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Hello and welcome to the webinar Supporting Individuals with ASD in the workplace. My name is Maya Chan and I am a field trainer at the Kentucky Autism Training Center. Can everybody hear me ok? Wonderful! So if you have any questions during this webinar please feel free to type them into the chat box below and I will answer questions at noon or at the end of the presentation today. But please do ask your questions so you don't forget them.

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Today's webinar will discuss strategies and techniques to support individuals with ASD successfully in the workplace; participants will also be directed towards additional services. And so first we are going to give a brief introduction of autism and how it relates to the workplace and then we will talk more about strategies, interventions, and accommodations before going on to resources.

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So why are we here? I'm sure you all have seen in the news that the number of people with ASD has been rapidly increasing over the years. While this usually pertains to smaller children these children are actually growing to adults and we are seeing them more and more in the adult population. So that increasing trend is just kind of a delay that we will see. So 2026 is when it will really hit us. Data currently suggests that focused interventions can significantly improve the lives of people with autism. So as professionals it is our responsibility, ethically, to be well-versed in these interventions so that we know what exactly we are doing and we can intervene properly and we make a good use of time and resources. Also we know that there are many obstacles in our path to delivery. Often times it is not anything that we have done. But certainly we must work through this together to change the system.

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So here are just a few demographics and I just wanted to describe these because it is who you will be seeing. Right now the diagnostic rate is 1 and 100 and again that will be coming to us eventually. There are no racial, ethnic, or social boundaries of autism it doesn't really matter who you are the diagnostic rates are still the same. We find the diagnostic rate four times more prevalent in boys than girls. This development disability usually affects sensory and motor processing systems of the brain. And of course autism spectrum disorders indicates that there are different degrees of severity in different individuals or autism looks different depending who you are. In total there are over half a million people in the U.S. who have autism or some form of a pervasive developmental disability so there are many many people in our community who are effected by autism spectrum disorders.

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Here is a line graph and I just wanted to give you all a visual. I know it is easier for me to imagine when I see it, this growing trend of autism. This data comes from the Kentucky Department of Education so again this slow but steady growth is happening in our schools right now. Schools have been trying very hard over recent years to accommodate all of these students. In 2026, that over 3500 that count will be in the adult population. So that it is absolutely necessary for us to prepare now.

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Next we are going to talk about the qualitative impairments that are listed in the DSM. The first one and I think one of the most important is communication. So in the DSM there are some criteria that are listed but we have changed them a little bit here so that they pertain more to the adult population. First individuals may not use vocal language to communicate, certainly people with autism can use either another sort of communication like an AAC device or sign language or perhaps they don't have a great communication system. Individuals with ASD may exhibit an inability or difficulty to initiate and sustain conversation. So perhaps a person has verbal skills or uses another communication device but they still might have difficulty with creating and sustaining conversations. Sometimes language is stereotyped or it might be idiosyncratic which means they are speaking but it doesn't necessarily mean that it is purposeful speaking.

Finally individuals may not be able to ask for what they need or want. This can certainly be challenging for us as providers as well as for the person with autism. I think it would be very difficult if I could not personally request what I need or want.

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So what does this mean exactly in the workplace?

Well if there are communication barriers and the co-workers are not fluent in the different communication form or perhaps it is the case that the person with autism does not have a great communication system it means they are probably not going to be included in the workplace. I mean can you imagine not being able to communicate with your coworkers. Certainly this will also be difficult if you can't ask for help and you can't ask to take a break. That might mean that you can't complete a task like you're supposed to or you might get really frustrated and display some other behaviors. Of course these things are going to make it hard to keep your job.

Finally these differences in communication can make someone seem aloof or anti-social which you know there are worse things in the world but when you talk about inclusion in the workplace and creating natural supports you know it is very difficult to want to include someone that looks like they don't really care or don't want to be around you. Certainly we all know that just

because a person appears to be aloof or appear not to be interested in the conversation does not necessary mean that they may just not have the skills to participate the way they wish.

