



Conversations on Conversions: Family Perspectives on Pathways to Integrated Employment for Individuals with Severe Disabilities

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Research Summary

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A quick look: ■

While recent legislation has called for the expansion of integrated employment of people with disabilities, a large number of adults with severe disabilities still work in segregated settings. To find out why so many families are attracted to the segregated setting, the authors of this article examined the views of parents and family members of individuals with severe disabilities from events held in eight communities.

They wanted to find out what they thought about the shift in employment focus from sheltered work environments to integrated work settings. These conversations led to several discoveries.

Key Findings: ■

Participants' responses varied across a wide range and were also very individualized. But across the geographically and economically diverse communities, there were common themes that arose. The themes included: safety, availability of personal supports, and opportunities for relationship development. Here were some of the other findings:

- ▶ Almost 82% of participants said that their child/family member's safety was a concern when it comes to integrated work settings.
- ▶ Many of the themes that participants mentioned included relationship building opportunities with peers and staff and also the chance for their loved one to have friends.
- ▶ An important factor that was mentioned frequently was consistency in scheduling, staffing, routines, and having a controlled environment.
- ▶ Some of the reasons families were reluctant to consider integrated employment were:
 - Safety concerns.
 - Insufficient supervision.
 - Lack of acceptance or understanding from others.
- ▶ The top three supports or assurances families said they needed to consider integrated employment were:
 - Assurance of safety on the job.
 - Access to job coaching.
 - Having an individually assigned support person.

Putting It into Practice: ■

- ▶ Future research should include gathering family members and gaining their perspectives
- ▶ The supports that families mentioned above should be addressed by local programs and state agencies. The support agents should provide answers and assurance to questions families have such as:
 - How will transportation be provided?
 - How will supportive employers be identified?
 - How will time-limited job coaching or ongoing supports be arranged?
 - How will disability benefits be impacted?
 - How will training be made available by employers?
- ▶ States and employers can use the findings in this article to implement ongoing systems change efforts to include:
 - Identify supports needed on an individual basis.
 - Allowing a co-worker to serve as a support on the job, as opposed to using an outside provider.
 - Use or create, if necessary, other community services that could help with ensuring a consistent schedule for the individual.

More about this Article (What did they say?) ■

- ▶ Two years after high school, only 26% of young adults with severe disabilities work.
- ▶ Almost half of the young adults who work after high school, work in segregated communities.
- ▶ In a recent survey, 63% of people with disabilities said that they preferred to work in an integrated setting out in the community.

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