Transition to Adulthood Guidelines for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Acknowledgments

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The Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence

eSc educational service center
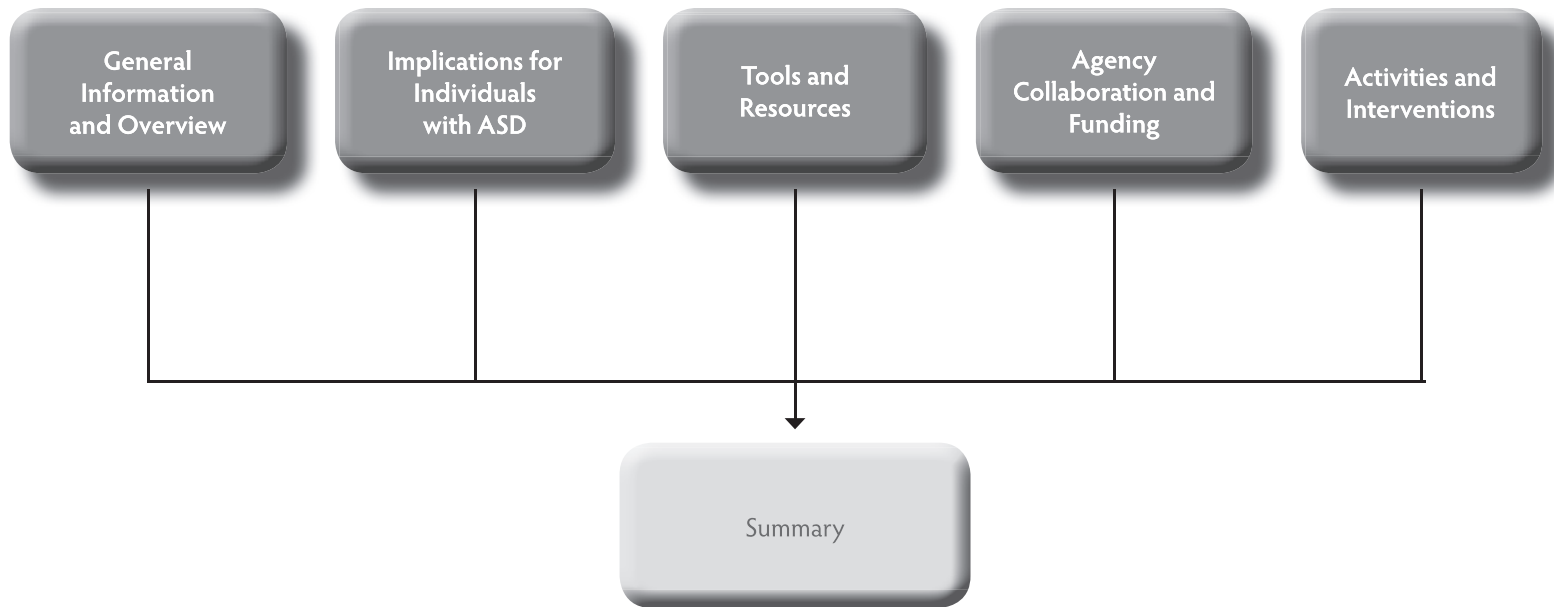*of Central Ohio* Serving Delaware, Franklin & Union Counties

CONTENTS

Transition to adulthood and the community beyond high school can present many challenges to individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families. In some cases the student with ASD may leave a protected, familiar and structured environment of the school system and establish new connections and support systems. Even when an individual with ASD obtains a job, finding and funding ongoing supports such as a job coach to maintain employment can be difficult. Sometimes connections with adult service providers are frustrating and difficult to make when eligibility decisions are based on a lack of knowledge about autism and the implications for a specific individual. Does the individual with ASD present too many challenges without the necessary supports to demonstrate her strengths? Or does she appear very verbal and competent in an interview while masking the difficulties they may have with self-care, understanding conversations or following multi-step directions? Adults with ASD are often underemployed or find jobs and lose them repeatedly because of behavioral or communication issues. Every day families struggle with issues related to repetitive behaviors, lack of friends and recreation opportunities and long waiting lists for supported living options.

ASD Transition Guidelines

		Introduction	
Legal	Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment	School Age Programming	Employment
	Postsecondary	Community Participation	Supported Living

Each of the seven sections that make up the *ASD Transition Guidelines* will provide information and resources that address the specific challenges individuals with ASD and their families face throughout the transition process. All sections are important for a successful transition although finding a job is often thought of as a key indicator. Thus, all of us enjoy lives that are enriched not just by work but with friendships, leisure interests and home and family. Each of the seven sections can stand alone, and for this reason they have a similar format. For example, if you are only looking for information on waivers, go to the Supported Living section and get the information you need quickly.

SECTION OVERVIEW

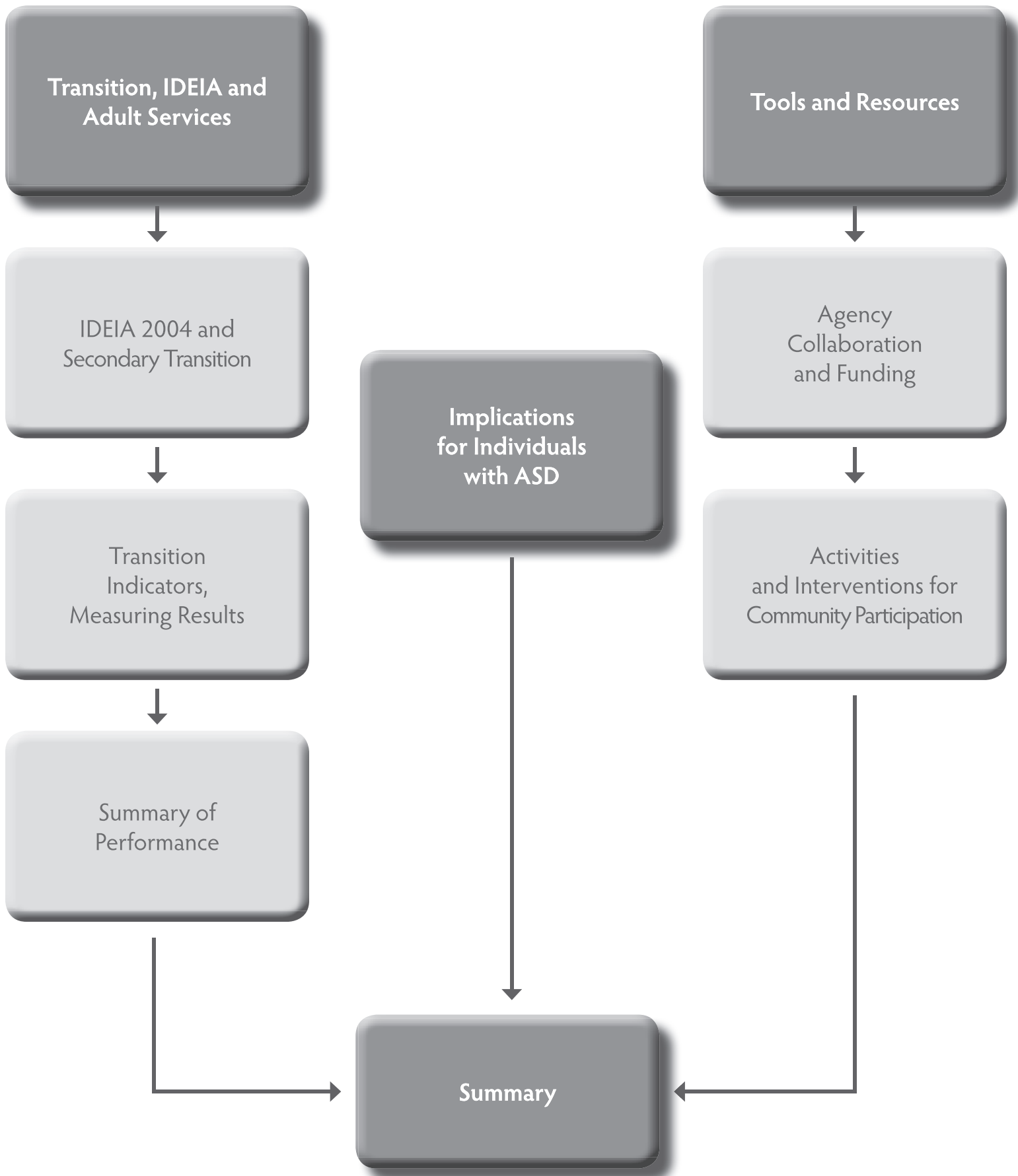| General Information and Overview | Implications for Individuals with ASD | Tools and Resources | Agency Collaboration and Funding | Activities and Interventions |

Summary

1. *General Information* gives concise background information and description of key issues related to ASD and transition..

2. *Implications for Students or Individuals with ASD* are presented in a table in each section (except legal) that describes characteristics of ASD such as sensory, social, behavior and organization within the context of the subject of a given section, such as age-appropriate transition assessment and a corresponding list of strategies or interventions that might be considered. For example, in the Community Participation section the table may list strategies for a student with ASD who wants to participate in a community game club, such as an orientation where he observes the games being played, has a social skills script or a step-by-step sequence of steps (possibly with pictures) for each game so he can play without anxiety.

3. *Tools and Resources* link to many free online resources that can be downloaded or viewed.

4. *Agency Collaboration and Funding* list agencies that may support or extend transition services with funding or experiences.

5. *Activities or Interventions* list ideas for activities that reinforce, develop or extend the concepts discussed in the section.

The content of each section also reflects the evidence-based transition practices developed by the National Secondary Transition and Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) and the key components of transition programming described in Kohler's taxonomy: student-focused planning, student development, family involvement, program structure and interagency collaboration. For more information, go to http://www.nsttac.org

LEGAL ISSUES AND IEP REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO TRANSITION

Transition, IDEIA and Adult Services

Tools and Resources

IDEIA 2004 and Secondary Transition

Agency Collaboration and Funding

Implications for Individuals with ASD

Transition Indicators, Measuring Results

Activities and Interventions for Community Participation

Summary of Performance

Summary

Legal Issues and IEP Requirements Related to Transition

Guiding Questions:
- ▶ What are the legislative requirements that guide the transition process?
- ▶ What are other agencies that may assist in the transition process?
- ▶ Where can I find more information about legal requirements and transition planning?

General Information

Transition, the IDEIA and Adult Services

The major legislative mandate that supports the structure of school-based transition services is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004. This is an entitlement program, meaning that by law all students are entitled to a free appropriate public education. IDEIA identifies specific transition requirements for students from age 16 (age 14 in Ohio) and provides general guidance for transition teams related to the content of transition plans.

One of the most important legal concepts related to transition is the difference between "entitlement" under the IDEIA and "eligibility" requirements of adult services. IDEIA outlines services that students with disabilities are *entitled* to receive once assessments deem them eligible. These services may include specialized instruction, therapies, curricular modifications and individualized assistance. However, when these students graduate and become adults, they are no longer entitled to services based on these educational guidelines and must meet *eligibility* requirements for adult services. These requirements vary across agencies, which

means that an adult may be deemed eligible for services from one agency (such as Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation [BVR]) and not from another (such as Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities [MR/DD]).

Additionally, once eligible, the adult may face waiting lists and limited services not experienced during the school-age years since these services are not mandated for all who are eligible. Therefore, "eligibility" in the adult services world means that one can be eligible and still wait for long periods of time to receive a service as a young adult may not be given "priority status." Adults must also advocate and request services and cannot assume they will automatically be provided. For example, a student who receives accommodations in high school will be responsible for requesting these same accommodations after high school.

> When students graduate and become adults, they are no longer entitled to services based on educational guidelines but must meet eligibility requirements for adult services.

There are many adult service agencies and legislative mandates for adults with disabilities. In Ohio, three are critically important when considering employment and independent living for persons with ASD:

1. Boards of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (MR/DD), established by Ohio law, determine eligibility under the federal Developmental Disabilities Act, which requires substantial impairments in at least three of seven life activity areas. Boards of MR/DD generally provide employment and residential programs and supports for youth and adults with the most significant disabilities.

2. The Rehabilitation Services Commission determines eligibility according to a disability definition contained in the Workforce Investment Act and Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 and also governs what are known as 504 Plans to remove barriers and discrimination for persons with disabilities. Rehabilitation Services typically provide employment and residential supports for youth and adults with moderate disabilities.

3. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that also addresses discrimination. The ADA prohibits discrimination against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities who can perform the essential requirements of a job with reasonable accommodations. It also requires that businesses and public places be accessible to persons with disabilities.

In the section "Tools and Resources," see links to Schwab Learning and the Organization for Autism Research (OAR) for more information on 504 Plans. Also view a comparison of the three laws, IDEIA 2004, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and ADA in Appendix A of "OAR: A Guide for Transition to Adulthood." Links may be found in the "Tools and Resources" section.

> Pat is a young man with autism. In high school, he received many services through his IEP. During his last years of high school, he was assessed by adult services and found eligible, but was placed on a waiting list for Medicaid Waivers and residential services and remained on these lists for more than five years.

IDEIA 2004 and Secondary Transition Highlights

The term "transition services" means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that:

1. Is designed to be within a results-oriented process that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including
   - ▶ postsecondary education
   - ▶ vocational education
   - ▶ integrated employment (including supported employment)
   - ▶ continuing and adult education
   - ▶ adult services
   - ▶ independent living or community participation

2. Is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences and interests

3. Includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. [IDEIA 2004, section 602(34)]

> **Additional IDEIA Highlights:**
>
> Transition services must be included in the IEP when a child is 16 or younger.
> (Previously, the mandatory age was 14. Ohio still begins transition at age 14).
> When the IEP team meets to discuss the child's postsecondary goals and transition services, the child must be invited to the meeting. If he or she does not attend, the child's interests must be considered.
> Measurable postsecondary goals must be developed for each student based on age-appropriate transition assessments related to his or her training, education, employment and independent living skills.

> The Transition Coalition describes transition as a
> **results-oriented** process
> **student-centered** process
> **coordinated** effort

Transition Indicators Support a Results-Oriented Process

IDEIA 2004 includes data collection and data reporting requirements. Each state must collect data on 14 specific indicators and describe the methods of data collection in the State Performance Plan (SPP). States must also report on the outcomes identified from the collected data in the Annual Performance Report (APR). This report should be published on each state's website and in the media. Access Ohio's Part B State Performance Plan for 2005-2010 at http:// www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/ DocumentManagement/ DocumentDownload. aspx?DocumentID=24854.
Finally, the state must also plan for how to use these data to improve performance for each indicator.

> When she turned 14, Carol's IEP team expanded to include others who could help her focus on her life as an adult. By the time she graduated, her team included a Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR) counselor, job developer, job coach, potential employer, her adult brother, YMCA representative, Social Security Administration representative and a community mental health counselor.

Four outcomes indicators in the required group of 14 concern transition:

- ▸ **Indicator 1:** Percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma. (Graduation indicator)
- ▸ **Indicator 2:** Percent of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school. (Dropout indicator)
- ▸ **Indicator 13:** Percent of youth aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes coordinated, measurable, annual IEP goals and transition services that will reasonably enable the student to meet the postsecondary goals. (Quality of IEP indicator)
- ▸ **Indicator 14:** Percent of youth with IEPs who within one year after graduation have been competitively employed or enrolled in postsecondary school or both. (Post-School Outcomes Indicator) – Ohio has a post-school survey that must be completed for graduates of special education

Performance indicators emphasize that school programs and IEPs must support meaningful instruction and activities that will likely lead to successful adult life in the areas of employment, postsecondary education/training and independent living.

Indicator 13 Checklist

The National Secondary Transition and Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) (http://www.nsttac.org) is funded by the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to assist states in building capacity to support and improve transition planning, services and outcomes for youth with disabilities. NSTTAC has developed a Form A and a Form B Indicator 13 Checklist to help states address the quality of IEP indicators. These forms have been approved by OSEP, but states may choose to develop and use their own to collect Indicator 13 data.

As an educator or a parent you may want to use one of these checklists to see how the IEP written by your transition team or your child's IEP team compares with the items on the checklist for a quality IEP. The NSTTAC forms are available here: http://www.nsttac. org/?FileName=indicator13_checklist

The Steps in Transition Planning

The State Transition Work Group has been developing guidelines for transition planning that follow the Indicator 13 checklist and the added Ohio requirement that transition planning begin for IEPs at age 14. These guidelines may be obtained from the Ohio Office for Exceptional Children. Transition plans must be reviewed annually, but the IEP team does not have to rewrite the transition part of the IEP unless needed.

A summary of the high points of these guidelines follows.

IN MEETINGS FOR IEPS TAKING EFFECT NO LATER THAN AGE 14

Step 1 Before all IEP Meetings Concerning Transition, Conduct Age Appropriate Transition Assessments

Assess a student's career interests, needs, preferences, and strengths using age-appropriate transition assessments including parent and student surveys, career interest inventories and functional vocational assessments, as needed. Prepare the student to describe his/her vision of the future in the IEP meeting.

Step 2 Future Planning

Have both the student and family describe their vision of the future. What will a typical weekday look like? How will the student spend leisure time? Where will the student live? Ask whether the student plans to pursue postsecondary education after graduation. If the student lacks realistic goals, identify additional age-appropriate transition assessments that can assist in identifying interests and aptitudes.

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When Robert was 13 years old, he and his IEP team developed a Transition Vision Statement: Robert wants to work with cars. He would like to be able to make simple repairs on cars or do some type of work that involves cars. Robert would also like to eventually live in an apartment where he knows the people who live nearby. He feels strongly that being able to go to the movies, shopping and swimming will be important parts of his adult life. Age-appropriate transition assessments included:

- providing opportunities for Robert to shadow mechanics in several body shops
- observing Robert on the job site performing simple tasks
- conducting formal vocational assessments through BVR
- using employability checklists that focus on general employability skills
- assessing life skills related to independent living
- observing Robert's transportation skills (i.e., use of the bus)
- using other informal and formal assessments that lead the team to a better understanding of Robert's strengths and what he needed to learn in order to make his vision a reality

Step 3 Present Levels of Performance

Describe the student's academic and functional skills and needed accommodations to participate in the general education curriculum. Discuss the findings of transition assessments regarding the student's career needs, interests, preferences and strengths. Discuss what the student will need to learn in high school to prepare for the future.