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So like I briefly said before some people with autism have alternative forms of communication.

Like sign language, pictures like the PEC system or high tech devices. We are seeing a great increase in the number of IPAD and IPOD being used as communication devices. So this means if a person does have an alternative form of communication you need to make sure that coworkers, supervisors, and really any other natural supports in the workplace are informed and educated about how to engage in this communication as well.

Some people with autism don't have an alternative source of communication and they struggle to communicate. I cannot stress enough that if a person does not have a communication system this should be addressed immediately. If you need help vocational rehab is a wonderful place to go for this. If the person utilizes SCL services, Michelle P any sort of Medicaid services they hopefully have access to a speech and language pathologist or perhaps a behavior analyst who might assist in picking out an appropriate communication device and implementing it but again communication systems are key in success.

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And why are they key?

Well we know that if someone does not have a communication system they are more likely to exhibit problem behavior. We all know this that behavior is communication it can mean I want a break, I need your attention, I want to eat, this is too hard.

Often times this problem behavior is what keeps people out of the workplace. We just need to teach them an acceptable form of communication and then this problem behavior usually just relieves itself.

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We are moving on to the next criteria which is qualitative impairment in social interaction. Again these have been adapted to reflect adults more. So a lot of folks with autism are seemingly unaware of social norms. They might not appear to know or care about certain things. They might have problems with non-verbal communication like eye gaze so making eye contact, they might stand too close or too far away from someone, and perhaps they do not orientate their body toward the listener. A lot of time folks with autism have difficulty creating and sustaining relationships

Really this is a result in challenges in communication and that includes both that nonverbal and verbal communication. It gets very complex in the workplace, their different relationships with

coworkers and supervisors, there are different norms and expectations and really when we talk about building a support network for people with autism in the workplace relationships with coworkers and supervisors are key. We can't really phase out as job coaches if there are no relationships being built in the workplace. So social skills and communication are extremely important.

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Next people with autism often display restrictive, repetitive, or stereotyped patterns of behavior. A lot of times this is displayed as an obsessive interest or special interest in a certain item, idea, activity or a person whether it's a person in their life or maybe a famous person. This really can be used as a strength depending on what the interest is to develop a career. Certainly if the person's special interest is video games it is probably difficult to come up with a career playing video games but perhaps we can take an interest in video games and if it is really the hand movements that they like maybe they can work in a factory setting something like that using similar hand movements. If it is the actual videos, perhaps they can go into an educational program where they can learn more about developing these programs

So additional characteristics include upset by changes in routine or environment I have certainly seen this a lot that folks with autism if you change their work schedule it is very upsetting and they don't know how to proceed. But there are many steps we can take to lessen this rigidity.

Some people with autism display stereotypical behavior that would be the hand flapping or maybe they like to look at something like a string and move it in the corner of their eye things like that

I've known people who just like to jump up and down that their stereotypical behavior or sometimes its self-injurious behavior things like head banging it just depends on the person.

A lot of folks with autism are interested in minute details or parts of an object. A lot of younger kids really like trains all the moving parts on a train. There are people with autism who really like computers because there are all these different things going on at one time. Again when we talk about restrictive, repetitive, or stereotyped patterns of behavior and interests I would really look to this as strength of folks with autism and I would look at how to turn this into a vocation for them.

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So what do we know about autism? There is the old saying if you know one person with autism, you know one person with autism. As providers we must continue to provide individual services. You know what HDI teaches with discovery and that whole process we already do

what we need to do we just take each person as they are and we look at their needs and their strengths and prescribe a certain job based on the strengths not on their disability label.

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So here is a great visual illustrating the differences between folks with autism and of course this is made up, this is just a couple of examples. But you see that child one they might be significantly affected by their disability in both communication, social, and then also ritualistic behavior. But child 2 you can see they have significant impairs in social skills so perhaps communication and ritualistic behaviors those are not as prevalent, this might be a person with Asperger's Syndrome. Somebody might be moderately affected in communication and social skills but they don't display as many ritualistic behaviors.

