Research Study #1

Research Brief #2

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Supporting Employment Through Parent Mentorship: The Employment Pathways Project

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Why his Study Matters: Most adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) want to have a job. Having a job can improve independence, relationships, and quality of life. However, fewer than 1 in 5 adults with IDD are employed.

Parents play an important role in helping their family member find a job, especially after high school when services often decrease. However, many parents report that they do not have the information, support, or guidance they need to navigate the employment process.

Parents often turn to one another for advice and support. Programs that connect parents to other parents (called parent-to-parent mentorship) have been helpful in other areas, but have not been widely used to support employment for adults with IDD. This study tested whether a parent mentorship model could help improve employment outcomes for adults with IDD and better support their families.

> *"The biggest support we can give is a listening ear and sharing what worked for us… letting someone know they are not alone."*
>
> **Mentor parent**

Program Components: The Employment Pathways Project includes several includes several key components:

- **Parent Mentorship and Ongoing Support:** Parents of job seekers are paired with experienced parents whose family member is already employed. Mentor-parent pairs meet monthly over one year to share advice, solve problems, and identify next steps.
- **Employment Short Course:** Four virtual sessions that teach key steps in finding and keeping a job.
- **Roadmap to Employment Guide:** A step-by-step practical guide with suggested activities and resources.
- **Mentor Training:** Training to prepare parents to serve as mentors.

Research Goals: This study examined whether the program:

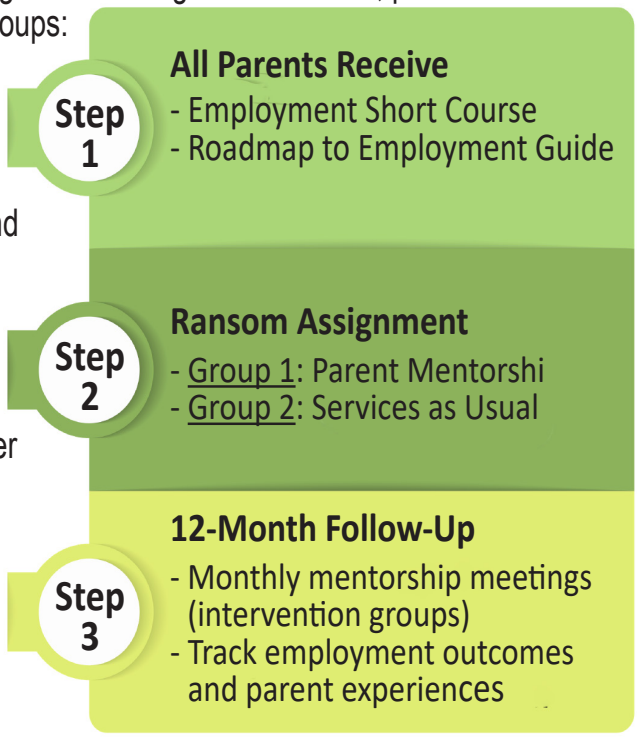
- Improved employment outcomes for adults with IDD
- Increased parents' knowledge, confidence, and preparedness
- Is feasible to implement
- Is acceptable to families

Study Design: The study used a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to test the impact of parent mentorship on employment outcomes. A total of 55 parents of unemployed adults with IDD participated. After receiving initial training and resources, parents were randomly assigned to one of two groups:

- Mentorship Group (n=26): participated in the mentorship program
- Comparison Group (n=29): continued using services and supports available in their community

Researchers followed families over 12 months to examine:

- Whether their family member got a job
- Changes in how prepared parents felt to support employment
- How families experienced the program



What to Look for in the Future: This study offers a promising approach for supporting families as they help their family members pursue employment. Future work will focus on:

- How mentorship can be improved and expanded
- Which families benefit most from this approach
- How this model can be used in communities across the country
- Expanding the model to include peer mentors (self-advocates with IDD) alongside parent mentors

"My son is so much happier and and more confident today than where he was a year ago. The project was a huge help"

Parent Participant

Learn More About Research Study #1:
https://idd.vcurrtc.org/research/rs1.cfm

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