Step 4 Courses of Study

Identify the course(s) of study within the general curriculum that will support the student's vision and future plan. Examples include advanced mainstream academics (generally needed for four-year colleges), career and technical education (often good for technical schools and employment after graduation), or applied academics and community-based training (often preferable for students who need to learn by doing). Attach a list of specific courses that would generally be pursued within the student's desired courses of study.

In Meetings for IEPs Taking Effect No Later Than Age 16 (from IDEIA 2004)

Step 5 Develop Post-School Goals

From the "Future Planning" section of the IEP, identify measurable post-school goals related to (a) employment, (b) postsecondary education /training, and (c) independent living (if appropriate). Initially, goals may be broad (e.g., employment and on-the job training after graduation). Later they may become more specific (e.g., paid integrated clerical work with employer training).

Robert's course of study from age 14–22 needed to include academic instruction, vocational instruction and functional living skills. The IEP team created a schedule where Robert was able to attend several general education classes, receive special education instruction in several core areas, attend life skills classes, receive targeted social skills instruction and participate in vocational activities that led to his area of interest and employment.

Step 6 Instruction

Consider the need for specific types of training that support transition to the post school goal. This might include areas such as self-determination and disability awareness, or specific types of instruction such as occupational skill training or on-the-job training.

Step 7 Community Experiences

Identify ways in which the student's classroom learning can be applied in actual authentic settings. For college-bound students, this might include attending actual college classes. For students planning to enter employment, this should generally include authentic community work experiences, such as job shadowing, volunteering or actual employment.

Step 8 Development of Adult Living Objectives

Identify ways that students can develop and make their career plans work such as the Individualized and Academic Career Plan (IACP) of the Ohio Career Information System (OCIS) or other career planning approaches. Transition specialists and guidance counselors may also be helpful.

Step 9 Related Services

Identify how to address the student's disability relative to his or her post-school goal. This might include work-site accommodations for students with physical and sensory disabilities, organizers and checklists for students with cognitive disabilities and behavioral supports and flexible scheduling for students with emotional disabilities.

Step 10 Daily Living Skills Training

Identify activities of daily living a student may need in order to achieve a post-school goal. For students entering work, this training often includes travel training and may include issues such as hygiene, personal appearance, health and safety and money management. For a post-school goal of independent living, this might also include menu planning, cooking, home maintenance and shopping.

Step 11 Linkages with Adult Services

Availability of adult services varies for students with differing disabilities. MR/DD services are usually available to only 10% of students with disabilities. Vocational Rehabilitation Services (BVR, BSVI) require a clear student employment objective. Refer to adult services no later than two years prior to graduation or exiting school.

Step 12 Functional Vocational Assessment

Assess student interests and aptitudes relative to postsecondary goals from Step 4, if appropriate. Use age-appropriate transition assessments.

> **NOTE: DEVELOP ANNUAL IEP GOALS**
> It is important that transition planning drive the IEP as the student nears graduation. If a student is in a clerical community work experience, for example, there should be IEP goals for this experience relating to the student's quality and/or quantity of work. Additionally, IEP goals may be written so teachers present academic subjects in a way they can be applied to the student's career interests.

Collaboration with other Agencies for Transition Services

In order to plan effective postsecondary goals, the IEP team may need to coordinate their efforts with local agencies outside the school. However, the ultimate responsibility for the transition services and supports falls on the local school system in which the student is enrolled.

> "If a participating agency, other than the local educational agency, fails to provide the transition services described in the IEP . . . the local educational agency shall reconvene the IEP team to identify alternative strategies to meet the transition objectives for the child set out in the IEP."
> (Section 614, IDEA).

Summary of Performance

IDEIA 2004 also requires local education agencies to provide a Summary of Performance to students with disabilities who graduate with a regular high school diploma or students with disabilities who have not graduated from high school but have exceeded the age eligibility for a free appropriate public education (22nd birthday).

The Summary of Performance includes a student's academic achievement and functional performance and also offers recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting his/her postsecondary goals.

The Summary of Performance serves several purposes:

- To provide guidance so that the student knows what accommodations and supports might be helpful in postsecondary settings
- To assist students in transitioning from high school to post-high school
- To provide students with summary documentation that goes with the student when he/she leaves high school

Implications for Individual with ASD

Qualifying for Services and Legal Requirements: Eligibility Is Key

Accessing services and supports from adult services such as MR/DD or BVR can only occur when one is deemed eligible through the processes of each agency. Individuals with ASD may have difficulty qualifying in some cases because:

- They may present as being too capable for MR/DD services (Strengths hide Challenges)
- They may appear to have too limited potential for employment to receive services from BVR (Challenges hide Strengths)

Alexis graduated from a small high school in a community that she had lived in her entire life. She was included in all general education classes with modifications when necessary. Many of her classmates and teachers had known her since elementary school and knew how to interact with her so that she understood what to do and what to expect. Her schedule was well planned, and her special education tutor always provided her with schedule changes before they occurred.

When a representative from MR/DD observed and interviewed Alexis at school, she appeared very competent and independent and initially was deemed *not eligible* for MR/DD services. However, Alexis' case was reconsidered. The following time, the MR/DD representative interviewed teachers about her behaviors and independence on field trips and in typical, yet unfamiliar situations. She was observed in the community attempting to follow a shopping list and purchase foods to make a meal, and she was interviewed regarding what she would do in situations that involved making safety decisions in home, work and community settings. Alexis clearly showed functional limitations in these areas, which led to her eligibility for adult services through MR/DD.

High school is a structured, familiar and protected environment where a student with ASD may be able to function with supports developed over a number of years with familiar people and often with major accommodations. The same student may not be prepared for the challenges of adulthood where supports are not mandated at the level provided in schools.

Even students with ASD who achieve academic success may have trouble with the transition to adulthood because of conflicts with teachers and classmates due to repetitive behaviors, rituals and poor communication skills. After leaving high school, these issues may become barriers to successful employment or post-secondary education settings where the protection of IDEIA does not exist. Accurate and timely assessment and eligibility for adult services can help bridge the gap from the high school support plan to the adult support systems.

Early Planning Is Essential

Transition services should be geared towards experiencing post-school environments, such as work, recreation and independent living, with opportunities to experience success and determine needed supports.

> Areas such as communication, sensory processing, socialization, repetitive behaviors/routines and deficits in executive functions must be addressed in the areas of age appropriate assessment, employment, residential living, community and postsecondary education.

Without planning, the adult service agencies may not recognize or address needs unique to individuals with ASD. Issues such as sensory, social or communication deficits may cause the individual to fail in school, be fired from a job or engage in activities that put them at risk. The following sections of these guidelines will identify specific issues related to ASD with recommended strategies and supports. Areas such as communication, sensory processing, socialization, repetitive behaviors/routines and deficits in executive functions must be addressed in the areas of age-appropriate assessment, employment, residential living, and community and postsecondary education.

Tools and Resources

OCALI Funding Stream and Resource Guide
(Coming soon to OCALI website)

Ohio Mental Retardation Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) includes a section on rules and laws at its website (http://www.mrdd.ohio.gov/rules/rules.htm) Click on "Rules in Effect" to read about rules for various MR/DD programs.

IDEIA 2004 (http://idea.ed.gov/explore/home)
  Includes a section on secondary transition.

  Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) in the U.S. Department of Education
  (http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/index.html)
  Click on "IDEA 2004 Resources."

  The Transition Coalition
  http://www.transitioncoalition.org
  Click on "Presentations" and scroll down to "Overview of IDEA 2004."

  The Council for Exceptional Children
  http://www.cec.sped.org/
  Click on "Policy and Advocacy," then "IDEA 2004 Resources."

A Parent's Guide to Section 504 at The Great Schools website (*formerly Schwab Learning*)
(http://www.schwablearning.org/articles.aspx?r=777)
  Answers questions about the implementation of Section 504 in public school systems.

OAR: A Guide for Transition to Adulthood
(http://www.researchautism.org/resources/reading/index.asp)
  Scroll down and either request the guide to be mailed or download a copy. See Chapter 1 on Agency Help/Legal Information, Chapter 2 Transition Plan and Chapter 3 Student Focused Transition Planning.

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Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission (RSC) (http://www.rsc.ohio.gov/). To find out more information about RSC services and complete a referral online or in Ohio, call 1-800-282-4536. RSC oversees the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR), which is the state agency that assists individuals with disabilities in finding employment and the Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired (BSVI), which works with individuals with visual difficulties.

Agency Collaboration for Transition Planning

School transition is mandated, but other agencies may be vital to transition planning. Agencies and organizations that may be included in transition planning include:

- Local BVR counselor
- MR/DD service support administrator
- Vocational school career center teacher or counselor
- School and private therapists and counselors
- Local autism advocate
- Local mental health representative
- College disability services coordinator

This is not a complete list; however, those listed may be key participants.

Activities or Interventions to Facilitate Qualifying for Services or Transition Planning

Start early with transition and futures planning. Become knowledgeable about the legal requirements to qualify for services from agencies and organization. Join local and national advocacy groups so you can network and learn about resources. When you know your rights, be persistent and follow through to ensure your student or child is getting the service he or she needs.

Summary

Vision Statement

For IEPs taking effect by age 14, the Vision Statement on the IEP should include statements related to the student's adult life plan for long-term outcomes related to employment/postsecondary education, post-school adult living and community participation.

From Vision to Transition

The vision statement and present levels of performance will contribute to the development of the student's high school courses of study at age 14 and to the development of measurable post secondary goals by age 16.

Requires School, Home and Community.

Transition planning is an ongoing process that must begin at age 14 in Ohio schools. However, important skills development should occur before age 14. Best practices support the development of skills so that students can perform in the environments they will enter as adults, including residential, postsecondary education, leisure and work.

Responsibilities

Parents and students must know their legal rights regarding transition planning and services and the importance of their participation in the process. School district transition teams need to know how to meet their responsibility for transition planning.

Time-Limited Services

Vocational rehabilitation services may be limited, which means that individuals with ASD may also need to seek alternative funding for long-term supports through other agencies such as Boards of MR/DD, which restrict eligibility to students with the most significant disabilities.

Transition Assessment Includes Informal and Formal Tests or Job Tryouts

Tools and Resources

Results Used to Develop Course of study, Measurable Goals and Transition Services

Implications for ASD and Strategies

Agency Collaboration and Funding

Activities and Interventions to Facilitate Planning, Implementation and Use of Assessment Tools and Credits

Summary
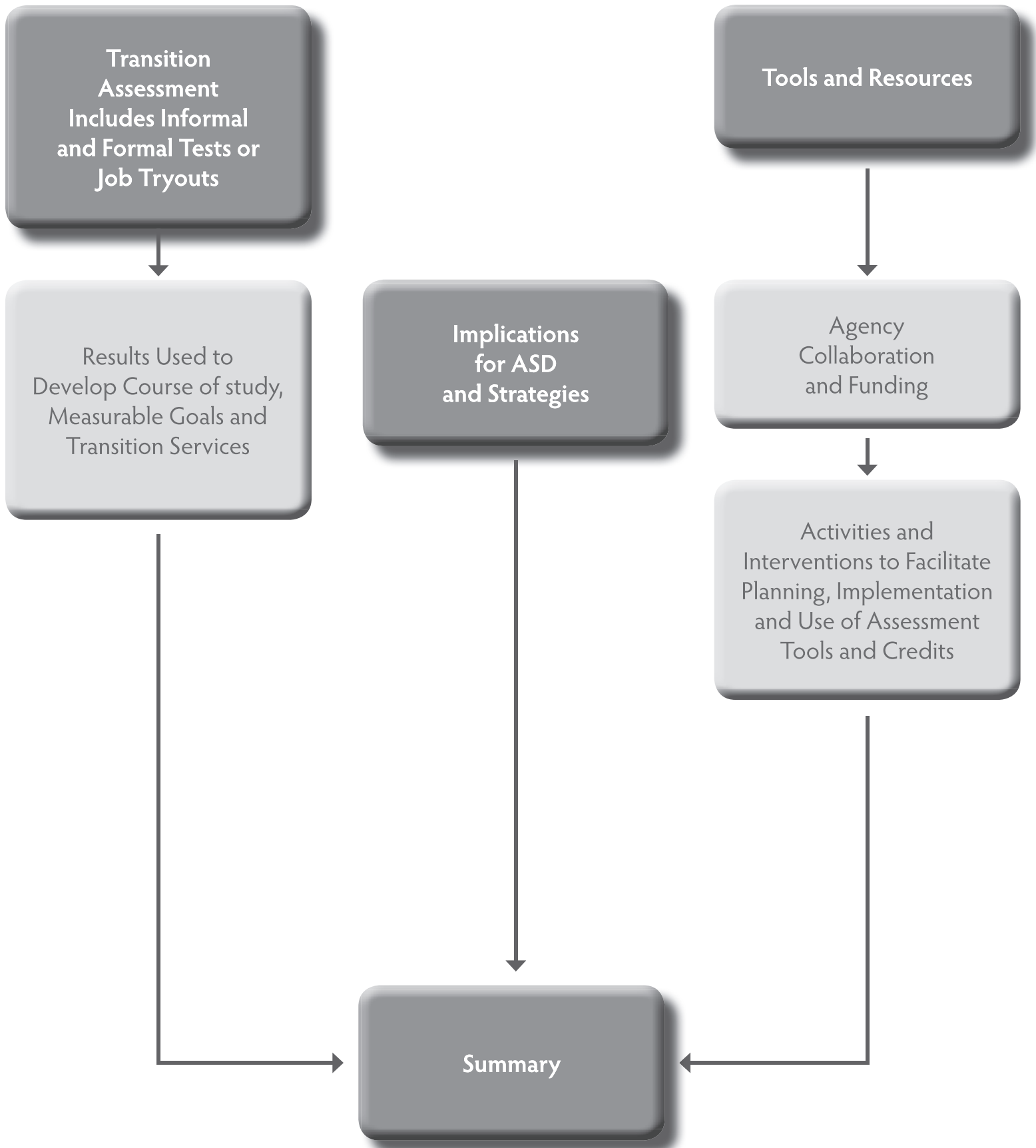
AGE-APPROPRIATE TRANSITION ASSESSMENT

GUIDING QUESTIONS

▶ What is age-appropriate transition assessment?
▶ Why is it important?
▶ What is included in a transition assessment?
▶ What are the implications and strategies for individuals with ASD?
▶ What are some additional resources related to age appropriate assessment?

General Information

Transition assessment as defined by the Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) of the Council for Exceptional Children as an

"… ongoing process of collecting data on the individual's needs, preferences, and interests as they relate to the demands of current and future working, educational, living, and personal and social environments. Assessment data serve as the common thread in the transition process and form the basis for defining goals and services to be included in the Individualized Education Program (IEP)."

Transition assessment requires planning with meaningful participation from the student and family in order to ensure that the right questions are asked based on the needs and interests of a particular student. Together, the IEP team determines what information is needed to create an effective transition plan for the student.

Once the issues are identified, a set of tools can be selected to collect data to answer these important questions and issues. These tools may be formal or informal tests or a series of job tryouts or situational assessments for independent living. The entire team (including family and student) may then use the results to make decisions and develop a student's course of study, measurable postsecondary goals and transition services.

Char and the IEP team recognize that she enjoys animals. Animals are one of the very few activities in which Char seems interested, engaged and motivated. This is evidenced by a previous portfolio of work, interests and family interviews collected throughout her educational career. At age 14, Char's IEP team developed a plan that would provide her with multiple opportunities in volunteer and potential work sites that involve animals. These opportunities allowed the team to assess Char's strengths and needs, including adaptations to the environment and communication supports. Assessments also focused on Char's ability to demonstrate specific employment skills that have high evidence of successful employment (such as communication and hygiene skills). Basic academic skills were assessed in the functional setting, as well as in a formal testing situation. Finally, functional living skills were assessed via observation in multiple environments using multiple observers.

Based on this combination of formal and informal assessments, the transition plan was developed; however, ongoing assessment was necessary to determine if the identified interventions were successfully allowing Char to develop targeted skills and to assure that she continued to show motivation and interest in working with the targeted pet-sitting business.

Characteristics of ASD – Sensory Processing Challenges

Implications

Students with an ASD often have sensitivities to sensory input resulting in responses that are difficult to understand. This can intensify during the assessment process. The assessment team should consider the following:

Will the student's sensitivity to the following adversely affect or interfere with the results of the assessment process:
- ▶ Noise or specific sounds?
- ▶ Bright or dim lighting?
- ▶ Smells/Odors?
- ▶ Visual clutter?
- ▶ Lack of personal space?

Strategies

If there is an adverse effect due to sensory stimulation, possible strategies include:
- ▶ Headphones that muffle sound or provide music
- ▶ Sunglasses, indirect lighting, low lighting, natural lighting or elimination of natural lighting (i.e., away from windows)
- ▶ Removal or reduction of foods, perfumes, air fresheners, printing inks, markers/pens with strong odors, etc.
- ▶ Organized workspace. Remove visual distractions
- ▶ Adequate personal space. This may require physical boundaries (dividers/walls) or simply a designated area

How are sensory issues handled at home or school? Can these strategies be used or adjusted for assessment?

Sensory processing challenges and sensitivities often intensify in stressful situations, unfamiliar routines and with unfamiliar people. Create predictability by using visual strategies, such as pictures, video, social scripts, and clear explanations of what to expect during an assessment process.

Allow the individual multiple opportunities to demonstrate ability and aptitude. A single assessment opportunity is often misleading and does not offer a complete understanding of the student's talents. Increasing the familiarity of the location and individuals involved with the assessment may reduce the stress (and the intensity of the sensory responses) that may develop during the unfamiliar situations of the assessment situation.

Characteristics of ASD – Social/Communication Challenges

Implications

Individuals with ASD typically struggle to respond to and understand the social aspects of a situation. Social skill training and instruction may be a critical element for an individual with ASD in obtaining or maintaining a job, successfully engaging in and completing postsecondary education and developing satisfying leisure activities. Needed competencies may range from the very basic social skills expected of a young adult to the complex aspects of reading social cues and accurately interpreting another's perspective or point of view.

