



RRTC on Employer
Practices for
Individuals with
Disabilities

Research Summary

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Perspectives of Employers about Hiring Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Evaluating a cohort of employers engaged in a job-readiness initiative

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A quick look: ■

Recently, a 12-week employment preparedness program was conducted for youth and young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and employers in a variety of industries. The program sought to provide individuals with ASD with employment goals and workplace experience opportunities and to provide employers with education on ASD and the potential employment needs of individuals with ASD. The program also encouraged employers to develop inclusion strategies and to build relationships with individuals with ASD seeking employment. Researchers conducted surveys and interviews with employers who participated in the program to gain their perspectives on hiring individuals with ASD.

Key Findings: ■

Approximately 82 employers in the program completed an ASD awareness questionnaire, 29 employers completed a post program survey, and 11 employers were interviewed after the program concluded. Here are some of the findings from this research:

- ▶ About 44% of employers reported that their organizations had inclusive hiring strategies, while the rest were either unsure or said their organization didn't.
- ▶ Only 7% said they had specific strategies for hiring people with ASD.
- ▶ 88% of employers indicated that the program increased their likelihood of hiring an individual with ASD.
- ▶ Overall, the majority of the 29 employers surveyed implemented either no or minimal adaptations.

Putting It into Practice: ■

Overall, the research findings indicate that there is a limited understanding about ASD for many employers and employees, which likely translates to little knowledge about the needs of individuals with ASD in the workplace. In addition to more education, here are some suggestions from the employers who completed the program of how they would enhance and increase the employment of individuals with ASD:

- ▶ Offer ASD awareness training to staff.
- ▶ Train supervisors to advance organizational knowledge about ASD in the workplace.
- ▶ Implement volunteer or internship trials and accept short-term onsite job coaches.
- ▶ Have modified interview policies and adapt work scheduling.
- ▶ Increase training for new roles and integrate assistive technology.

More about this Article (Where to go from here?) ■

When asked about their experiences working with people with ASD during the program, employers had several responses, including:

“...what this program did is identify (the importance of) making sure that you do spend the time to get to know the individual to understand their skills, and also maybe... what their triggers are, where they get sidetracked, or what may be a distraction for them and how to make sure that they can get back on task... so making sure that you're finding the right role.”

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