So again this is just a visual that shows everybody with Autism is different it is a spectrum disorder.

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As job coaches we usually focus on teaching skills that are necessary to complete tasks. Whether its folding, collating, things like that and those are very important skills. However with clients that have ASD we need to consider more. You do see vocational skills as listed here and listed first. However, also important is building up work stamina when a person has never worked before asking them to work an eight hour day that is pretty tough.

Additionally of course social skills as a key deficit in autism is necessary to work on. A lot of times people with autism are barred from the workplace because they don't have acceptable social skills.

Going along with that dress code and hygiene can be extremely important. For whatever reason some people have a hard time with this stuff. It obviously a very visual way to point someone out as being different.

Finally punctuality of course some folks with autism take a little bit longer than others to get ready in the morning. Just like we all do. Sometimes I take a little bit more time too. But as we look for jobs we need to consider punctuality and the importance for some work places in part of that process. So if it is unacceptable in a workplace to be five minutes late and we know that our

consumer with autism is slow in the morning and sometimes they are late and there is nothing we can do about that then perhaps that is not a good job fit.

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So when we when we are talking about building skills for community living this is another really important part of the skills we need to teach a person with autism that might not be just the vocational skills. So there are different ideas of acceptable behavior. if this is a person's first job and they have never been ask to be professional if they never ask to dress a certain way , maybe address coworkers differently than their supervisors things like that if they never seen this then how do they you know how to act this way. If a person is transiting from a school or a day program they might have acceptable behavior in those settings, but perhaps that is different than the workplace. I know in a lot of schools it is more acceptable to give hugs to your fellow students or perhaps a teacher but we know in the workplace this would probably be extremely unacceptable and could be seen as depending on who and when and all of that can be seen as sexual harassment. So there are always different ideas of acceptable behavior and we need to keep in mind that people with autism have a difficult time understanding these different social norms and they probably need to be taught explicitly an acceptable way to act in a given workplace.

We also need to think about the daily living skills. There is a lot to do when we are getting ready for work in the morning. You need to brush your teeth, brush your hair, wash your face, pick out an acceptable outfit, put it on the right way, eat breakfast, get ready for your bus or your transportation, take the bus all this stuff, there is a lot of things to do and if someone has never worked before and perhaps they are in a group home or a setting similar to that we might need to make sure that everyone on the team is onboard about what is important to do in the morning and we also need to continue to help that person with autism increase those independent living skills. Also it is always good to expose a person with autism to a number of people and this is both communication and socialization. I have known some people with autism who maybe a young man who really likes women and he doesn't always display acceptable social skills with women. Well we need to make sure we take care of this stuff before going to work.

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So what kind of supports does a person with autism need? Here you see that there are natural supports, sensory supports, job accommodations, and instructions on work skills. All of these

things are extremely important and all of them are related and we are going to talk about each of these coming to us next

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So here are some basic steps to get your consumer ready for the workplace and set them up for success. We always want to break up demands or new tasks so that each piece is easy for the consumer and they can be successful if we know that a certain task saying collating 10 sheets of paper is not going to be successful then let's break it down to a level that the consumer will be successful. Because we want the consumer to enjoy work, to feel like they are good at it, and build that reinforcement into work.

So that brings us to our next bullet point. The consumer should get a high rate of reinforcement for the work they do. So we are going to talk about reinforcement in a little bit but I mean reinforcement drives everything that we all do and it really important that we build a good base in the beginning. And then just like breaking demands, we need to break up time. So if a person has never worked before, we need to start with a small amount of time and work up. This can mean that you start with the person only working 1 or 2 hours a week, it can also mean that you just take more frequent breaks.

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We also need to make sure that we are building a supportive environment that means that we are training coworkers and supervisors giving them some awareness about autism, what does it mean to have a disability and how is this new coworker going to be valuable and a fun person to work with. We need to also teach that behavior is a form of communication so if someone is displaying an inappropriate form of behavior it not necessarily because they are angry, their an angry person or their mean or their lazy, any of those general terms. It is probably because they need more help and we are not doing our jobs like we should. Using visual supports and using those natural supports are key in success for folks with autism.