Social deficits may not only interfere with the assessment process, but must also be considered when identifying the range and types of age-appropriate assessments that are necessary. Questions to consider include:

▸ Will the student's social skills and social understanding be a significant barrier to assessment process or to successful postsecondary outcomes?

▸ Does the student understand and is the student able to follow verbal directions?

▸ Does the student need directions in alternate or multiple formats – verbal, visual or demonstrations?

Strategies

Do not assume that because a student has received instruction/direction, is able to repeat instructions or is verbal that he understands the intent of the language. Confirm understanding by asking the student to explain what he is to do, demonstrate/model for the student, or provide a trial prior to the assessment.

Use strategies such as direct instruction, social scripts, Power Cards, videos, checklists, priming, visual reminders, role models and rehearsal to ensure that the student understands what to expect and what is expected during the assessment process. (Refer to the OCALI website and/or lending library for information about these specific strategies.)

Provide the student with an effective way to ask for help, request clarification or signal that the situation is too stressful.

Consider the use of informal/observational assessment when evaluating the social, social communication and social emotional competencies of an individual.

Studies indicate that individuals with ASD have great difficulty generalizing social instruction that occurs in a classroom or therapeutic environment to the situation where the skills are to be used (the workplace, cafeteria, community, home, etc.). The most effective practices include instruction and/or reinforcement in the actual environments or situations where the skills must be used. Therefore, recommendations resulting from assessments should consider not only the need for social skills instruction, but also the methods and environments that will be used.

Characteristics of ASD – Executive Function/Organization

Implications

Individuals with ASD may have great difficult with organization, attention and mental planning. This challenge may affect the results of the assessment process as the student may have knowledge or skill but not be able to demonstrate these abilities due to difficulty initiating, maintaining focus or solving problems. Organizational and environmental strategies may be necessary during assessment, as well as in daily living and learning situations in order for the person to demonstrate and function at her full potential. Assessment teams should ask:

1. Can the student initiate tasks independently?
2. Does she know how to start and end a task? Does she work systematically?
3. Is the environment conducive to attention and concentration?
4. Does the student require additional environmental assistance in order to independently complete tasks and activities?
5. If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," how does the assessment need to be structured to accurately assess the student's skills/abilities?
6. If the answer is "yes" to any of these questions, what are the implications for a job, career or postsecondary education setting?

Characteristics of ASD – Executive Function/Organization (con't.)

Strategies

1. Consider organizational supports such as checklists, visual schedules, templates, outlines, visual examples, written directions, timers, labeled bins or shelves, etc. These supports should assist the person in understanding:
   i. What work is to be completed
   ii. Where it is to be completed
   iii. How much is to be completed
   iv. Where to begin and end tasks
   v. The allotted time for completing tasks
   vi. What to do when one is finished

   These types of organizational supports may be especially important to the student with ASD during an assessment process that may be new, short term, and with limited time for the student to internalize the task or activity.

2. Assess the environmental stimulation and the potential for distraction. This may include noise levels as well as visual distractions. (Review "Sensory Processing Challenges").

3. Review and document the organizational supports that were effective during the assessment process. The assessment team should include these as a necessary portion of the ongoing support plan. If possible, student goals should reflect instruction in how to create these supports rather than depending on others to develop the support.
   i. Example: A student who needs a checklist to complete several tasks in a workplace may be able to learn to create the checklist and then use the list to ensure that all tasks are complete during the work day.
   ii. Example: A student who has multiple assignments in college classes can be taught a process to record assignment due dates, as well as create a schedule to work systemically towards the completion of each assignment.

Characteristics of ASD – Ritualistic or Repetitive Behavior

Implications

Students with ASD may demonstrate a number of ritualistic or repetitive behaviors. These may range from physical routines, to verbal repetition, to topical restrictions. In some situations, these behaviors or interests can interfere with completion of an assessment process.

Strategies

1. If the ritual (such as ordering all items on a desk) are minor and do not interfere with productivity or continued work, allow the student to continue with the behavior and document the intensity of the behavior. Note how the behavior may change as the student becomes more comfortable with the situation.

2. If possible, include the routine behavior as part of the assessment process. For example, if the student needs to discuss a favorite topic prior to beginning the assessment, place "Talk Time" as the first activity instead of struggling to avoid the situation.

3. Document ritualistic behaviors in the assessment process so that these behaviors can be accommodated as part of the job or career. For example, an individual who needs to pace frequently might fit well in a job that requires delivering mail or packages throughout a company. Or an individual who reads manuals and guides could utilize this "obsession" as a proofreader.

4. As part of the assessment, determine what, if any, triggers cause or escalate the ritualistic or repetitive behaviors. Can these be analyzed and minimized by providing environmental or visual supports (such as Adaptive Behavior Cards)? (Refer to the OCALI website and/or lending library for information about these specific strategies.

Characteristics of ASD – Other

Implications

ASD is complex and varies greatly among individuals on the spectrum. Therefore, even the most thorough transition assessment may not yield all the information that would be important. Sources such as historical data about successful strategies and supports developed for the student by the family and school may be forgotten or not transferred to new settings. Assessment activities can include a review of this information.

Assessment data must also reflect not only plans for the student while in class or working, but also assess the skills, abilities and corresponding supports that will be necessary when not in school or on the job.

- ▶ What will occur if the individual with ASD is only employed part time or attends college part time?
- ▶ Will there be a safe, supervised setting for the individual?
- ▶ Will the student have the necessary skills to prepare and travel to school or work?
- ▶ Will he know how to fill his/her leisure or "down-time" productively?
- ▶ Will he know how to create nutritional meals?

These and other questions should be included as part of the age-appropriate assessment process.

Strategies

1. Document successful strategies, review with new staff and adjust in new settings.

2. As appropriate, include independent living assessment as an important part of assessment and a successful transition. Assessments related to adaptive behavior or independent living are NOT reserved for students who seem less capable. High-functioning students with ASD or Asperger Syndrome may require extensive assessment. Teams should begin to assess these areas early (age 14) in the transition assessment process The assessment process should not only identify the need for instruction and skill development in these "functional" areas, but should also provide suggestions for how these skills may be developed while a student is engaging in an academic curriculum. This process is very individualized and should begin as early as possible in order to prevent the crisis that may occur when a student is 17 or 18 and does not have the independent living skills necessary to move into an educational, work, or community living situation.

3. Ensure assessments results reflect potential adult/transitional agency involvement. Early planning for agency eligibility and waiting lists may be necessary.

Tools and Resources

Employability and Life Skills Assessment (ELSA) developed by the Ohio Department of Education.
(See *Appendix C: Employability/Life Skills Assessment*)

This simple-to-use assessment includes a parent and school version to capture information from both home and school environments. A summary chart provides an overview of the identified areas of strength as well as those that can be improved with instruction and activities.

Standardized Tests and Students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder
http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/generalinfo/standardtests.html

This article describes the difficulties students with ASD face when taking standardized tests because of social, communication or sensory issues, or ritualistic behaviors. Included is a list of accommodations for taking tests.

National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) Transition Assessment Guide
http://www.nsttac.org/Default.aspx?FileName=tag

Describes how to conduct and select instruments for a transition assessment. Gives examples of sample instruments for both informal and formal assessments and includes links to pod casts and articles on transition assessment.

DCDT Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment Fact Sheet
http://www.nsttac.org/?FileName=dcdt_factsheet

This fact sheet describes how students can be involved in their IEP and the evidence based researching supporting this involvement. The 11 steps in the Self Directed IEP process are explained.

Questions for Transition Assessment from the Transition Coalition
http://www.transitioncoalition.org/cgiwrap/tcacs/new/resources/presentations/index.php

Sample questions for transition planning and assessment in areas such as employment, post secondary education, community activities and personal/social

are listed along with methods for collecting information in each of these areas.

The Transition Coalition also offers a free online training module on Transition Assessment at http://www.transitioncoalition.org.

Career Planning Begins with Assessment from the National Collaborative on Work Force and Disability
http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/assessment.html

This extensive guide includes chapters on understanding assessment and selecting and using assessments.

A Guide for Transition to Adulthood from the Organization for Autism Research
http://www.researchautism.org/resources/reading/index.asp

This free guide includes a section on transition assessment (pp. 9-14) and a form in Appendix D for summarizing interests and skills.

Agency Collaboration and Funding Related to Assessment

Agencies such as Rehabilitation Services Commission (RSC) and Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (MR/DD) may be invited to meetings where transition assessments are discussed, especially if the student is likely to be served by these agencies in the future. Mental health agencies may also be helpful during the assessment process for students who have a co-occurring mental health challenge.

Agency or adult providers may be able to offer guidance and advice based on assessment results. Many of these agency personnel may not be able to "officially" open a case or follow the student early in the transition process; however, the assessment process is a natural time to introduce the student, family and other team members to potential adult service providers. The assessment planning process should include a discussion of the multiple types of agencies that are available and which agencies should be approached to officially or unofficially participate.

> Tyrone and his team decided that it was in his best interest to delay his graduation until his 22nd birthday. Tyrone is a talented, yet complex young man who has been identified with high-functioning autism and bipolar disorder. At age 17, with Tyrone and his family's permission, the IEP team invited MR/DD, BVR, the local mental health agency and an adult advocacy organization to attend a "getting to know Tyrone" meeting. At this meeting the agency representatives were given information about Tyrone, his strengths, his vision for the future and his potential needs. The agency representatives offered advice related to additional assessments, applications, resources and general information related to their experience. Several months later an official IEP/transition planning meeting was held, and the same people were invited to attend. Tyrone's parents signed releases so that minutes from the IEP meetings and the Transition Plans were made available to the agencies.

school building. These activities and resulting skills are documented and included as part of the historical data.

A transition assessment program structure should support family involvement, a student-centered approach and ongoing individualized assessment with early transition planning, especially in critical areas such as residential living. The program structure should include staff knowledgeable about community resources and contacts for interagency collaboration and a creative use of resources.

> Caryn was given the responsibility to independently select her lunch with a goal of a healthy selection and maintaining a healthy weight. Her choices were not directed or corrected; however, she was given instruction related to the caloric content and nutrition of the foods on the menu. Caryn also monitored her weight regularly. When her weight increased, Caryn was assisted in reviewing her choices where she determined that she would replace rich desserts with fruit and limited her meals to one serving.

Agencies such as RSC may be able to assist in funding for certain assessments. MR/DD may provide certain assessments, such as assessment of travel or mobility. For students who qualify for Medicaid, this may be another resource for assessments related to medical needs.

Activities or Interventions to Facilitate Planning, Implementation and Use of Assessment Tools and Procedures

Early opportunities for self-determination activities, such as choice making, goal setting and decision-making, will provide a foundation for a student's active participation in transition assessment. Therefore, they should be included as part of student's educational program as soon as possible.

Ongoing career development activities at school and home, such as job shadowing, community experiences and volunteering, will contribute to a more meaningful transition assessment. These may begin early in a student's educational career within the classroom or

Antonio's family requested that a visioning process be used to help plan his future. The people who knew Antonio best participated in this process. These included his teacher, parents, brothers, sister, aunt, uncles, therapists, several friends from school and a long-time family friend. The process centered on Antonio as a unique individual. This process guided the development of the transition Vision Statement and the goals for Antonio's adult life.

Summary

Age-Appropriate Assessment

"Age appropriate" means chronological age rather than developmental age (Wehmeyer, 2002).

IDEA Requirements

Age-appropriate transition assessments are required by the law IDEA 2004.

Focus

Assessment areas include education/training, employment and, when necessary, independent living.

Student and Family Participation

Student participation in transition planning ensures that students' interests and preferences are reflected in the results. Families can also contribute important information concerning student medical history and continuity regarding background information that may be otherwise forgotten by school or agency personnel.

Data Driven

Transition assessment data drive the transition planning and the development of IEP goals. Accurate and meaningful transition assessment data support the development and achievement of appropriate and measurable postsecondary goals for employment, postsecondary education and independent living.

Not a Single Test

There is no one "correct" transition assessment format or set of tests. Transition assessments are individualized and collect data on a particular student's needs, aptitudes, interests and abilities.

Multiple Assessments

Transition assessments can include formal testing (achievement, aptitude, and interest), informal testing (interviews, observations, questionnaires) and situational work assessments. Behavioral, self determination and independent living assessments should be considered and may be included when determined to be necessary for future planning.

Ongoing

Transition assessments do not take place at one point in time. They are ongoing throughout the high school years and should reflect data from more than one person.

Meaningful Summary of Results

A report that summarizes results and an explanation of the results should be given to the family and team members. Transition assessment results should assist the student and family in participating in the transition process and making informed decisions about life choices.

Documentation

The assessment results should also be reflected in the Present Levels of Performance of the IEP and the Summary of Performance, a document given to the student upon exiting the school system.

Determining
the Course
of Study

Implications and
Strategies for ASD

Developing
Postsecondary
Outcomes for
Employment,
Education and
Community Living
(if needed)

Academic Instruction and
Career Development

Tools and Resources

Life Skills,
Social Skills and
Learning Strategies

Agency
Collaboration
and Funding

Self-Determination Skills

Activities and
Interventions for
School-Age Transition
Programming

Community-Based
Career and
Work Experience

Summary

SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMMING

Guiding Questions:

- ▶ What are the services can the school provide for a successful transition to education, employment and independent living?
- ▶ What is the role of the family in providing skills and instruction for the student to transition to post-school outcomes?
- ▶ What is self-determination and why is it important for student transition to post-school education, employment or independent living?
- ▶ What is the role of community services and agencies in the successful transition for students to post-school outcomes?

General Information

Developing Postsecondary Outcomes

School age programming for students with disabilities, including ASD, should consider the transition to adulthood process as early as possible. In Ohio, by age 14, teams must be engaging in age-appropriate assessments and developing statements related to transition planning. These ongoing assessments lead to the creation of transition goals and objectives that support the identified outcomes the student desires following high school. Postsecondary outcomes must focus on employment and education, and sometimes community living.

The resulting IEP process for the transition-age student focuses on provision of instruction and experiences during the middle and high school years that will likely lead to the desired outcomes. The school, in partnership with the family and community agencies, is the primary provider of instruction and skills that will help the student with ASD be successful after graduation.

Postsecondary outcomes must focus on employment and education, and sometimes community living.

The course of study is a listing of classes and community experiences that students will complete to meet their transition goals. It is a multi-year description starting with the student's current year and ending with the exit year.

Below is an example of a course of study developed by the Zarrow Center (see link in the section "Tools and Resources").

1. Nina wants to work with animals in a medical setting. Her measurable postsecondary education goal would be attending the veterinary technician program at Lakeside Community College.

2. Jeremy wants to work part time in an office environment. A measurable postsecondary employment goal for him would be part-time supported employment in an office where he can use his training in spreadsheet and word processing for data entry and document development.

3. Jack wants to live in his own place after school. A measurable postsecondary community living goal would include living in a semi-independent apartment and participating in at least one community activity with support services.

High School Graduation Requirement Credits

▶ 4 English
▶ 3 Math
▶ 3 Science
▶ 3 Social Studies   23 Total Credits
▶ 1 Arts
▶ 1 P.E./Health
▶ 8 Electives

Note: Graduation requirements vary from state to state and may even be different between school districts.

Vision for Employment: Welder
Vision for Further Education: Career Tech program

Jake wants to be a welder.

Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
1. English I	1. English II	1. English III	1. English IV
2. Math I	2. Math II	2. Algebra I	2. Business Math
3. Physical Science	3. Biology	3. Earth Science	3. Career Prep
4. U.S. History	4. World History	4. State History/Civics	4. Applied Technology
5. P.E./Health	5. Art	5. Career Tech program	5. Career Tech program
6. Career Exploration and Transition	6. Tech Ed	6. Career Tech program	6. Career Tech program
7. Study Skills	7. Language or Other Elective	7. Career Tech program	7. Career Tech program
8. Participate in DECA	8. Participate in DECA	8. Job Shadow at Bob's Welding Shop	8. Welding Internship at Bob's Welding Shop

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The IEP team (which includes the family and student) selects and describes a course of study that is reviewed and revised (if necessary) on a yearly basis. Although academic achievement is important, the course of study should reflect skills and activities that are necessary in order to live and learn as an adult.

The following areas should be considered and, if necessary included in the course or study, the Transition Plan, and the IEP goals and objectives:

1. Academic instruction and career development
2. Life and social skills
3. Self-determination skills
4. Community-based career development

Academic Instruction and Career Development

All students need thorough academic instruction to succeed in college and in the workplace, as well as career development and guidance to assist in identifying areas of interest and aptitudes.

Applied Academics

In some cases, the academic instruction is most appropriately provided as functional or applied academics where the student is provided instruction that allows her to understand and apply the basic curricular concepts to meaningful life experiences.

Academic Supports

Students with ASD may need additional supports to succeed academically and to identify vocational goals that are a good match for their skills while taking into account needed accommodations and factors that may inform their choices.

For example, a student with ASD may need an organizational system for homework assignments to help break down projects into manageable tasks, or visual supports like time lines and schedules in order to complete an assignment.

A student who likes to work with his hands but is very sensitive to loud noises may want to explore vocational choices other than machinist if this vocation means working in a noisy environment that causes him stress and results in an inability to concentrate.

Life Skills, Social Skills and Learning Strategies (Study Skills, Note Taking)

Many schools offer non-academic instruction such as driver training, drug education and sex education. Teaching students functional life skills is a high-evidence secondary transition practice (Test, 2007). Studies demonstrate that when students learn practical skills, they are more likely to be successful in their life after high school. This implies that IEPs and transition plans should extend beyond the typical "life skills classes" to direct instruction in social skills and socialization.

Life Skills and ASD

Social and life skills are especially important for individuals on the autism spectrum, including those with high communication and cognitive skills. Social challenges and difficulties with socialization are hallmark characteristics of the autism spectrum. This includes instruction in understanding different relationships such as acquaintances, friends, boyfriends or girlfriends.

