents of transition age youth (approximately ages 16-21) and adults with ASD

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## What will the focus of the workshop include?

### Introduction to ASD and Employment

The session will begin with a brief review the current employment picture for individuals with ASD. This will include a concise overview of the underlying characteristics of ASD and a discussion of the potential impact of these characteristics on successful employment. *Individuals with little or no knowledge/experience with ASD should review basic ASD information prior to the workshop.*

Underlying characteristic areas briefly reviewed include:

1. Social
2. Communication
3. Repetitive Behaviors and Routines
4. Emotional Vulnerability
5. Sensory Difference
6. Motor Differences
7. Cognitive Differences
8. Medical/Biological Factors

### Areas of Intervention

The intervention portion of the workshop will be divided into five areas of focus.

1. The Environment
2. Teaching What To Do
3. How to Teach and Support
4. Making It Meaningful
5. Consistency

An overview of each area of focus is explained below.

- **The Environment**

- Success on the job starts with the environment.
  - Will the environment support or challenge the individual?
  - What are the aspects of the environment that need to be assessed?
  - How can those aspects that may be a challenge be modified?

Walking through the door to the employment setting should not present an obstacle. This section will include exploration of sensory processing and how to informally assess a situation to “set the stage” for success.

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- **Teaching “What To Do”**

- Employment or potential employment assumes that the employee has the competencies to perform the job accurately and in a timely manner. However, this includes much more than just the steps or skills of the job. This is where frequently individuals with ASD struggle to be successful. Not because they are unable to master the steps of the task, but more frequently because of the assumed competencies in areas such as socialization, communication, organization and problem solving. In order to identify what needs to be taught and learned, a complete task analysis must be accomplished. This includes:
  - Steps of the task/job
  - Precursor skills of sensory regulation, communication and organization/initiation
  - Social competencies for the job
  - Accessing assistance and problem solving

Participants will practice how to complete the extensive task analysis and identify what potential steps/areas could be a challenge for individuals with ASD based on the underlying characteristics.

- **How to Teach/Support**

- Once the areas that need to be taught and supported have been identified, selecting strategies to teach and support the individual in the identified areas of need are the next step. Participants will learn about and practice the following.
  - *Strategies using the technology of Applied Behavioral Analysis*
    - Prompting. Many job or employment support personnel use prompting as a primary strategy to support and teach. However, considering how to prompt, when to prompt, and what types of prompts to use is essential to success and independence. Fading prompts will also be discussed.
    - Priming. A simple, yet effective strategy includes helping a person know what to expect and what to do.
    - Chaining. Teaching everything at one time is not generally effective for anyone! Teaching steps systematically and sequentially can help a person build success.

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- Generalization. Transferring skills from one setting, person or types of materials to another can be difficult for some people with ASD. Job support personnel need to understand and support the individual to make these generalizations.
- *Visual Supports*. The literature concerning ASD widely supports the use of visual supports for many situations and environments. This includes the work environment. The spectrum of visual supports is extensive. This session will explore several types of visual supports that can help teach and remind individuals on the job. These supports include:
  - *Environmental organization*
  - *Visual schedules and routines (high to low tech)*
  - *Visual communication supports*
  - *Timers, calendars*
  - *Video support*
- *Social Supports*. Many of the aspects of the job that are identified as needing assistance and support for individuals with ASD include social skills and social competencies. Frequently this includes teaching the “Hidden Curriculum” of the workplace. Many of the previously discussed strategies can assist in the areas of teaching social skills. Additional social supports for these areas will be reviewed and resources provided. These supports include:
  - *Video Modeling*
  - *Social Narratives*
  - *5 Point Scale*
  - *Power Cards*
  - *Social Autopsy*
- **Making It Meaningful**
  - To this point, the session has assumed that the employee with ASD that is being supported also desires to be employed in the targeted job. However, this is an assumption that one must not make. Instead, individuals with ASD, like everyone, need to feel motivated to get up and come to work! This factor cannot be overlooked when designing a successful employment support plan. The individual with ASD must want to be employed in the targeted job and must be motivated to

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utilize the supports and want to learn how to be successfully employed. In this portion of the session, participants will explore what motivates and reinforces individuals. Discussion will include how aspects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation may or may not be considered for individuals with ASD. Strategies to improve motivation include:

- *Using Special Interests.* This strategy for motivation focuses on including the individual's special interests as the basis for employment or as part of the employment setting.
  - *Reinforcement.* In this portion of the session, participants will review the definition of reinforcement and discuss the role of reinforcement. Reinforcement will be discussed as a tool to improve employment success.
- **Consistency**
    - As supports are put in place and strategies to build and maintain success are developed and implemented, a system to help communicate these supports to others on the team becomes a vital component of the overall plan.
      - *Six Minutes Brief CAPS.* The Comprehensive Autism Planning System (CAPS) is an excellent tool to use to help identify and share information about the individual and the supports that lead to success. A modified version of this tool, the Six Minute Brief CAPS, will be shared and discussed as a possible communication strategy.
      - *Use of Natural Supports.* Discovering the natural supports that exist in the environment and tapping into those possibilities also adds to the consistency of the support plan.
      - *SART.* A final tool to be provided is the Strategy Assessment and Revision Tool. This is a simple framework that can be used in a variety of ways. It can help identify the comprehensiveness of a strategy or plan and identify areas of weakness. It may also be used to facilitate discussion with teams to identify additional supports for improved outcomes.