We always want to make sure that we are fading prompts from us as job coaches and also from our natural supports because we want to promote independence. And I would say the most important place that this is going to be is on the job, you prompt as a job coach because we always want to be in a position where we can step out of that relationship and the person with autism can be successful on their own.

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We will talk about it in a little bit but we always want to consider the consumer's sensory needs. Considering a structured work system can be helpful. We always want to give the person with autism lots of choices. A while back researchers found in the prison system, giving prisoners the choice between two different kinds of toothpaste reduced problem behavior significantly. For people with disabilities a lot of time they are told what they are going to do every day, they don't get many choices in what they are going to eat for lunch, what they are going to wear, any of that. So giving people choices throughout the day and certainly in their work as well is important; whether it is choosing a job, choosing what they are wearing to work things like that it is important to building success in the workplace.

Finally we want to make sure we are reinforcing coworkers. The coworkers are going to have the greatest and most supportive relationship with our consumer and we want to make sure that the coworkers really like the person with autism and they find this relationship reinforcing.

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So now we are going to move on to barriers. I know that in every community there is nothing we can necessarily do about this but there are barriers everywhere. As a system we do still have problems and all and I know we are all working to make it better but there will always be issues in transportation, in training and supervision, in public attitudes things like this. We always need to work beyond these and not use these as excuses because they will bar success in the workplace. We also need to look at them beforehand so that we can minimize their effect as much as possible.

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So now we will move on to their interventions and strategies that make folks with autism successful in the workplace. I would say the most important thing we can talk about is reinforcement. By definition, reinforcement is a consequence that results in an increase of the target behavior. So it can be that you are giving something or you are taking something away and that either way it results in an increase in behavior. So getting a paycheck increases the likelihood that I will go to work tomorrow right? That is why we all go to work is to get paid I love my job but I need my money too. Another example you give your significant other a kiss after they do the dishes, and they start doing the dishes every night, wouldn't that be wonderful? So the consequence was a kiss for the completion of dishes and it increased the rate of doing the dishes.

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So here are some questions to consider when we talk about reinforcement. What about people who have never worked before? Why would they want to work? Why do you work? What if nothing has ever been demanded from you?

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So why do you work? Besides money what other items are reinforcing to you?

I have shown a few things that are reinforcing to me. Social praise people telling me I did a good job or what I am doing is important that is important. I also really like coffee and chocolate I will do just about anything for coffee and chocolate and I also really like watching The Office. So everyone has different items that are reinforcing, everybody has different preferences, that is what makes us all so unique.

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When we talk about what makes work reinforcing for a lot of folks, it's money and sense of self worth, that social praise or social acceptance but what about folks with autism? Do they find money and social praise important? For some people with autism they are taken care of, they get everything they need on a daily basis and they have never really been exposed to either money or perhaps they have never had to budget on their own so money is not necessary reinforcing. Social praise or social acceptance folks with autism maybe have not gotten a lot of social praise or perhaps they don't value it.

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So we always need to make sure that we are coming up other relative systems of reinforcement if the person with autism does not find work reinforcing. We need to make sure that we build work as a reinforcing task or activity but in beginning we are going to have to find an alternative. We will talk about how to find that alternative in a minute.

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So when we provide reinforcement like we talked about earlier we always want to provide reinforcement very, very, frequently, we want to choose strongly reinforcing items, and we want to make sure the item and delivery is socially acceptable. So if an adult with autism really likes Barney it is not necessarily acceptable to be providing a Barney stuffed animal that is enormous after the completion of a collating task because that would probably point the person out with autism as being extremely different and we don't really need that. So if Barney is the only thing that is reinforcing perhaps there is another way to deliver that reinforcement. Maybe they get to watch a Barney You Tube video for 3 minutes after completion on a task but it in his or her own cubicle or it is on a smaller screen something like that. We always want to try and make sure that adults with autism continue to be viewed as adults. We don't ever lead anyone to believe that they are childlike like, it happens so often for people with disabilities so we always want to make sure that it are socially appropriate.