Life Skills Across the Spectrum

Examples of life skills instruction include teaching purchasing and shopping, cooking, budgeting and banking, mobility (crossing the street) and safety (first aid). Other life skills involve the "soft skills" of basic interpersonal relationships with coworkers such as learning to recognize their moods or emotions. Understanding the importance of punctuality, privacy, and hygiene often need to be included in transition planning. An age-appropriate transition assessment will assist in determining needed transition instructional services.

For example:

▶ A student with Asperger Syndrome, who receives good grades in computer science classes, but does not know how to make a phone call or engage in a social conversation in the school cafeteria needs life skill and social skill instruction.

▸ **Life Skill Resources –** A link to a list of strong and moderate evidence-based life skill instruction practices developed by NSTTAC (National Secondary Transition and Technical Assistance Center) can be found in "Tools and Resources." By clicking on a specific life skill, you can download a PDF describing the evidence to support the practice and links to teach the skills.

Parent Involvement

Parents can also teach life skills by modeling skills and providing opportunities, training and support in performing and practicing skills. These activities should begin when the student is a very young age and continue into the young adult years. Educators can partner with families by providing ideas and help with organizational or communication supports. For example, video and peer modeling have been used to learn activities of daily living such as grocery shopping and making change.

Self-Determination Skills

> Self-determination (SD) can be defined as knowing oneself, one's goals and how to achieve those goals.

Self-advocacy is often used with self determination. This is an important skill, too, because it is not enough for students or individuals with ASD to know their goals and strengths. In environments such as college or the workplace, individuals with ASD also have to know how to ask for accommodations or supports when needed.

For example, teaching students with disabilities how to lead their own IEP meetings is a research-based self-determination practice. In a self-directed IEP meeting, students learn how to actively participate in making decisions about their own future and how to present their interest and goals to the IEP team. Research shows that in teacher-directed IEP meetings, students talk only 3% of the time. But after self-determination training for student-led IEPs, students spoke 13% of the time and their IEP documents had more comprehensive post-school goals and vision statements.

Developing Self-Determination

Becoming self-determined is a process of developing and implementing a realistic plan for one's life. It requires an awareness of one's own strengths and challenges along with the knowledge and skills needed for adult life. This process takes time, and most students need teachers, family members and others to provide them with opportunities to become self-determined. (See the link for the Zarrow Center in "Tools and Resources" for several self-determination assessment scales and self-determination education materials.)

Improved Outcomes

Teaching self-advocacy and self-determination skill is a strong and moderate evidence-based transition practice based on research from NSTTAC. See "Tools and Resources."

Individualized Instruction

In the article, "Developing Skills and Concepts for Self-Determination in Young Adults with Autism" (Fullerton & Coyne, 1999), the instructional methods were tailored to fit the learning needs of the student. Temple Grandin says that youth with autism, whose approach to thinking is different and who find communication challenging, may have difficulty understanding the concepts of life planning and self-determination in the same manner as people without autism (Fullerton & Coyne, 1999). Helpful instructional methods include:

▸ Visual organizers and drawings were used to help students understand time periods, sequences, concepts and social situations

▸ Small-group activities (eye contact, taking turns in a conversation) were structured with roles, procedures and purpose described and written so students could actively participate and practice skills

▸ Role-play demonstrations were concluded before the activity so students could see what

Parent/Family Role

Parents play a critical role in the development of self-determination by acting as models of self-determined behavior and by interacting with their children in ways that promote self-determination. Home environments can provide opportunities for exploration, choice, taking risks and exercising control.

Community-Based Career Development and Work Experiences

Students who have community job experiences prior to leaving high school are more likely to become employed as adults. Whether a student plans to continue in postsecondary education or pursue employment following high school, it is strongly suggested that transition plans promote community-based experiences. For example, summer and after-school jobs can help students develop employability skills, like being on time, following directions or learning a sequence of tasks.

School Support

Schools can provide real-life opportunities for career exploration with assignments and activities like job shadowing, volunteering, visiting local employers, implementing community-based vocational instruction (see section "Tools and Resources") and exposing students to a variety of career paths. These activities allow employers to become mentors to young students and assist with career planning.

Community Support

Career and transition fairs are opportunities for employers, agency personnel and community members to give feedback on resumés, participate in mock interviews, and most importantly get to know the talents and abilities of individuals with ASD. Not only will these opportunities help young students prepare for the work environment, they will also help community groups develop an awareness of needed accommodations.

Partnerships

Schools that reach out to the community and pave the way for students to volunteer, earn internships and summer employment experience may give students with ASD their only opportunity to gain vital real-life experience in a supportive environment. Service learning is another way to describe volunteer opportunities.

Characteristics of ASD – Sensory

Implications

   Individuals with ASD often have sensitivities to the sensory environment that result in responses and reactions that can be difficult for others to understand. These sensitivities can intensify in situations such as

- ▶ Transitions to new environments or people
- ▶ Changes in schedules and routines
- ▶ Stresses caused by school deadlines, illness, sleep disturbances or difficulties outside of school

When assessing a school environment, consider the following:

1. What do you know about the sensory issues for this individual? How do they affect school performance?

2. Are these sensory triggers in the school environment or specific classrooms?
   - ▶ Noise or specific sounds
   - ▶ Bright or dim lighting
   - ▶ Smells/odors
   - ▶ Visual clutter
   - ▶ Lack of personal space

3. Can adaptations be made to the environment that reduce or eliminate the sensory challenges?

4. Could the individual benefit from calming or alerting activities to deal with the sensory issues that remain?

Characteristics of ASD – Sensory (con't.)

Strategies

1. Often strategies and environmental adaptations to address sensory issues are documented in the IEP. An occupational therapist may be a valuable team member when assessing for sensory issues and providing interventions. Below are some typical school-based interventions.

   i. Modify school environment/schedule when possible. For example:
      a. Schedule lunch time 10 minutes earlier or later to reduce crowding when entering the cafeteria.
      b. Schedule breaks or allow the student to use a "take-a-break" card. Teachers can also give the student a "take-a-break" card when they see the student is getting upset. This time may give the student a chance to calm down.
      c. Allow the student to listen to soothing music if this helps with panic in crowded spaces or when exposed to unpleasant sounds.
      d. Place the student in a corner or at the back of the classroom rather than by a door or in the middle of a group of students.
      e. Use dividers to create personal space if the student is distracted easily when doing assignments. These may be as simple as file cabinets, room screens, curtains or bookshelves.
      f. Allow desirable air fresheners or avoid placing the individual near students who use heavy perfumes or colognes.
      g. Experiment with different types of lighting. Some students prefer natural lighting, some indirect lighting and some are fine with overhead lights.
      h. Explore opportunities during the school day that allow the student who needs to move or pace to do so in a natural manner. Jobs such as delivering messages or packages or cleaning shelves and floors allow for a natural sensory break. Active movement is calming to many individuals.

2. Sensory processing challenges and sensitivities often intensify in stressful situations, unfamiliar routines and with unfamiliar people. Create predictability by using visual strategies, such as pictures, video, social scripts, and clear explanations of what to expect at school, especially when changes are to occur.

Characteristics of ASD – Communication and Socialization

Implications

Individuals with ASD typically struggle to respond to and understand the social aspects of a situation. Without intervention and support, these challenges can result in poor communication and strained social relationships with teachers and peers. Sometimes poor social and communication skills result in bullying by classmates, being the object of jokes or making the student with ASD further isolated and unable to form friendships with peers.

In school, students with ASD may need more time to learn the skills or rules. They may exhibit difficulty with change in routines or developing a comfort level with new teachers and students. Understanding who to go to with questions or who to ask for help may not be natural or easily problem-solved. Knowing when to ask for help is also an area that needs to be taught, rather than assumed. Often schools establish a safe place where students can go for help, especially when they feel out of control.

Social skill training and instruction may be a critical element to help a student with ASD get along with peers and interact with teachers. Needed competencies may range from the very basic social skills expected of a young adult to the complex aspects of reading social cues and accurately interpreting another's perspective or point of view. This includes understanding the school culture, nonverbal body language and peer feelings.

Social instruction may need to address these areas as well as expected school behavior, such as appropriate eye contact and how to initiate, sustain and end a conversation. Typical conversations and vocabulary of the school culture may also need to be taught. Individuals with ASD may make seemingly irrelevant comments or focus on their own special interests to the exclusion of other topics if they are not taught and cued by others.

When assessing the school environment, consider:
1. Will the student's social skills and social understanding be a significant barrier to fitting in with peers?
2. Does the student understand and is he able to follow the directions and instructions given by the teacher?
3. Does the student need directions in alternate or multiple formats–verbal, visual, or demonstrations?
4. What types of social instruction, social supports and social cueing does the student need to successfully complete assignments, as well as engage in social interactions with fellow students and teachers?

Strategies

1. Review the available transition assessment information or ask to have this area assessed. Note the types of social and communication concerns that were identified, as well as the types of supports and interventions that were effective. Include these interventions (or modified versions of these supports) in the behavior support plan.
   - ▶ In a new situation, the supports will likely need to be intensified initially and then modified as the situation becomes more familiar and predictable.

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Characteristics of ASD – Communication and Socialization - Strategies (con't.)

2. Remember that a combination of verbal, visual and demonstration reinforces learning of new tasks and skills. Skills that may be the most difficult for the individual to master include social skills and social understanding. Strategies and supports that may be used within the workplace include:
   i. Visual/written scripts
   ii. Visual reminders of school rules or social norms in terms of what "to do" and the hidden curriculum
   iii. Subtle cues between the individual and the teacher, or intervention specialist to remind the student when she is too close, too loud, needs to respond, etc.
   iv. Priming – The support person gives reminders or reviews (can include visual supports) with the student immediately before entering the situation in which the skill is to be used (cafeteria, classroom, bathroom, etc.)
   v. Videos of self or others performing a task or using desired social skills
   vi. Immediate (or as soon as reasonable) reinforcement when the student is performing or acting in the desired manner (reinforcement can range from earning a tangible reward to a verbal or gestural praise)

3. Teach, as appropriate, common social skills, such as initiating or responding to a request to engage in an activity.
   i. Can the individual with ASD be taught a script for this activity or engage in practice requests to establish predictability?
   ii. Video self-monitoring of practice interviews may also improve interview skills.

4. Use clear verbal/visual description and/or demonstration/modeling of classroom activities, rules, breaks and expectations. This should be done prior to the activity as well as during class. Check for comprehension by observing the student in practice, as well as by encouraging questions.

5. Use email to communicate clearly and concisely with an individual who is competent with the technology. This may allow her time to focus on and better understand the message.

6. Provide a consistent, structured classroom environment. Give advance notice if a change in activities or schedule will take place.

7. Provide peer education. The teacher or other informed individual can do "one-minute" situation-specific education with students about why an individual is acting or reacting in an unusual manner in order to foster understanding.

8. If the individual with ASD uses an AAC device, make sure the specific class vocabulary is programmed into the device. Is there a low-tech alternative in case of a device failure? Is there someone else in the school who understands how to facilitate the device or communication should breakdown occur?

Characteristics of ASD – Executive Function and Organization

Implications

Individuals with ASD may have great difficult with organization, attention and mental planning. This challenge may affect the ability to quickly learn and complete activities, assignments or tasks, even in an area where the individual has great talent.

These challenges may appear as:
- Appearing overwhelmed by a relatively simple task
- Having difficulty getting started or knowing what to do when finished – even with a routine task
- Becoming easily distracted and having difficulty returning focus or re-engaging with a task or activity
- Shutting down or becoming anxious with a change in the normal activity or class routine
- Viewing a simple problem-solving situation as insurmountable
- Having a messy or disorganized desk area, even if the individual appears to desire routine and predictability

The individual may not be able to easily and consistently mentally organize and problem-solve, even after the initial transition to a class. Therefore, environmental organization and strategies may be necessary throughout the person's life in order for him to demonstrate and function at his full potential.

Assess the environment and school responsibilities for daily routine, environmental distractibility and the need to problem-solve. Potential environmental modifications and supports should be explored with the school team in order to determine if the situation will likely be a "good fit."

Strategies

1. Develop lists of the items that the student needs to take to work and home. The list may be in pictures or words and used as an organizational checklist.

2. Make available visual routines/checklists (words or pictures) of frequent routines encountered at school. These may be used extensively by the individual on some days and not at all on other days. Routines to consider include:
   i. Arrival and departure routines
   ii. Lunch activities
   iii. Specific class routines (a person may have several activities that can be reflected in a step-by-step visual routine)
   iv. Template/diagram for organization of desk area (e.g., photograph of desk organization)
   v. Templates that assist a person in completing a written task by offering a visual "roadmap" throughout the task (some templates provide an example of each step of the task like an outline)

OCALI
The Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence

Characteristics of ASD – Executive Function and Organization - Strategies (con't.)

3. Create organizational supports to assist the person in understanding:
   ▶ The assignment to be completed
   ▶ Where it is to be completed
   ▶ How much is to be completed
   ▶ Where to begin and end tasks
   ▶ The time allotted for completing the work
   ▶ What to do when the work is finished

4. Provide maps of the school area labeled with bathrooms, lunch areas, offices, etc.

5. Develop "to do" lists or use sticky note reminders.

6. Provide low-tech auditory cuing devices; for example, voice or time cues may help the individual complete activities in a timely manner.

7. Post and review calendars or timelines of deadlines and important tasks. Assist the individual in breaking down a long-term task/assignment into planned steps over the course of several days/weeks/months. Use of online email reminders may also be helpful.

8. Introduce and continue to teach environmental strategies. Extensive cueing/prompting may be necessary in the early stages of using these tools. Once an individual becomes familiar with or competent in the use of the tools, prompts can be limited or faded completely.

Tools and Resources

Ohio Employability Life Skills Assessment

There are two versions–one for teachers and one for parents to complete. Permission has been given for use of this assessment developed by the Ohio Department of Education. See Appendix C and D, "Employability/Life Skills Assessment" and "Employability/Life Skills Assessment Parent Form," respectively.

Evidence Based Transition Practices from NSTTAC

http://www.nsttac.org/?FileName=student_development

Click on a specific practice to get more information on evidence and resources for teaching the skill.

Creating High Expectations (CHE)

http://www.create.org.vt.edu

An innovative project designed to light a spark in middle and high school students with disabilities by engaging them in thoughts about a career and post-secondary education; making the most of attending a transition event; and subsequently, knowing how to be an active participant in one's own transition planning. A series of lesson are offered as modules in three critical areas: assistive technology, career and leadership. In addition, resources are provided for students, educators and families.

Rubrics for Transition III: for Autism Spectrum Students

Software and manuals may be borrowed from OCALI www.ocali.org or purchased from http://www.tensigma.org/transition/

The software and manuals help assess students in a variety of transition skills (like following directions, working cooperatively with others) and provide customized rubrics to train and evaluate needed transition skills.

Youthhood http://www.youthhood.org/

This website was built to help students plan for the future. It asks questions like: What will you do after high school? Will you work? Go to college? Live in a place of your own? By using this website, students can plan for their future and participate in goal-planning activities.

Learn and Earn: Tips for Teen

http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Careers/learn.html

Prepared by DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking and Technology), this website includes advice on how high school students can prepare for careers, a fact sheet and link to a free online video. This project encourages students with disabilities to enter careers in math and science and provides information and resources about using technology as an accommodation.

Learn and Earn: Supporting Teens

http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Careers/support.html

This fact sheet describes why teens with disabilities should be involved in work-based learning. It is also a product of DO-IT and has a link to a free online video.

Picture Set

http://www.setbc.org/pictureset/

This is a collection of downloadable visual supports that can be used by students for both receptive and expressive communication in the classroom, at home, and in the community.

DCDT Student Involvement in the IEP Fact Sheet

http://www.nsttac.org/?FileName=dcdt_factsheet

This fact sheet describes how students can be involved in their IEP and includes the evidence-based researching supporting this involvement. It also includes the 11 steps a student can follow when leading his own IEP meeting.

Preparing for a Career: An Online Tutorial

http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Careers/prepare.html

This is a nice compendium of career planning resources, but geared towards teens with disabilities. There are resources for resumé writing, interviewing and finding out about careers, interests and aptitudes. This is another product of DO-IT. Check out all their resources at their home page http://www.washington.edu/doit/

Community-Based Instruction Work

http://www.vcu.edu/rrtcweb/techlink/courses/course4/session3/s3intro.htm

This website tutorial discusses the rationale for community-based vocational training, provides ideas for developing vocational sites, explores methods for individualizing the training process and presents information about labor laws.

Career Voyages

http://www.careervoyages.gov

This website is the result of collaboration between the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education. It is designed to provide information on high growth, in-demand occupations along with the skills and education needed to attain those jobs.

Work-Based Learning:
Ohio Department of Education

http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=958&ContentID=11609&Content=31017

This resource is designed to assist students, educators and business representatives in designing and implementing career-related experiences for learners.

Your Employment Selection (YES)

http://www.yesjobsearch.com/

This is a web-based collection of career videos to determine work interest. There is a small fee to view.

Zarrow Center

http://education.ou.edu/zarrow/

The Zarrow Center offers transition planning and self-determination assessment and training material geared towards the student with a disability.

Articles

Fullerton, A., & Coyne, P. (1999). Developing skills and concepts for self determination in young adults with autism. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 14*(1): 42-53, 63.

This article describes a self-determination project for students with autism that used graphic organizers and peer discussion to develop choice and decision making skills.

Held, M., Thoma, C., & Thomas, K. (2004). The John Jones Show: How one teacher facilitated self-determined transition planning for a young man with autism. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 19*(3); 177-188.

Summary at http://www.worksupport.com/resources/viewContent.cfm/256

This article describes the efforts of a teacher to infuse self-determination throughout the curriculum and the school year using several self-determination curricula, peer modeling and PowerPoint technology.

Wehman, P. (2006). *Life beyond the classroom: Transition strategies for young people with disabilities*. 4th edition (436-439). Baltimore: Brookes Publishing.

