

The Effects of a Parent-to-Parent Mentorship Intervention on the Employment Outcomes of Adults with Autism and/or Intellectual Disability

A Quick Look:

Many adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) want to have a job. Families often help their loved one find work, but many parents say they do not know where to find services, what steps to take, or who to ask for help.

This study tested a new parent-to-parent mentorship program called the Employment Pathways Project. Parents of job seekers received employment training and resources. Some parents were also paired with an experienced parent mentor who had already helped their own family member find a job. Researchers wanted to learn whether this approach could improve employment outcomes and help families feel more prepared to support employment.

Key Findings:

- More adults with IDD found jobs when their parents participated in the mentorship program (69%) than when parents received community services alone (41%).
- Parents who worked with a mentor felt more prepared to support their family member's employment.
- Parents in the mentorship program reported less stress during the employment process.
- Training and employment resources helped all participating families build knowledge and confidence.
- Parents and mentors found the mentorship experience helpful and meaningful.

Putting It into Practice

These findings suggest new ways to support families and improve employment outcomes:

- Include families as active partners in the employment process.
- Provide practical employment training and easy-to-use resources for families.
- Connect parents with experienced parent mentors who can share advice and encouragement.
- Continue supporting families throughout the employment journey, not just when a job search begins.

What's Next?

Researchers will continue to study how parent mentorship can help families support employment. Future work will improve the program, learn which families benefit most, and explore adding peer mentors (self-advocates with IDD) alongside parent mentors.

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