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So how do we know what a consumer prefers? Well there are a couple ways to go about this. We can perform a preference assessment, one way is to the natural environment and that means to just kind of place some things that we know a person with autism likes, we just put them in the natural environment. So maybe it is their bedroom and we just look around and we are going to see what they go for first, and we will see what they do first, second, third, fourth and we will note how much time they spend with each object. There are also a variety of formal assessments we can do too. If you would like more information about preference assessment I can give you more information after this presentation is over. It is also very important to ask a family member or someone who knows the client well or just ask the client what they would like to work for. What is important to them?

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One way to deliver reinforcement is the token economy. This is a reinforcement strategy where a person collects tokens in order to receive the desired reinforcer.

You see here that there would be a place to put what the person is working for, their reinforcer. Then I think it is great that there are actually pennies on this token economy board because we all actually working for money on a token economy system right? You work 40 hours a week, maybe you get a paycheck at the end of each week or at the end of two weeks something like that but we are all working for the money. So this actually makes that real.

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So beyond being a system of reinforcement, token economy helps with creating a sense of time, delayed gratification, and it does help make them socially acceptable. You always want to make sure that these are socially acceptable. We want to make sure that they don't look too different. We don't want to make them really big and make the person with autism stand out too much in the workplace.

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So how do we implement a token economy? Well first we definitely want to train a coworker, mentor, boss, or even the consumer to deliver the tokens because again we don't want to be a permanent fixture in the workplace. Tokens can be delivered for time worked, pieces completed, or other forms of efficiency measures. There is no right or wrong on this one it just whatever seems to fit best with the person and the task at hand. I wrote down file folder and charts here. These are two great ways to make a token economy socially acceptable. You can just put in that token economy that we just saw on the last slide with the pennies on it. We can just put it in a file folder so we can close it if the person is not actively using it. Then if we open it, you know everybody has file folders sitting on their desks so that is not too different.

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The next intervention that I wanted to talk about is visual supports. Visual supports are a wonderful tool to use for folks with autism. Really in America we are actually increasing the amount of visual supports that we use across the board because we know that beyond disabilities people learn better sometimes through visuals. As there are changes in who lives in the U.S. there are more languages being spoken here and visual supports goes beyond the different languages. There are a variety of ways that visual supports can be used: they can be used in schedules, whether it is a daily schedule or an activity schedule, which means that it shows how to complete a certain task, we can use it in choice making, I will show you a first then board, reminders, timers, lots of different ways to use visual supports.

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Here is an important example of a schedule and it also includes a sort of token economy. So we see that we have on the left the different times then what task is being done so from 9 to 10 the person is collating and when they are finishing collating they can give themselves a Star Trek button. So it seems that this person finds Star Trek reinforcing it might be their special interest. So this person is giving themselves tokens for collating, then for attending a meeting, completing a data entry task, and then at the end of the day for getting all of their tokens they are going to watch a Star Trek video on YouTube

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So here is another example of supports in the workplace. This was actually taken from a national pizza food chain this is how they train all of their staff how to make these different pizzas and you see here that there are nine different pizzas so that is a lot of things to remember. So they have some great explicit visual supports and this is very helpful to people with autism too.

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Here we see that we can have a visual support to assist in choice making. Here it is listed as pictures but if a person is really great at reading we can also just have words instead. To the left the person has the choice of washing dishes and then on the right there is a broom. So we are still asking them to complete tasks they just get to choose what to do first dishes or sweeping.

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Here is a first then board and this is what I was talking about earlier I mean it seems so simple first we complete the task then you get your reinforcer but it's very helpful in getting folks to understand that the reinforcer is coming. You would want to be sure this is kept in sight of your consumer while they are completing their task because visual supports don't work if they cannot be seen.