Agency Collaboration and Funding Related to School-Age Programming

Most school-age programming is covered by local education agency. However, some students may be eligible for Medicaid waivers or Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation vocational services that can be used to reinforce transition goals and objectives. Examples of other agencies that may provide services and may collaborate with the school transition team to reinforce and expand transition services include:

- Local mental health agencies
- Easter Seals
- Goodwill
- Autism advocacy groups
- Social Security Administration

For example, High School High Tech and DO-IT are two national organizations that emphasize careers in science, math and technology for students with disabilities. High Tech has local programs in some areas, and DO-IT offers many online resources and opportunities for mentoring. Transition teams should explore all local resources and providers to make connections while the student with ASD is in school. Getting to know neighborhood employers that may be close to public transportation for the student and recreation and leisure options will expand opportunities for the student. Inviting agency personnel and employers to IEP meeting may be appropriate.

See Section 4: "Employment" for more information on RSC, MR/DD services, eligibility and funding.

Activities or Interventions to Facilitate School-Age Programming for Transition

Most school transition activities will be individualized, based on a student's transition plan and specified in writing on the IEP. Other activities during the school-age years that benefit consumers, families and transition personnel are:

Transition Fairs – Agencies (BVR, MR/DD), postsecondary institutions, Social Security and local employers send representatives to a site (usually provided by the school) to present information on their services, talk with families and students and answer question. Students can be prepared ahead of time by deciding who they want to talk with and writing questions for the representatives.

Career Development Activities – Part-time and summer work and volunteer experiences are critical foundations for successful transition. However, organized group activities such as clubs, hobbies and community organizations may also help students with ASD begin to solidify their strengths and interests that can be linked to future work opportunities. School transition teams can assist by being knowledgeable about community resources and by providing contact information for families.

Self-Determination/Self-Advocacy – Check opportunities for the student to take responsibility for school projects, scheduling appointments for medical, hair cuts or budgeting allowances and making purchases. Another activity for students to practice self-advocacy skills may be a workshop or training provided by the school on leading their own IEP. These are all situations where students can plan, make choices and decisions and that allow them to use skills that will be necessary for future independent living.

Summary

Career Development Is a Life Long Process
Starting at a young age, students need to explore and learn about a variety of careers, job requirements and working conditions. Students need to determine how to match their interests and aptitudes with job clusters and occupational outlooks.

Balance of Skill Instruction
How can both necessary life skills and academic instruction be included in the curriculum especially when teachers must meet academic content standards? For example, the NSTTAC skill practice descriptions provide examples of how and where the life skills have been implemented along with an explanation of how life skills connect to a quality transition IEP and to national academic standards.

Aligning Outcomes with IEP Goals
The goals and objectives in the IEP should not only be based on age-appropriate transition assessment but also be designed to reasonably achieve the long-term transition outcomes for employment, postsecondary education and independent living.

Team Planning
Transition planning often requires scheduled meetings outside the IEP time. The team should include teachers, community agencies, family members and most important, the student. The team should have access to transition assessment data, the student's interests and abilities and knowledge of community resources.

Self-Determination Skills Need to Be Developed
Students need training and opportunities to learn self-advocacy skills and how to participate meaningfully in their IEP meetings. Making choices and decisions is also part of self-determination and is an important life-long skill. Teaching self-advocacy and self-determination skills is a strong and moderate evidence-based transition practice.
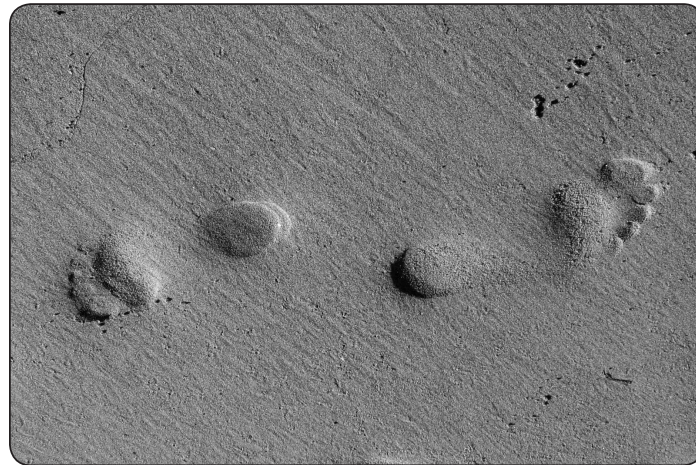
Families Need Training and Support

Family-focused training and empowerment help families work effectively with school personnel, other agencies and professionals. Families need to be knowledgeable about the transition process, eligibility and funding for services and, most important, how to advocate for services for their child.

Work-Based Learning Experiences Are the Foundation for a Successful Transition

Hiring practices are often based on prior work experience. Many individuals with ASD graduate from college and high school without internships or any work or volunteer experience and face great difficulty in getting any type of a job in their chosen field (see "Tools and Resources" for link to ODE website on work-based learning).
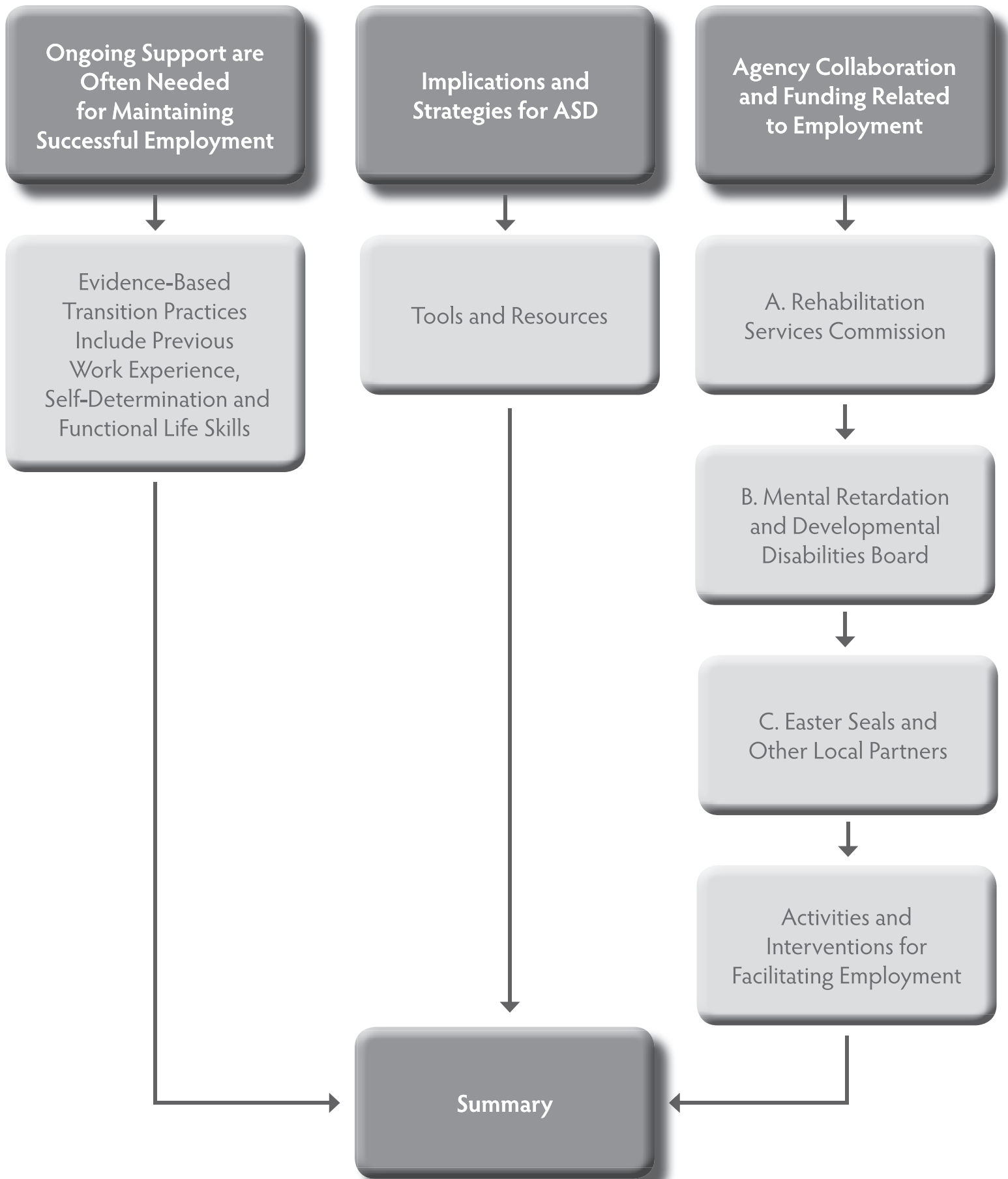
Life Skills Instruction Is a High and Moderate Evidence-Based Transition Practice

Social skills are an important component of life skills instruction. Lack of social skills impacts employment, relationships and integration into the community. Many individuals with ASD are not able to select behavior appropriate to the situation or exhibit behavior that is inappropriate. Once students leave school "situations requiring social competence tend to far outnumber those requiring academic skill" (http://www.cited.org/index.aspx?page_id=154). Individuals with cognitive disabilities are able to master social skills with direct and structured instruction, opportunities to generalize these skills to new settings and with practice (CITEd, 2008).

Ongoing Support are Often Needed for Maintaining Successful Employment

Implications and Strategies for ASD

Agency Collaboration and Funding Related to Employment

Evidence-Based Transition Practices Include Previous Work Experience, Self-Determination and Functional Life Skills

Tools and Resources

A. Rehabilitation Services Commission

B. Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board

C. Easter Seals and Other Local Partners

Activities and Interventions for Facilitating Employment

Summary

EMPLOYMENT

Guiding Questions:

▶ What transition activities can be planned and implemented in high school to prepare the student with ASD for successful employment?
▶ What are some of the challenges that an individual with ASD may face in seeking employment?
▶ What supports or accommodations have helped individuals with ASD find and maintain employment?
▶ What resources are available for more information and services?

General Information

Currently, the employment outcomes for adults with ASD are not encouraging. Some studies suggest that as few as 6% of individuals with ASD have full-time employment (Barnard et al., 2001). A 2002 study of 405 adolescents and adults with ASD indicated that:

▶ Those in supportive employment worked an average of 15 hours per week
▶ Those in competitive employment spent roughly 27 hours per week at their jobs
▶ Those in sheltered workshops worked an average of 24 hours per week

National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (Seltzer & Krauss, *2002)*

The 2005 National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 reports a post-school employment rate of 14% for individuals with ASD. The same study reports that 75% of parents expected their children with ASD to secure post-school employment. However, only 20% of the surveyed individuals' IEP goals included competitive employment, 25% of the goals included supported employment and 15% included sheltered employment.

> Individuals with ASD may find the visual or auditory environment of a potential employment situation to be distracting or even painful. Adaptations to the environment, such as headphones or dividers, can allow an individual to attempt and maintain employment.

Obtaining employment presents challenges for many individuals with ASD. However, effective transition planning and careful selection of services in high school can contribute to successful employment. Multiple and varied work experience opportunities with individualized supports may be necessary for the individual with ASD to select and secure successful postsecondary employment. Often individuals with ASD have limited opportunities for career development and work experience while in high school either because of communication or behavior challenges.

At times school personnel and/or parents avoid attempting work experiences out of fear that the individual cannot handle a work situation. Instead, careful planning and individualized supports should be provided to help the student with ASD to experience opportunities that lead to a fulfilling adult life and meaningful employment.

During middle school and high school, individuals with ASD should frequently participate in experiences such as:

- ▶ Volunteer jobs
- ▶ Summer employment
- ▶ Unpaid or paid internships
- ▶ In-school work experiences
- ▶ Job shadowing

Thorough preparation for a new setting and necessary supports will minimize or accommodate the student's sensory, social, communication or cognitive challenges.

Teaching students functional life skills is also a high-evidence secondary transition practice (Test, 2007). This holds true for all individuals on the autism spectrum, including those with high communication and cognitive skills. Parents can provide simple

job development experiences to teach life skills by assigning household chores that incorporate following directions (with visual supports if necessary), building on student interests or providing incentives for work completion. These activities should begin at a very young age and continue into the young adult years.

> John, a high school graduate with a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome, participated with few accommodations in the academic portion of his high school career. However, John did receive specific instruction in social-emotional awareness and social skill development. He also attended life skills classes for the last two years of high school in order to develop and practice functional skills in areas that were most difficult for him to master. John used self-monitoring strategies to assist in assessing his ability to use these skills in the community and at home.

Educators can be partners with families by providing ideas and help with organizational or communication supports. For example, video and peer modeling have been used to learn activities of daily living such as grocery shopping and making change.

A complete transition assessment can further help students and families identify areas of interest/ability and establish postsecondary goals and the services needed to achieve these goals. The measurable postsecondary goals that are established by the IEP team should align with the assessment data, and the services that will be planned and implemented for the student should reasonably help him achieve employment goals (See Section 2: "Age-Appropriate Assessment").

> The typical social norms of a work situation can be overwhelming or confusing for the individual with ASD. Identification of and instruction in the specific social expectations of the employment situation can prevent potentially career-ending mistakes.

Characteristics of ASD – Sensory

Implications

Individuals with an ASD often have sensitivities to the sensory environment that result in responses and reactions that can be difficult for others in the workplace to understand. These sensitivities can intensify in situations such as:

- ▶ Transitions to new environments or people
- ▶ Changes in schedules and routines
- ▶ Stresses caused by work deadlines, illness, sleep disturbances or difficulties outside of the workplace

When assessing a workplace environment or a potential workplace environment, consider the following:

1. Will any of the following sensory issues in the work setting hinder the work performance of the individual with ASD?
   - ▶ Noise or specific sounds
   - ▶ Bright or dim lighting
   - ▶ Smells/odors
   - ▶ Visual clutter
   - ▶ Lack of personal space

2. Can adaptations be made to the environment to reduce or eliminate the sensory challenges?

3. Could the individual benefit from calming or alerting activities to deal with remaining sensory issues?

Characteristics of ASD – Sensory (con't.)

Strategies

1. Often effective strategies and environmental adaptations to address sensory issues are documented in the IEP. Consider these interventions. Could they be adapted or used in the work setting?

2. Modify the work environment/schedule when possible. For example:
   i. Schedule starting time 10 minutes earlier to reduce crowding when entering work site
   ii. Allow extra breaks, as long as efficiency and effectiveness are not compromised
   iii. Provide individual with a strategy such as ear buds with soothing music to help with panic in crowded spaces or unpleasant sounds
   iv. Place the individual in a corner or end desk/work area rather than by a door or in the middle of a group of coworkers
   v. Use dividers to provide personal space (these may be true office dividers or materials such as file cabinets, room screens, curtains or bookshelves)
   vi. Allow desirable air fresheners or avoid placing the individual near coworkers who use heavy perfumes or colognes
   vii. Experiment with different types of lighting (some students prefer natural lighting, some indirect lighting, and some are fine with overhead lights)
   viii. Explore opportunities in the workday or the workplace jobs that will allow the person who needs to move or pace to do so in a natural manner. Jobs such as delivering mail or packages, returning items to shelves/bins or greeting coworkers may allow for a natural sensory break. These can also provide the worker with the "heavy work" that can be calming

3. Sensory processing challenges and sensitivities often intensify in stressful situations, unfamiliar routines and with unfamiliar people. Create predictability by using visual strategies such as pictures, video, social scripts, and clear explanations of what to expect during in the workplace, especially when changes are to occur.

Characteristics of ASD – Communication and Socialization

Implications

Individuals with ASD typically struggle to respond to and understand the social aspects of a situation. Without intervention and support, these challenges may result in poor communication and strained social relationships with supervisors and coworkers. In fact, social mistakes are often reported as the reason individuals with ASD lose their job. Performance of the job tasks may be exceptional, yet employers may terminate employment in some situations for lack of social competence. Some employees who are not very proficient at their jobs may keep them because their social competence results in being well liked and having strong relationships with coworkers and supervisors.

In an employment situation, individuals with ASD may need more time to learn the job or work rules. They may exhibit difficulty with change in routines or developing a comfort level with new supervisors and coworkers. Understanding who to go to with questions or to ask for help may not be natural or easily problem-solved. Knowing when to ask for help is also an area that usually needs to be taught, rather than assumed.

Social skill training and instruction may be a critical element for an individual with ASD in order to obtain or maintain a job. Needed competencies may range from the very basic social skills expected of a young adult to the complex aspects of reading social cues and accurately interpreting another's perspective or point of view. This includes understanding the workplace culture, nonverbal body language and coworkers' feelings. Social instruction may need to address these areas as well as expected workplace behavior, such as appropriate eye contact and how to initiate, sustain and end a conversation. Typical conversations of the workplace may also need to be taught. Individuals with ASD may make seemingly irrelevant comments or focus on their own special interest the to exclusion of other topics if they are not taught and cued by others.

When assessing the workplace, consider:
1. Will the individual's social skills and social understanding be a significant barrier to successful employment?
2. Does the individual understand and is she able to follow the directions and instructions typical to the workplace environment?
3. Does the individual need directions in alternate or multiple formats – verbal, visual or demonstrations?
4. What types of social instruction, social supports and social cueing does the individual require to successfully complete the job, as well as engage in social interactions with coworkers and supervisors?

Strategies

1. Review the available transition assessment information. Note the types of social and communication concerns that were identified, as well as the types of supports and interventions that were effective. Include these interventions (or modified versions of these supports) in the workplace support plan.
   - ▶ Do not assume that the individual has "grown out of" the need for these interventions.
   - ▶ In a new situation, the supports will likely need to be intensified initially and then modified, as the situation becomes more familiar and predictable.

Characteristics of ASD – Communication and Socialization (con't.)

2. Use a combination of verbal, visual and demonstration to reinforce learning of new tasks and skills. The skills that may be the most difficult for the individual to master are the social skills and social understanding. Strategies and supports that may be used within the workplace include:
   i. Visual/written scripts
   ii. Visual reminders of workplace rules or social norms in terms of what "to do."
   iii. Subtle cues between the individual and the teacher, or intervention specialist to remind the student when he is too close, too loud, needs to respond, etc.
   iv. Priming – The support person reminds or reviews with the individual immediately before entering the situation in which the skill is to be used (cafeteria, meeting, worksite, bathroom, etc.).
   v. Videos of self or others performing a job or using desired social skills.
   vi. Immediate (or as soon as reasonable) reinforcement when the individual is performing or acting in the desired manner (reinforcement can range from earning a tangible reward to a verbal or gestural praise)

3. Teach interview skills to help the individual make a good "first impression."
   i. Can the individual with ASD be taught a script for job interview and engage in practice interviews to establish predictability?
   ii. Video self-monitoring of practice interviews may also improve interview skills.

4. Use clear verbal/visual description and/or demonstration/modeling of job duties, rules, breaks, and expectations. This should be done prior to entering the workplace as well as during work hours. Check for comprehension by observing the individual in practice, as well as by encouraging questions.

5. Use email to communicate clearly and concisely with individuals who are competent with the technology. This may allow the individual with ASD time to focus on and better understand the message.

6. Provide a consistent, structured work environment. Give advance notice if change in duties or schedule will take place.

7. Provide coworker education. The job coach, supervisor or other informed person can do "one-minute" situation-specific training with workers about why a person is acting or reacting in an "unusual" manner in order to foster understanding.

8. Develop natural supports through selected coworkers who can assist the individual with ASD in communicating effectively and responding successfully in social situations.

9. If the individual with ASD uses an AAC device, make sure the worksite vocabulary is programmed into the device. Also consider: Is there a low-tech alternative in case of a device failure? Are there others in the workplace who understand how to facilitate the device or communication should breakdown occur?

Characteristics of ASD – Executive Function and Organization

Implications

Individuals with ASD may have great difficult with organization, attention and mental planning. This challenge may affect their ability to quickly learn and to perform a job or task, even in an area where they have great talent. These challenges may appear as:

▶ Appearing overwhelmed by a relatively simple task
▶ Having difficulty getting started or knowing what to do when finished – even with a routine task
▶ Becoming easily distracted and having difficulty returning focus or re-engaging with the task or activity
▶ Shutting down or becoming anxious over a change in the normal activity or class routine
▶ Viewing a simple problem-solving situation as insurmountable
▶ Having a messy or disorganized desk area, even if the individual appears to desire routine and pre-dictability

The individual may not be able to easily and consistently mentally organize and problem-solve, even after the initial transition to a workplace. Therefore, environmental organization and strategies may be necessary throughout the person's life in order for her to demonstrate and function at his/her full potential.

The environment and job responsibilities should be assessed for daily routine, environmental distractibility, and the need to problem-solve prior to accepting employment. Potential environmental modifications and supports should be explored with the employer to determine if a given situation will likely be a "good fit."

Strategies

1. Develop lists of the items that the individual needs to take to work and home. The list, whether in pictures or words, is used as an organizational checklist.

2. Make available visual routines/checklists (words or pictures) of frequent routines encountered at work. The may be used extensively on some days and not at all on others. Routines to consider include:
   i. Arrival and departure routines
   ii. Break or lunch activities
   iii. Job routines (a person may have several jobs that can be reflected in a step-by-step visual routine)

Characteristics of ASD – Executive Function and Organization (con't.)

iv. Template/diagram for organization of work area (e.g., photograph of desk organization)

v. Templates or "jigs" that assist a person to complete a task by offering a visual "roadmap" throughout the task (some templates provide an example of each step of the task)

3. Make sure all organizational supports assist the person in understanding:
   ▶ The work to be completed
   ▶ Where it is to be completed
   ▶ How much is to be completed
   ▶ Where to begin and end tasks
   ▶ The time allotted for completing the work
   ▶ What to do when the work is finished

4. Provide maps of the work area that are labeled with bathrooms, lunch areas, offices, etc.

5. Develop "to do" lists or sticky note reminders.

6. Provide low-tech auditory cuing devices, such as voice or time cue, to help the individual complete activities in a timely manner.

7. Post and review calendars or time lines of deadlines and important tasks. Assist the individual in breaking down a long-term task/assignment into planned steps over the course of several days/weeks/months. Use of online email reminders may also be helpful.

8. Introduce and continue to teach environmental strategies. Extensive cueing/prompting may be necessary in the early stages of using these tools. Once an individual becomes familiar with or competent in the use of the tools, prompts can be limited or faded.

Characteristics of ASD – Repetitive Behaviors and Routines

Implications

Individuals with ASD may demonstrate ritualistic or repetitive behaviors. They may range from physical routines, to verbal repetition, to topical restrictions. In some situations, these behaviors or interests can interfere with completion of a job task or workplace plan. In other situation, these can become an asset.

Repetitive behaviors may be more obvious when adjusting to new settings as the rigid behavior may intensify. Requirements of the new job may not easily align with the individual's established routines. These routines may gradually be modified with patience and support from the employer and coworkers.

Some individuals develop routines that revolve around a special interest. While these topical interests may interfere with some situations, in the right environment they may be an asset. Finding the job or career that aligns with the individual's special interests or daily routines is making the "right match." Routine-oriented behavior can be a strength when the individual routines can be aligned with the workplace or job schedules and tasks. Allowing the individual enough time to modify routines to fit a new job can also lead to successful employment. However, expecting the individual to forego the comfort of established routines may be unreasonable and unsuccessful.

Strategies

Strategies should focus on:
- ▶ Providing predictability and structure so that the individual is able to limit time in routine/repetitive behavior
- ▶ Attempting to find ways to incorporate the routines and rituals into the work plan or job requirements
- ▶ Identifying employment and careers that view the routine or ritualistic behaviors as a strength.

Examples:
1. Some routines or ritualistic behavior are so minor that coworkers and supervisors are not concerned, nor do they interfere with the productively and accuracy of the work. For example, hand-flapping briefly and periodically during the day may not bother or interfere with an individual that is unloading trucks, sorting mail or repairing computers. Needing to watch the same TV show on the lunch break may not be an issue for coworkers when there are several TVs in the lunchroom or break area.

Characteristics of ASD – Repetitive Behaviors and Routines (con't.)

2. If the behavior can be a problem, alternates and choices may be used to help decrease stress and ultimately reduce the ritualistic behavior. For example, if the individual with ASD engages in ritualistic hand-flapping when his computer breaks down, this can escalate to where it is very distracting to coworkers. An adaptive behavior scale and choices such as walking down the halls or having other duties may be made available and used when this type of situation arises, thus giving the person a stress–relieving alternative and eliminating the distraction.

3. A brief video, pictures or a PowerPoint presentation that incorporates pictures and audio to show the work site, supervisor, coworkers or job tasks can prepare the individual with ASD for the new setting and allow her multiple opportunities to review. Other environmental and visual supports may be helpful in this situation (see "Executive Function and Organization").

4. Incorporating an individual's special interests into some aspect of the job is a very individualized process. For example, John is an individual with ASD who has a special interest in trains. He has been employed successfully at the main train station of a large city answering questions about train schedules and connections. This job capitalizes on his attention to detail and indirectly supports his interest in trains by placing him in a train station. Socially he can handle the brief encounters that all follow a certain "script" and the short interaction time prevents him from talking in detail about his knowledge of train trivia.

Characteristics of ASD – Other

Implications

Unexpected occurrences can impact the individual's ability to work or to work at the usual rate and efficiency. For example:

▶ Disruptions in daily transportation
▶ Changes in living arrangements
▶ Crisis within the family

At times the disruption that triggers a problem may be something that most others consider pleasing, which can be confusing to coworkers and employers. For example:

▶ vacations or holidays
▶ an unexpected "snow day"
▶ houseguests
▶ new furniture
▶ a new work area
▶ help to lighten the work load
▶ a new pet
▶ remodeling or painting

Strategies

▶ Revisit, expand or implement visual supports and routines that add security, predictability and structure (see "Executive Function and Organization").

▶ Review the sensory supports and sensory environment to make sure the supports are sufficient and that the environment is not overwhelming (see "Sensory").

▶ Arrange for a supervisor, coworker or job coach to help directly by offering more of a presence or by attempting to understand the triggering factors.

▶ If the situation is ongoing or escalates, provide additional support outside of the employment situation. Ongoing case management services may be needed in order to investigate and provide additional supports.

Tools and Resources

Auties.org www.auties.org

Provides self-employment ideas and networking resources for people with ASD.

Life Journey Through Autism: A Guide for Transition to Adulthood

http://www.researchautism.org/resources/reading/index.asp

This free guide contains a chapter on vocation and employment. The appendices includes state and federal agencies for transition assistance, job ideas and a list of reasonable and common job accommodations.

Video on Autism and Employment

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erFrIz9HNMg

This brief video clip from YouTube shows a young man with autism working in a supported job. His supervisor and school staff are interviewed.

Attainment Company

http://www.attainmentcompany.com/

This is a source for low-tech devices for organization, cuing and picture supports (e.g., time cue, voice cue, invisible clock).

Supporting Individuals with Autism in Integrated Community Jobs: Identifying Support Needs to Facilitate Success

http://www.crp-rcep.org/resources/viewContent.cfm/618

This article describes the characteristics of autism and strategies that may be used to promote successful employment outcomes.

Evidence-Based Practices for Helping Secondary Students with Autism Transition Successfully to Adulthood

This is a PowerPoint presentation by David Test, University of North Carolina at Charlotte and National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, Feb. 2007. Retrieved Nov. 3, 2007, from http://www.nsttac.org/?FileName=nsttac_presentations

The National Autistic Society Employment Campaign

http://www.autism.org.uk/workforce

This site includes the manual *The Undiscovered Workforce* written by Prospects, a successful supported employment program in the United Kingdom. It contains helpful information about accommodations and supervising individuals with ASD.

Employees with Asperger Syndrome

http://www.jan.wvu.edu/media/asperger.html

In this pamphlet from the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), Suzanne Gosden Kitchen helps employers with effective accommodations and compliance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). It gives an overview of Asperger Syndrome and how to accommodate each of the characteristics in a work setting. Examples, resources and references that contribute to a valuable resource.

Picture Set http://www.setbc.org/pictureset/

This is a collection of downloadable visual supports that can be used by students for both receptive and expressive communication in the classroom, at home and in the community.

Articles

Barnard, J., Harvey, V., Potter, D., & Prior, A. (2001). *Ignored or ineligible: the reality for adults with autism spectrum disorders*. London: The National Autistic Society

Dew, D. W., & Alan, G. M. (Eds.). (2007). *Rehabilitation of individuals with autism spectrum disorders* (Institute on Rehabilitation Issues Monograph No. 32). Washington, DC: The George Washington University, Center for Rehabilitation Counseling Research and Education. Retrieved December 10, 2007, from http://www.autism-info.org/2007_employment_&_ASD_report.pdf

Fullerton, A., & Coyne, P. (1999). *Developing skills and concepts for self-determination in young adults with autism. Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, *14*(1); 42-53, 63.

This article describes a self-determination project for students with autism that uses graphic organizers and peer discussion to develop choice and decision making skills.

Hinton Keel, J., Mesibov, G., & Woods, A. (1997). TEACCH-Supported employment program. J*ournal of Autism and Developmental Disorders 27*(1): 3-9.

Holmes, D. L. (2007). When the school bus stops coming: The employment dilemma for adults with autism. *Autism Advocate*, *46*(1), 16-21.

   This issue of the *Autism Advocate* includes several articles about employment for individuals with ASD. This one describes challenges for students with autism who leave the school system. Appropriate transition planning for better outcomes, options for supported employment and resources for post-school planning are described.

Howlin, P., Alcock, J., & Burkin C. (2005). An 8 year follow-up of a specialist supported employment service for high-ability adults with autism or Asperger syndrome. *Autism 9*(5): 533-549.

Schaller, J., & Yang, N. (2005). Competitive employment for people with autism: Correlates of successful closures in competitive employment and supported employment. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin 49*(1): 4-16.

Wehman, P., Targett, P., & Young, C. (2007). Off to work for an individual with autism: A supported approach. *Autism Advocate*, *46*(1), 54-57.

Agency Collaboration and Funding Related to Employment

   Collaboration of school transition services and staff with community transition agencies can ensure better employment outcomes. Agencies such as the Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (MR/DD) Board, the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR), and local mental health agencies, autism advocacy groups and Easter Seals may provide information, funding or vocational services and can be in included in IEP transition planning when needed. Most agencies and programs that provide employment services utilize funding from Medicaid, Social Security Administration and agency-generated dollars. Individuals and/or families are also asked to contribute financially to the service plan based on their resources.

Services

   Rehabilitation Services Commission (RSC) is the state agency that provides vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to help people with disabilities become employed and independent. BVR is the arm of RSC that assists people who have physical, mental and emotional disabilities by providing vocational rehabilitation and other services. Students with ASD should apply for BVR services from a local BVR office. Contact information for local offices may be found on the BVR/RSC website:
http://www.rsc.ohio.gov/VR_Services/BVR/bvr.asp

Eligibility

   BVR eligibility requirements must be met to be eligible to access the available funds for vocational training and job placement/job coaching services. Transition teams should facilitate the eligibility process for high school students by explaining the requirements and providing potential evidence of eligibility. BVR requirements involve evidence that:
   ▸ An impairment exists that results in a substantial barrier to employment
   ▸ The individual can significantly benefit from employment assistance
   ▸ BVR services would be effective in the employment process

Documentation and Advocacy

   Parents and team members may need to advocate for the young adult with ASD as agency personnel may be not be well informed regarding ASD and the implications for employment.
   High-functioning individuals with ASD may appear to be capable of independently locating, obtaining and maintaining employment based on the assessment of the individual's skills and talents. A brief interview may not result in obvious concerns, and the counselor may not easily identify the need for employment assistance. The parent or support network should provide BVR with documented information related to the individual's diagnosis, challenges and the implications of these challenges (see Section 2: "Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment").

Given no history or documentation of previous difficulties, the BVR counselor had difficulty determining if Mitchell, a student with Asperger Syndrome, would require and benefit from BVR services. Fortunately, Mitchell's teacher was able to provide documentation of his difficulties working in large groups, his inability to auditorily process multiple step directions and evidence of a documented anxiety disorder. Although the team attempted to focus only on Mitchell's many strengths, the documentation of his challenges assisted the BVR counselor in understanding why he would require assistance locating and learning the many aspects of a new employment situation.

Autism

On the other hand, the BVR counselor may view some individuals with ASD as requiring too much assistance based on a brief encounter that does not highlight the individual's strengths. Once again, documentation that highlights skills and talents and the "right fit" help the counselor determine eligibility.

For more information, visit the Ohio BVR website: http://www.rsc.ohio.gov/VR_Services/BVR/bvr.asp

During an assessment in a county career center, Patrick had great difficult following directions, initiating and completing tasks and problem-solving simple situations. Although the assessment was extensive, due to the unfamiliar surroundings, the staff's lack of understanding of Patrick and how to support him, and his resulting anxiety, the assessment results incorrectly suggested that Patrick would not be suitable for community employment. The assessment further suggested that he would be more appropriately placed in a sheltered environment such as a workshop. The transition team chose to pursue community employment and several months later, with appropriate supports, Patrick was successfully employed 30 hours a week in a local community setting.

Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board (MR/DD)

Services

Employment options through MR/DD support systems include, but are not limited to, community competitive employment, supported employment, mobile work crews, enclaves, entrepreneurships and sheltered employment.

While MR/DD may be the lead agency for employment services for an individual with ASD, the service providers (e.g., job development, job coaching, transportation to work) may be a separate agency or an individual who works jointly with MR/DD. In some cases, MR/DD directly provides these services.

Eligibility

Each county in Ohio is served by a County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disability (MR/DD). Many of the individuals with ASD are eligible for services from MR/DD due to difficulties with daily living skills, socialization, problem solving and other issues. Some individuals with ASD have co-occurring cognitive challenges and consequently present additional challenges due to these delays.

MR/DD establishes eligibility utilizing assessment tools that identify the substantial functional limitations in life activity area. Note: Although an individual may be eligible for MR/DD service as a young child, an adult assessment is completed at age 16 to determine continued eligibility for adult services.

Individuals should contact their service and support administrator as they move into the transition years to request supports for employment. If an adult has yet to become eligible for MR/DD service, contact the local county MR/DD to begin the intake process. Early referral is strongly recommended when it is suspected there may be a need as an adult.

Ohio MR/DD uses the COEDI (Children's Ohio Eligibility Determination Instrument) and the OEDI (Ohio Eligibility Determination Tool) to determine if a person meets functional eligibility requirements. There must evidence of a substantial limitation in three out of seven areas: mobility, receptive and expressive language, self-care, self-direction, capacity for independent living, learning and economic self-sufficiency (adults only).

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Funding

Much of the funding for employment services through MR/DD comes from Medicaid Waivers. MR/DD is the agency that administers these waivers. Therefore, MR/DD must work closely with Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS) to determine eligibility. Each county board of MR/DD coordinates the federal Medicaid Waiver program for residents in their county. Medicaid Waivers are limited, and counties must commit local dollars in order to access these waivers. The federal Medicaid Waiver programs provide 60% of the needed dollars when the local boards of MR/DD are able to match the funds with the remaining 40%. Since waiver options may change, check with your local MR/DD for the latest information.

> There are currently two MR/DD Waivers: Level One and Individual Options Waivers. Although the level of support differs, both types of waivers offer services that could potentially support an individual to access or maintain employment.

County boards of MR/DD also provide a limited amount of employment services funded through local county dollars not associated with a Medicaid Waiver. The amount of service available varies from county to county based on funds raised at the local level. Counties often have long waiting lists, so it is best to apply early for services or make early referrals.

> Robin receives assistance to maintain her employment by the help of a job coach who meets with her one time a week. The job coach is employed by an Easter Seals agency that bills the local MR/DD for the services of the job coach.

Agency and Organization Partners

Many other community and state organizations, agencies and individuals work with the lead agencies to individualize supports and provide a range of employment services and options.

> Artie receives specialized transportation to and from work. He also has a job coach who assists him several hours a day, several days a week Both of these services are provided through a local agency that is an approved Medicaid Waiver provider. The agency bills Artie's Medicaid IO Waiver for these services.

Funding Streams

Some groups offer services funded by their agency dollars; however, many organizations utilize the funding streams that MR/DD and BVR access in order to finance services. At times, these partnering organizations are the providers of the service for MR/DD or BVR.