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Here is another way that visual supports can be used in reminders and timers. If you haven't seen Timed Timer which is on the left I strongly encourage you to Google it, it is a very useful tool and I think you can even get them on the Internet, download it for free for your desktop which would be wonderful for a lot of workplaces. On the right we see just a Sticky Note. I know I use Sticky Notes all day long, but it can be another form of visual supports.

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We are up to our next intervention social narratives.

Social narratives are just short stories to teach appropriate social skills and behaviors and I am not going to in depth on each of these steps but there is actually a formula for the way that these are created. You always want to describe a situation, what you are supposed to do in the situation, and why it is great to use it and depending on the person they can be adapted. So if the person has limited reading skills we would want to use pictures. Certainly we would always want to adapt the reading level to meet the person's needs and it can be used in a variety of ways.

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Here is one on showering so here we see that the social narrative starts out on the situation people take showers, this is why they are important, it says that it can be relaxing this is what I do I'm going to wash my body and wash my hair and then I need to rinse off and when I am done I turn the shower off, dry off and then it ends with a positive I like taking showers and my coworkers do to. So it ends in that positive

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We are up to our next intervention modeling

Modeling can come in really two different forms: there is video modeling and there is role playing. Again really this capitalizes on a person with autism on their great visual skills. So

both of these capitalize on that! I actually have a short video to show you all this is acceptable greetings in the workplace.

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Derrick: “Good morning Mrs. Curbin” Mrs. Curbin: “Good Morning Derrick how are you?
Derrick: I’m doing well, how are you? Mrs. Curbin: “I’m doing well thanks.” So very simple that was just how a person enters and greets his or her own coworker and if you are teaching this there are several different ways to provide video modeling,: you can have the person’s point of view, you can videotape them doing it correctly or you can edit the videotape so it looks like they are doing it correctly or you can also have a peer in the video.

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So we have discussed many ways on how to increase behaviors

But what if you want to decrease certain behaviors? What kinds of behaviors would you want to decrease? I think we all have behaviors that we need to decrease. For folks with autism this depends on the person but often times it might be social skills some people with autism might ask too many questions or they might ask inappropriate questions perhaps there are some hygiene issues or some self-stimulatory behaviors.

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Some self-stimulating behaviors are very difficult to stop; they are doing it because it feels really good. So instead of just stopping it and not letting them do it, we need to actually have a systemic approach to this. So here are some suggestions. First, it can be really help to build in a time for that person to engage in that behavior. Another option would be find a workplace where behaviors are more acceptable. So perhaps the consumer sometimes shouts out swear words this is part of stereotypical behavior and this is not acceptable in a lot of office settings. If they were working on a construction site, it might not matter at all.

But if we are trying to decrease a behavior if it is dangerous or not appropriate in any situation or is barring them from participating in the community we need to provide explicit instructions on

the acceptable behavior. If you are not allowed to act one way, then we need to teach you how you are suppose to be acting.

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If you need to replace a challenging behavior:

First we need to investigate the cause of the behavior, is the person trying to get out of doing something? Do they want attention? Do they want to access a favorite item? Then we need to teach a socially acceptable replacement behavior using some of the discussed strategies we used today. There are a number of evidence based practices for working with people with autism, and we teach a replacement behavior using one of those

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So here is one example that I have worked with and I am sure some of you have worked with too. Hands in the pants! A consumer putting his hands in the pants is not an acceptable behavior in really any setting. So this consumer Michael works in a restaurant, so this is really a hygiene issue. He really can't be working around food if he is putting his hands in his pants so what can we do to eliminate this behavior?

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Well there are a couple things, first we will want to work with Michael's parents to ensure that he has a special time at home.