Explore Local Options

Transition teams should explore all available local resources and providers to determine the best match for the individual in terms of location, philosophical beliefs, types of services and cost.

Easter Seals

Nationally, Easter Seals has taken a special interest in adults with ASD. Easter Seals has partnered with the Autism Society of America (ASA) to expand services for adults. Local Easter Seals agencies offer a variety of activities to better serve adults with ASD in the local community. Many of these services focus on employment. More information may be found at http://www.easterseals.com

When assessing employment options and opportunities for an individual with ASD, it is critical to assess the social environment and expectations, the communication requirements of the employment, the predictability and structure of the workplace and the sensory challenges that may be present.

Walgreens made a significant effort to create supports and accommodations in their distribution centers. In one of the centers, 40% of the workforce were individuals with disabilities. This center became one of the most productive distribution centers in the Walgreens company (see video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2akb4v2cUQ).

Activities or Interventions to Facilitate Successful Employment of Individuals with ASD

Understanding ASD

School and agency staffs must be knowledgeable about the characteristics of ASD so they can design supports that meet the needs of the individual with ASD and the employer. Review Section 3: "School Age Programming" in the areas of Implications and Strategies for additional interventions and strategies to prepare the transition-age student during secondary education programs.

Brianna, a young woman with Asperger Syndrome, demonstrated exceptional talent in the area of graphic design. However, until she learned how to advocate for herself, how to dress in clean clothing, shampoo her hair and use the basic courtesies expected in an office setting, Brianna received no job offers.

Beginning with Assessment

Transition planning and services based on comprehensive transition assessment data and aligned with measurable postsecondary goals support better employment outcomes. Skills, abilities and interests should be highlighted. Students and families should be active participants in the process.

Importance of Life Skills.

Teaching students functional life skills, self-determination, social and communications skills are evidence-based secondary transition practices.

Individualized Career Development

Students should have opportunities to participate in a variety of career development activities (part-time work), community work experiences and vocational education that support their goals. Such experiences should be focused on locating the "right match" or "best fit" for the individual rather than picking just any convenient available option.

Employers Becoming Advocates

Employers of individuals with ASD can demonstrate successful strategies and accommodations and serve as advocates for the employment of individuals with disabilities with other employer groups. The support network for the employee with ASD should provide his employer with resources and information to reinforce the advocacy efforts.

Summary

Supports Are Necessary

Rates of employment are higher when individuals with ASD work in situations where needed supports are provided (89% retention rate with TEACCH support services (Hinton, Mesibov, & Woods, 1997), 68% placement in Prospects supported employment (Howlin, Alcock, & Burkin, 2005) and 75.3% successful RSA closure in supported employment (Schaller, & Yang, 2005).

"Individuals with autism can be successfully employed when the proper supports are identified, put into place, and evaluated periodically to ensure effectiveness" (http://www.crp-rcep.org/resources/viewContent.cfm/618).

The Right Match!

Individuals with ASD often have problems in finding work that matches their abilities and in keeping jobs once they are employed. "Be sure to consider features of a work place, which either meet the needs of the individual's characteristics or can be adapted to support the person" (http://www.crp-rcep.org/resources/viewContent.cfm/618).

Self-Determination Is Important

Parents and educators can help students develop self determination skills. Self-determination skills include making choices and decisions, goal setting, problem solving and self-advocacy. Research shows that students with self-determination skills are better prepared to participate in planning for their future and in making decisions (Fullerton & Coyne, 1999).

Full- and Part- Time Employment

Most individuals with ASD work part time. Daniel Tammet in *Born on a Blue Day* (2007) revealed that in the United Kingdom the National Autistic Society reports that only 12% of people with high-functioning autism or Asperger Syndrome had full-time jobs. Increased hours of employment can occur when the proper supports are provided. However, even with proper supports, some individuals prefer part-time work due to the strain of sensory, social and communication demands in the work environment.

Career Selection

"A job analysis of potential jobs should look at all issues related to environmental factors (e.g., noise, light, temperature); coworker supports (e.g., amount of available supervision, social demands of the workplace); and types of job tasks (e.g., down time, production requirements, number of job duties, routine, and job complexity)" (http://www.crp-rcep.org/resources/viewContent.cfm/618). Making the right job/career match can improve the chances that the individual will work more hours with improved efficiency.

Job Coach

The job coach plays a critical role by providing training in the mode suited to the worker (verbal, written, demonstration, or a combination). The job coach must also help the person with ASD to interpret and understand the social rules of the workplace.

The job coach can help to develop natural supports on the job by assisting coworkers in understanding why the individual with ASD acts and reacts in a particular manner, or why she needs certain routines or rituals. This often leads to the understanding and acceptance from coworkers that are essential for successful natural support.

Job Clubs

Organized after work, job clubs function as a problem-solving peer group for employees with ASD. Such groups can offer ongoing peer and facilitator support for problem solving, communication and social issues on the job.

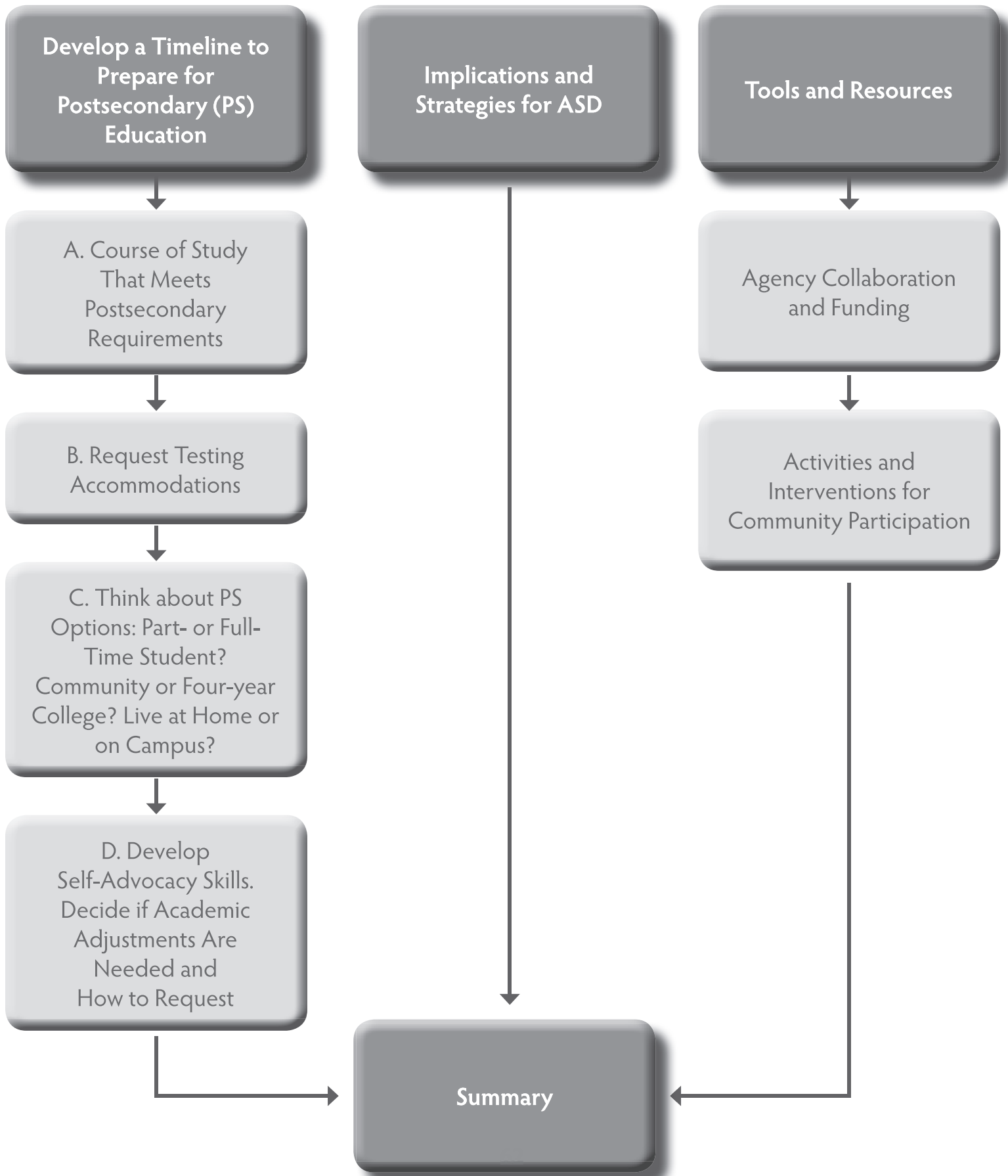### Entitlement Versus Eligibility

School services are an entitlement and are provided regardless of how many other students require them. However, to gain services in the adult system an individual must first meet eligibility guidelines and even then may be placed on a waiting list. Eligibility also requires identification of substantial functional limitations.

Substantial Functional Limitations

Diagnostic labels do not equate to services provided. The individual's identified needs drive the level of service. To improve the likelihood of meeting eligibility criteria for VR and MR/DD services, therefore, the transition team should provide a clear picture of the substantial functional limitations presented by the individual with ASD. For example, an individual with Asperger Syndrome may be able to present himself verbally in an interview and have computer skills to do a job, but not be able to plan and initiate steps to complete a job or becomes agitated when interrupted by a coworker with another request. If these needs are identified, he may be eligible for job coach services to design and implement organization and social skills support. Without these supports, he will lose his job.

After-Work Supports and Recreation

Provide opportunities for the individual with ASD to engage in physical activities or pursue recreation and hobbies so work is not the sole focus of her life. After-work activities also allow the individual an opportunity to de-stress.

Develop a Timeline to Prepare for Postsecondary (PS) Education

Implications and Strategies for ASD

Tools and Resources

A. Course of Study That Meets Postsecondary Requirements

Agency Collaboration and Funding

B. Request Testing Accommodations

Activities and Interventions for Community Participation

C. Think about PS Options: Part- or Full-Time Student? Community or Four-year College? Live at Home or on Campus?

D. Develop Self-Advocacy Skills. Decide if Academic Adjustments Are Needed and How to Request

Summary

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Guiding Questions:

▶ What can families and students with ASD in high school do to prepare for a successful transition to post-secondary education?

▶ What legislation should families and students with ASD know about to help them with transition planning?

▶ What are alternative campus-based transition programs?

▶ What is self-determination and why does it contribute to a successful transition to postsecondary education for students with ASD?

▶ How can one find a postsecondary school that will provide the transition supports needed by students with ASD?

▶ What resources can help with admission exams, choosing a college and getting the necessary supports for a student with ASD?

General Information

Planning for postsecondary education involves many steps, including:

▶ College application process

▶ Testing process for the College Board Tests (SAT) or the Educational Testing Service (SAT)

▶ Meeting eligibility criteria, if accommodations are needed

▶ Applying for financial aid

▶ Finding a college that provides supports for a student with ASD

▶ Documenting all of these steps in the high school transition plan to ensure they are completed

Another way to think about this process is like a timeline. For example:

▶ By the ninth grade or age 14, the student's transition plan should include the college coursework needed for entrance into postsecondary education. This may be a good time to discuss the student's academic strengths and interests and how they might match course work and degrees offered at various colleges and universities.

- During the 10th grade, students can take a practice SAT (PSAT). Especially for students with ASD, this may be a good opportunity to become comfortable with the testing process and lessen anxiety.

  - If the student takes the PSAT, a special student with disabilities eligibility form should be submitted approximately six weeks prior to the practice exam date to secure accommodations. If the student does not take the practice test, the disabilities eligibility form should be submitted 6-8 weeks prior to the date of the SAT exam.

  - A current Multi-Factored Evaluation (MFE) form should be on file at the high school for disability documentation support.

- In the summer of the 10th or 11th grade, the student might also take a summer course at a community college to begin to familiarize herself with the demands of college coursework and how to advocate for accommodations and navigate the college campus.

  - The 11th grade would also be the year for the student to begin exploring colleges online and in person and finding out about the support services offered. This process should be documented in the IEP transition plan, with the responsibilities of the student, family and school clearly stated.

  - By this time the student should have a clear picture of the types of accommodations she may need in college and should be comfortable asking and explaining the need for supports to teachers and instructors.

- Towards the end of the 11th grade, the student should take the SAT or ACT with any needed accommodations.

- At this time or in the beginning of the 12th grade, financial aid forms should be completed and eligibility for any scholarship or other aid through vocational rehabilitation (VR) should be researched. High school guidance counselors are valuable resources throughout this process and can assist with many of the forms and access to information.

Example Timeline:

9th Grade: Ensure the Course of Study includes all pre-requisites for college/ training programs. Refine interests for areas of study.

10th Grade: Take PSAT. Audit college courses. Explore potential colleges and training programs. Continue to refine focused area of study.

11th Grade: Continue to refine college search. Research the support services and accommodations offered in colleges. Take the SAT/ACT. Document needed accommodations for postsecondary education. Contact BVR.

11th or Early 12th Grade: Complete financial aid and scholarship applications. Continue to work with BVR. Meet with Disability Services offices at colleges of choice.

Course of Study

The transition plan should list the courses needed for college admission, a detailed timeline of when they are offered and when the student will take them.

Applying for College, Testing Information

The SAT Reasoning Test and the ACT are standardized tests for college admissions in the United States. The SAT is owned, published and developed by the College Board. The Educational Testing Service (ETS) administers the exam. The SAT tends to be more popular among colleges on the coasts, and the ACT to be more popular in the Midwest and the South. Some colleges require the ACT to be taken for

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college course placement, and a few schools do not accept the SAT at all (Wikipedia, 2008).

If a student requires accommodations to take the PSAT (practice SAT test), SAT or ACT, an eligibility form must be completed. (See the Services for Students with Disabilities websites for the College Board Test, the Educational Testing Service or ACT in the "Tools and Resources" section).

> Generally, eligibility requirements include: A disability that necessitates testing accommodations. Documentation on file at the student's school that supports the need for requested accommodations. Receipt and use of the requested accommodations for school-based tests.

Testing Accommodations in College / Postsecondary Programs

There are four major categories of testing accommodations:

- ▶ **Presentation** – large print; reader; Braille; Braille device for written responses; visual magnification; audio amplification; audiocassette; sign/oral presentations
- ▶ **Responding** – verbal/dictated to scribe; tape recorder; computer without grammar/cut-and-paste features; large block answer sheet)
- ▶ **Timing/scheduling** – frequent breaks; extended time; multiple days; specified time of day
- ▶ **Setting** – small-group setting; private room; special lighting/acoustics; adaptive/special furniture/tools; alternative test site (with proctor present); preferential seating

Retrieved March 25, 2008, from: http://www.collegeboard.com/ssd/student/eligible.html

Part-Time Student

For some students attending school part time and possibly working part time may allow them to take classes at a more comfortable pace.

Community College or Technical School

> Howard is taking two classes per semester his first year of college so that he can master study skills, develop a comfort level with campus life and work one day a week at a local art museum. He plans to pursue a museum studies degree in college.

Some students with ASD may want to start their college coursework at a community college and live at home to minimize the number of changes needed to function in a new environment. After two years at the community college and an associate's degree, they might transfer to a four-year degree program with a firmer grasp on what is needed to succeed.

> John attends a community college 10 minutes from his home. He uses public transportation or occasionally gets a ride from his parents or brothers. While visiting college campuses during high school, the thought of living on campus, attending classes and meeting new people made John very anxious. Attending the community college close to home decreased John's stress level and offered a gradual introduction to postsecondary education.

Campus-Based Transition Programs

These are relatively new programs that provide high school students with a campus-based work experience and may include opportunities to take a specially designed class on campus, audit a regular college class or participate in recreation activities with peers. Students can also enhance social and communication skills with age-appropriate peers. The high school may provide a teacher and aides on site while the college provides classroom space.

> Eight high school students with multiple disabilities worked two mornings per week in various departments across campus. Student career interests and goals drove job development. Melissa, who plans to pursue a career in law enforcement, worked in the parking and traffic office. Jerry, a student who loves basketball, worked at the student recreation center with other students who share his enthusiasm for sports. (Excerpted from Ohio APSE newsletter, Fall 2006)

BVR may assist with funding job coaches, and in some cases the Work Incentive Act may fund job coaches and wages for students. See the article Appendix E: "Campus Works" for more details on programs at Kent State, Bowling Green State, Ohio State and Columbus State Universities. Cuyahoga Community College also participates in a program with a local vocational education consortium.

Some colleges also offer programs in a small-group setting for young adults with ASD to discuss their social, living and vocational experiences. Peers and facilitators may assist with problem solving and role playing to practice new social skills.

Legislation

Students with disabilities leave the entitlement system in high school under IDEA (Individual with Disabilities Education Act) and enter an eligibility system in the college or university setting. IDEA, which only applies to students in pre-school through 12th grade, entitles a student with disabilities to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Once students with disabilities enter postsecondary institutions, they are covered by civil rights legislation (Office of Civil Rights); namely, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

> Students in institutions of postsecondary education are responsible for notifying institution staff of their disability should they need academic adjustments. High schools, in contrast, have an obligation to identify students within their jurisdiction who have a disability and who may be entitled to services. A student must provide documentation, upon request, that he or she has a disability, that is, an impairment that substantially limits a major life activity and that supports the need for an academic adjustment. The documentation should identify how a student's ability to function is limited as a result of her or his disability. The primary purpose of the documentation is to establish a disability in order to help the institution work …with the student to identify appropriate services. Academic adjustments …may include a reduced course load, extended time on tests and the provision of auxiliary aids and services. Auxiliary aids and services include note-takers, readers, recording devices, sign language interpreters, screen-readers, voice recognition and other adaptive software or hardware for computers, and other devices designed to ensure the participation of students with impaired sensory, manual or speaking skills in an institution's programs and activities. (*Transition of Students with Disabilities to Postsecondary Education: A Guide for High School Educators*, March 2007).

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Lisa is a young woman with Asperger Syndrome who attends college. While she is able to complete her academic coursework, she requires some accommodations. Lisa has difficulty blocking out even minor distractions during testing situations (such as paper shuffling, other students moving around the room, asking questions, etc.). She can become so distracted and anxious that she is unable to complete the test during the class period. Lisa also has great difficulty with the auditory processing and fine-motor skills required for note taking. These issues were documented in high school and supported by evaluations from her neurologist. Now, in college, Lisa is able to take her tests in a quiet room with extended time, if necessary. She records the class lectures and is given an outline of the material, which limits the amount of note taking she must do in class.