Then the second part of that is that we teach the socially acceptable behavior. If your hands cannot be in your pants where else can they be? Your hands can be in your pockets, your hands can be clasped together, you can high five people with your hands, we have to teach exactly what acceptable behavior looks like and then what stragties would we use? Well there are a number of strategies that might be helpful in this situation

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Here are some teaching strategies visual supports we had reminders placed in different places in the workplace that he visited often it just said, and it said it pretty discreetly, no hands in the pants, I engaged in a lot of role-playing with him we practice where your hands are suppose to be, before work he read a social narrative. We also trained Michael's coworkers to respectfully remind him of the rules and the rule was just no hands in the pants. Michael knew his coworkers really well so it was not asking too much in certain situations that might not be appropriate but here they certainly appreciated that we were working on the skill and it wasn't imposing really.

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Now we are going to talk about job accommodations and there are several different kinds of job accommodations and we will start with the physical ones.

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I have named just a few here there are an unlimited number of accommodations we can provide depending on the individual and what their needs are. So if a person has sensitive hearing then perhaps it is appropriate to use noise canceling headphones to eliminate the background noise. You could also use earplugs. You could also put them in a cubicle near the back of the office either to reduce the amount of noise or perhaps they just need fewer distractions.

If a person has visual sensitivity sometimes it might be helpful to put in solid colored carpet in consumer's cubicle to minimize distractions. I have known one person with autism who had to follow a pattern in carpet until it was completed. So if there are a lot of patterns that can be distracting during the day.

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Here are just a few examples of social and communication accommodations

Again these are just tailored to the individual. We can ask an employer if tasks or questions can be received through email or instant messaging instead of by someone coming to the desk and just asking the question. I know that my workplace more and more uses e-mails because it is just more efficient to not disturb people while they are working and a person can answer a question when they get a chance. Perhaps a consumer can use a card that says "I need help" to solicit assistance from a coworker and we could make this card look like a business card so it doesn't look too different than what is already in the workplace and so they don't have to

vocalize this they can, they just hand it over. This is actually a pretty tough skill to teach, but the visual supports can be very helpful.

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Here are examples of task accommodations.

Say the employee has difficulty distinguishing between two items on the last step of a ten step process. Maybe a coworker just checks at the end of the day if he was right or wrong.

Perhaps an employee is proficient in all tasks except one in the job description. So what happens in this situation is this job is just exchanged with a coworker. So that the coworker takes the other job that was tough and the employee trades a job so that is a really easy trade.

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Here are some examples of time accommodations:

An employee is given fifteen extra minutes to complete a task. Perhaps an employee receives more breaks and shorter breaks throughout the day. Perhaps an employee comes into work earlier than most people because medication affects productivity in the afternoon. These should be negotiated on an individual basis. There is going to be a right answer for different people.

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If you ever have questions about accommodations the Job Accommodation Network is phenomenal. You can visit their website, and I have it listed here. They actually have short two page documents on autism and asperser's syndrome and kind of explains the disability it would be very appropriate to hand this over to the employer. If you have specific questions about a certain issue and need help coming up with an accommodation you can actually call them up on the phone and they have specialists in every different area that can come up with a great answer for you. They are always learning new things and they always have the most up to date technology; so I would go to them first.

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The next area that I want to talk about is building natural supports. This is a very important part of making sure that a person with autism is successful in the workplace. Really natural supports are important for anyone at any job in being successful.

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So in the beginning just like any new employee, consumers with ASD may rely on their coworkers for more natural supports. When a person with autism is new in the workplace it can be a little bit different. They might need a little bit extra help and the coworkers might not know what to do or maybe they have never helped a person in this way before.

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So In the beginning always make sure that the coworkers are getting a lot of reinforcement. You are telling them they did a great job maybe you are the person with autism who is bringing in cookies for the disability awareness talk that you are going to. We always want to make sure we are providing information, training, and feedback. So that they know if they are doing something right or wrong, and we are educating them to be better community members. We want them to really like working with the person with autism, so ham it up.

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So when a person is new in the workplace it is often helpful to identify a go to person. This person might also be called a mentor. They can help the person with autism with several things.

Scheduling: the coworker can help create a structured schedule they will know much more than you and probably the supervisor what day to day schedules look like and they can customize a schedule to meet the needs of your company and then also your consumer. They can also be helpful in making sure that the employee knows of any changes in advance. They can help guide them through the workplace. So whether it is finding the soda machine or letting them know for your birthday you bring in cupcakes! Both things are really important! This person can also function as a safe person to ask questions too. Also heaven forbid if there is every an emergency, maybe a fire alarm earthquake something like that this go to person can ensure that your consumer receive the attention that they need and gets out of the building safely.

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When we talk about educating coworkers, and the go to person, and supervisors again one of the most important things about autism is communication. We always want to tell people that communication needs to be clear, concise, and concrete. This goes to most every form of communication. So whether someone is giving directions, expectations, or consequences we need to make sure they are following these clear, concise, and concrete guidelines. So here is an example “Wow these tables are really dirty, someone should clean them!” A person with autism might be thinking “yeah these tables are disgusting someone should clean them! Instead it would be more helpful for the supervisor to say “Jay these tables are very dirty, I need you to wash them by noon.” So we see that the second example is clear that Jay needs to complete the task, it is concise he needs to wash these table my noon and it is concrete we are not being sarcastic we are not saying someone should do this we are saying Jay should do this.

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Here are a few other pointers

So when we are picking out a go to person we want to make sure that this person is actually interested in helping and that the person is not just assigned to this task. Often times there will be someone in the workplace who stands out more than other coworkers. Then we want to make sure we introduce the consumer with ASD as a whole person. We need to make sure we are talking about their interests, like do they like watching baseball, or basketball whatever strengths, and what they hope to be on the team, what they hope to bring. When we introduce the person with autism as a whole person we are much more likely to have coworkers who are willing to take that extra step and who are much more interested in building a relationship.

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So we are on to our final section, sensory supports, and this is pretty short

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So everyone is affected differently by their environment. Unfourtunely there is limited research indicating which practices as far as sensory stuff goes are effective. I know that every day more

and more studies are being published so hopefully this will change in the future. But we do know that folks with autism are affected in different ways. I know that many people with autism actually see fluorescent lights like fireworks. Certainly this would be very distracting in the workplace. My little sister has very very sensitive hearing and that can certainly affect her in crowds. So there are not always evidence based practices to use as interventions in these situations. However if it is working for your consumer, that is awesome! But always be sure that you keep data! So that you're not spinning your wheels, you're not wasting time, you're not wasting resources, and you're not wasting your own time.

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Here are some examples and these actually look very similar to those physical accommodations. If a person has sensitive hearing, an easy solution would be just put on those noise canceling headphones.

If they have a visual sensitivity maybe they can use sunglasses or maybe they can have a lamp instead of the overhead fluorescent lights. Then if a person needs more input, maybe we can choose something discreet like silly putty, or a stress ball, or gloves to help with that additional support.

If the person does have a sensory need that requires a more significant intervention perhaps the person with autism can engage in this during their break time and not necessary at their workspace

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I wanted to just give a few additional resources before taking questions

This first one Do2Learn.com is a fantastic resource it is free and it helps folks with autism through the entire job process. So that when we talk about going to interviews and what to wear they have great checklists, they have visual supports, social narratives, it is fantastic

The second one, Visual Aids for Learning.com is another free source. They provide visual supports on a number of things. They actually have one for puberty and hands in the pants and all that stuff. They actually have it in packages so they make it really easy for you to access.

If you would like more information about specific interventions Autism Internet Modules.org is a wonderful site that the KATC promotes and you can just create a user name and password and you have access to forty-five minutes to hour trainings on visual supports, antecedent based interventions, social skills training a number of things.

Finally you can always visit our website for upcoming training, for new materials that we found things like that. Also a lot of times we promote what you all are doing out in the community too.

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Here is my contact information

At this time does anyone have any questions? All right well no questions. I will stand here just a few more minutes in case anyone does have any questions. Thanks so much for attending today! I hope you all have a wonderful day!