Many colleges have a disability services coordinator who can assist students with requests for academic adjustments and arrangements for note takers, tutoring or, if needed, personal aides. Some auxiliary aids may be provided by the college, but personal aide are the responsibility of the student. AHEAD is an organization of college disability service coordinators. For more information see their website in "Tools and Resources."

Self Determination

"Self-determination is the desire, ability, and practice of directing one's own life" (*411 on Disability Disclosure*).

Adults need to know their own preferences and abilities in order to make decisions and choices about how they will live. Students with ASD who are contemplating a new environment with new demands – such as college – can prepare themselves for a smoother transition by taking the time to think about how they study, live and socialize and whether they will need to make adjustments or accommodations to be successful in college. The Right Match is a checklist designed to assist in identifying an individual's personal work, living and social style and how that style "fits" with the potential postsecondary program. (See Appendix A "The Right Match"). Please note: This self-assessment can be done by students with ASD or collaboratively with family members or high school personnel as a preparation and planning activity.

Another self-determination activity is helping the student with ASD decide if and when and how much detail to disclose about his disability at the postsecondary institution. As noted in the previous legislative section, a student is only eligible for accommodations and supports from a postsecondary institution if he requests it and provides documentation of the disability. The booklet *411 Disability Disclosure,* may be downloaded from the link found in the "Tools and Resources" section and is a helpful source for making well-informed decisions.

Angelo plans to attend a university and major in music. Although he is very gifted in music and academics, he struggles greatly in the area of socialization and emotional regulation. Throughout high school, he received coaching in these areas by the educational team and his peers. Angelo believes that he will continue to need this coaching to be successful in college. He has decided to disclose that he has Asperger Syndrome to his professors and residence hall advisors. In addition, he will give some suggestions of how to best coach, prompt and remind him of appropriate behavior or during difficult social situations. He found this to be a wise choice as he made several "social mistakes" with his professors during the first week of classes. Because they were aware of his diagnosis, Angelo's professors were able to meet with him and help him understand a better way to handle similar situations in the future.

Characteristics of ASD – Sensory

Implications

Individuals with an ASD often have sensitivities to the sensory environment which result in responses and reactions that can be difficult for others to understand. These sensitivities can intensify in situations such as:

- ▶ Transitions to new environments or people
- ▶ Changes in schedules and routines
- ▶ When stressed due to college deadlines, illness, sleep disturbances or difficulties outside of school

When assessing a college environment, consider the following:

1. What do you know about the sensory issues for this individual? How do they affect school performance?

2. Are the following sensory triggers in the school environment or specific classrooms?
   - ▶ Noise or specific sounds
   - ▶ Bright or dim lighting
   - ▶ Smells/odors
   - ▶ Visual clutter
   - ▶ Lack of personal space

3. Can adaptations that could be made to the environment to reduce or eliminate the sensory challenges?

4. Could the individual benefit from calming or alerting activities to deal with the sensory issues that remain?

Strategies

1. Often effective strategies and environmental adaptations to address sensory issues have been identified in the high school IEP. Many of these strategies can be modified or adapted. Keep in mind, however, that the college setting is a new environment and may need to be assessed for sensory triggers that were not encountered in high school, such as different types of lighting, seating arrangements or auditory stimulation. "The Right Match" checklist in the "Tools and Resources" section may be helpful when considering sensory issues.

Characteristics of ASD – Sensory – Strategies (con't.)

2. The following are examples of typical college accommodations that can be requested or initiated by the student. Note: Some students with ASD will need practice and support to understand how, when and why to make these requests.
   i. Modify the college environment/schedule when possible. For example:
      a. "In lecture halls, seating can be important. Sitting at or close to the front, and sometimes in the center of the row, can make it easier to hear and understand a lecture. Some students find it easier to sit near the front but in an aisle seat, so that they have a bit more room to spread out and are less likely to be bumped" (http://www.teacch.com/college.html).
      b. A distraction-free environment may be necessary for studying and test taking. This may be as simple as adding file cabinets, room screens, curtains, or bookshelves.
      c. Avoid sitting near a student who uses heavy perfumes or colognes.
      d. Experiment with different types of lighting in the college dorm or when studying. Some students with ASD prefer natural lighting, some indirect lighting and some are fine with overhead lights.
      e. Frequent opportunities to engage in active movement may be calming. Walks between campus buildings are ideal for some students with ASD.

3. Sensory processing challenges and sensitivities often intensify in stressful situations, unfamiliar routines and with unfamiliar people. Some college programs that provide specific supports for students with ASD may be able to create predictability by developing and using visual strategies, such as pictures, video, social scripts, and clear explanations of what to expect, especially when changes are to occur.
   i. For example, some universities provide freshman students pictures of the main buildings on campus as part of their orientation. A student with ASD may find this type of visual support very helpful, although the photographs and descriptors may need to be adapted, expanded and individualized to the student's unique schedule. One adaptation might be to provide pictures of all the buildings the student will encounter along with a description of what to expect in each building. In addition, locating these same buildings on the campus map with the length of time that it takes to walk/drive from one building to the next can help in daily planning and help reduce anxiety.

Characteristics of ASD – Communication and Socialization

Implications

Individuals with ASD typically struggle to respond to and understand the social aspects of a situation. Without intervention and support, these challenges may result in poor communication and strained social relationships with professors and peers. Sometimes poor social and communication skills may result in further isolating the individual with ASD, making her unable to form friendships with peers.

In college, individuals may need more time to learn social skills or rules. They may exhibit difficulty with change in routines or developing a comfort level with new professors and students. Understanding who to go to with questions or to ask for help may not be natural or easily problem-solved. Knowing when to ask for help is also an area that needs to be taught, rather than assumed. The student with ASD may need explicit instructions on how to contact the disability services coordinator or another designee when problems arise.

Social skill training and instruction may be necessary for an individual with ASD to get along with peers and interact with teachers. Needed competencies may range from the very basic social skills expected of a young adult to the complex aspects of reading social cues and accurately interpreting another's perspective or point of view. This includes understanding the college culture, nonverbal body language and peer feelings. Social instruction may need to address these areas as well as expected behavior, such as appropriate eye contact and how to initiate, sustain and end a conversation. Individuals with ASD may make seemingly irrelevant comments or focus on their own special interest to the exclusion of other topics if they are not taught and cued by others.

When assessing the college environment, consider:
1. Will the individual's social skills and social understanding be a significant barrier to fitting in with peers?
2. Does the individual understand and is she able to follow the directions and instructions given by the professor?
3. Does the individual need directions in alternate or multiple formats – verbal, visual or demonstrations?
4. What types of social instruction, social supports, and social cueing does the individual require to successfully complete assignments, as well as engage in social interactions with fellow students and professors?

Characteristics of ASD – Communication and Socialization

Strategies

1. Students with ASD who have reached college age may have social supports in place from high school transition plans. Completing a self-assessment such as the "Right Match" (see link in "Tools and Resources") to assist in identifying areas of concern that should be addressed when planning for postsecondary education.

2. Some individuals with ASD have taken classes in psychology and communication to better understand and learn about social and communication skills. Individuals who have done so suggest auditing these courses since they may be more difficult and require more time. As mentioned earlier in the introductory section for postsecondary, some colleges offer small-group settings where individuals with ASD can discuss social issues and engage in problem solving and social skills practice with peers.

   Some of the strategies and interventions described below fall under the category of academic adjustment. Others may fall under the personal or social arena, and the individual with ASD may need the services of a personal coach to implement them.

3. Use a combination of verbal, visual and demonstration reinforces learning new tasks and skills. The skills that may be the most difficult for the individual to master are the social skills and social understanding. Strategies and supports that are commonly used and may be adapted for the college setting include:
   i. Visual/written scripts
   ii. Visual reminders of college rules or social norms in terms of what "to do" and the hidden curriculum
   iii. Subtle cues between the individual and a "coach" to remind the individual when he is too close, too loud, needs to respond, etc.
   iv. Priming – The "coach" gives reminders or reviews (including visual supports) with the individual immediately before entering the situation in which the skill is to be used (cafeteria, classroom, bathroom, etc.)
   v. Videos of self or others performing a task or using desired social skills
   vi. Immediate (or as soon as reasonable) reinforcement when the individual is performing or acting in the desired manner (reinforcement can be as simple as a verbal or gestural praise)

4. As appropriate, teach common social skills, such as initiating or responding to a request to engage in an activity.
   i. Can the individual with ASD be taught a script for this activity or engage in practice requests to establish predictability?
   ii. Video self-monitoring for practice interviews may also improve interview skills.
   iii. A peer mentor or other person on campus can provide helpful, direct (but respectful) feedback related to the appropriateness of the individual's actions and interactions in class and in collegiate social environments.

Characteristics of ASD – Communication and Socialization – Strategies (con't.)

5. Use clear verbal/visual description and/or demonstration/modeling of classroom activities, rules, breaks and expectations. This should be done prior to the activity and during class. Check for comprehension by observing the individual in practice, as well as by encouraging questions.

6. Students with ASD may have difficulty completing assignments that require speaking in front of a class or working as a team on a group project. The student may withdraw or, quite the opposite, struggle in these situations by taking over a group, not understanding the rules of shared group input or speaking for extensive periods of time on a subject of great interest.
   i. One way to accommodate a student who has trouble speaking in front of the class would be to allow him to do a PowerPoint presentation where he can use the slides as visual cues to assist with the verbal presentation. Another option might be a video presentation with accompanying narration.
   ii. When working on a team project, the student with ASD may need a clearly defined role and expectations in order to complete the assignment successfully.

7. Use email or a course website (with assignments and expectation described) to communicate clearly and concisely with the individual with ASD. This may allow him time to focus on and better understand the message.

8. Students with ASD benefit from a consistent, structured class environment. Provide the student with advance notice if change in activities or schedule will take place.

9. If the individual with ASD uses an AAC device, make sure the specific class vocabulary is programmed into the device. Also consider: Is there a low-tech alternative in case of a device failure? Is there someone in the college who understands how to facilitate the device or communication should breakdown occur?

Characteristics of ASD – Executive Function and Organization

Implications

Individuals with ASD may have great difficult with organization, attention and mental planning. This challenge may affect the individual's ability to quickly learn and to complete activities or assignments or tasks, even in an area where he has great talent.

These challenges may appear as:

▶ Appearing overwhelmed by a relatively simple task
▶ Having difficulty getting started or knowing what to do when finished, even with a routine task
▶ Becoming easily distracted and having difficulty returning focus or re-engaging with the task or activity
▶ Shutting down or becoming anxious with a change in the normal activity or class routine
▶ Viewing a simple problem-solving situation as insurmountable
▶ Having a messy or disorganized desk area, even if the individual appears to desire routine and predictability

The individual may not be able to easily and consistently mentally organize and problem-solve. Therefore, environmental organization and strategies may be necessary throughout the person's life in order for him to demonstrate and function at his full potential.

Assessing the environment and considering potential environmental modifications and supports should be part of the planning for postsecondary education to determine if the situation will likely be a "good fit."

Strategies

1. Help the student with ASD develop clear, systematic organizational strategies for academic work and probably for aspects of daily living. Calendars, checklists and other visual strategies for organizing activities should be developed with the student (http://www.teacch.com/college.html).

2. When necessary, provide extra time to complete tests and assignments because of organizational difficulties in beginning new tasks. It may also be helpful to use visual supports to establish routines.

Characteristics of ASD – Executive Function and Organization – Strategies (con't.)

i. Use sample models for assignments and projects to provide a visual support for what is expected and how to proceed

ii. Provide step-by-step checklists for specific class assignments. A tutor may also assist with establishing study routines and tips for organizing papers

iii. Include template/diagram for organization of work area (e.g., photograph of desk organization)

iv. Provide templates to assist the person in completing a written task by offering a visual "roadmap" throughout the task (some templates provide an example of each step of the task, like outlines or rubrics)

3. All organizational supports should assist the person in understanding:
   ▸ The assignment to be completed
   ▸ Where it is to be completed
   ▸ How much is to be completed
   ▸ Where to begin and end tasks
   ▸ The time allotted for completing the assignment
   ▸ What to do when the assignment is finished

4. Provide maps of the school area that are labeled with bathrooms, lunch areas, offices, etc.

5. Develop "to do" lists or sticky note reminders.

6. Provide low-tech auditory cuing devices, such as voice or time cue, to help the individual complete activities in a timely manner.

7. Post and review calendars or timelines of deadlines and important tasks. Assisting the individual in breaking down a long-term task/assignment into planned steps over the course of several days/weeks/months can be very helpful. Use of online email reminders may also be helpful.

8. Introduce and continue to teach environmental strategies. Extensive cueing/prompting may be necessary in the early stages of using these tools. Once an individual becomes competent in the use of the tools, the extensive prompts can be limited or only used in difficult or unpredictable circumstances.

Tools and Resources

Services for Students with Disabilities, College Board Test (SAT)
  http://www.collegeboard.com/ssd/student/index.html
  Accommodation information for the SAT College Board test.

Test Takers with Disabilities, Educational Testing Service (SAT) http://ets.org.
  Resources and information about accommodations for the SAT College Board test.

Services for Students with Disabilities, ACT test
  http://www.act.org/aap/disab/index.html
  This site describes the process for requesting accommodations for the ACT test.

College Planning for the High-Functioning Student with Autism
  http://www.professorsadvice.com/
  This article is written by a college professor with autism and describes the challenges he faced during college.

Transition of Students with Disabilities to Postsecondary Education: A Guide for High School Educators http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transitionguide.html
  This is a guide by the Office of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education. It is written for educators to help prepare students with disabilities for post secondary education as students move from an entitlement system to an eligibility system.

The Right Match http://www.ocali.org
  A checklist designed to assist in identifying one's personal work, living and social style and how your it "fits" with the potential postsecondary program. See Appendix A "The Right Match."

Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities
  http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html
  This is another guide written by the Office of Civil Rights for high school students. The guide prepares students with disabilities for college by informing them of their legal rights and responsibilities and the need to disclose their disability to obtain accommodations in the postsecondary setting.

Asperger Syndrome: Transition to College and Work (2001)
  Coulter Video (available through the OCALI Lending Library. Register for a free account at www.ocali.org).

Understanding Asperger Syndrome: A Professor's Guide
  http://www.researchautism.org/resources/AspergerDVDSeries.asp
  This is a 15 minute DVD that gives an introduction to life as a college student with Asperger Syndrome. It highlights accommodations and the importance of students with ASD knowing how and what accommodations to request.

College Program for Students with Asperger Syndrome at Marshall University
  http://www.marshall.edu/coe/atc/modelcollege.htm
  Read about the program, and then click on "WSAZ cover story" to view a brief video.

Fast Facts for Faculty
  http://ada.osu.edu/resources/fastfacts/index.htm
  A series of information briefs for college instructors about educating students with disabilities. Topics include "Coordinating Internships for Students with Disabilities," "Teaching Students with Sensory Impairments" and "Universal Design for Learning."

FAME (Faculty and Administrator Modules in Higher Education)
  http://www.oln.org/ILT/ada/Fame/
  An information resource to improve the quality of education for students with disabilities.

FacultyWare
   http://www.facultyware.uconn.edu/home.cfm
   A product of the Universal Design for Instruction project at the University of Connecticut.

The Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP)
   http://www.dol.gov/odep/programs/workforc.htm
   A resource for businesses nationwide to identify qualified temporary and permanent employees from a variety of fields. Applicants are highly motivated postsecondary students and recent graduates eager to prove their abilities in the workforce.

HEATH National Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities
   http://www.heath.gwu.edu/
   Provides online, web-based resources on postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities.

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth
   http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/411.html
   The *411 on Disability Disclosure Workbook*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership.

Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) http://www.ahead.org
   AHEAD is a professional association that serves students with disabilities in higher education. This site provides resources and professional development opportunities to ensure full participation of individuals with disabilities on college campuses.

   Williams, G., & Palmer A.(2006). *Preparing for college: Tips for students with HFA/Asperger syndrome.* Retrieved August 25, 2008 from http://www.teacch.com/college.html

Finding Scholarships http://www.cspohio.org/csp/
   Publication of the Cleveland Scholarship Program.

Agency Collaboration and Funding Related to Postsecondary Education

   Collaboration between school transition services and staff and postsecondary institutions and other agencies can ensure a better transition to college. BVR may provide information and funding for college costs and can be in included in IEP transition planning when needed. Most agencies and programs that cover costs utilize funding from the federal government and agency-generated dollars. Individuals and/or families are also asked to contribute financially to the service plan based on their resources.

Rehabilitation Services Commission/ Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation

Services
   Rehabilitation Services Commission (RSC) is the state agency that provides vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to help people with disabilities become employed and independent. Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR) is the arm of RSC that assists people who have physical, mental and emotional disabilities by providing vocational rehabilitation and other services. Students with ASD should apply for BVR services from a local BVR office. Contact information for local offices may be found on the BVR/RSC website http://www.rsc.ohio.gov/VR_Services/BVR/bvr.asp

Eligibility
   BVR eligibility requirements must be met in order to access funds for vocational training and job placement/job coaching services. Transition teams should facilitate the eligibility process for the high school student by explaining the requirements and providing potential evidence of eligibility.

Documentation and Advocacy
   Parents and team members may need to advocate for the young adult with ASD as agency personnel may be not be well informed regarding ASD and implications for employment.

OCALI
The Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence

High-Functioning ASD

The high-functioning individual with ASD may appear to be capable of independently locating, obtaining and maintaining employment when assessing the individual's skills and talents. A brief interview may not result in obvious concerns and the counselor may not easily identify the need for employment assistance. The parent or support network should provide BVR with documented information related to the individual's diagnosis, challenges and the implications of these challenges (Section 2: "Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment" addresses many of these implications).

"Classical" Autism

On the other hand, the BVR counselor may view some individuals with ASD as requiring too much assistance based on a brief encounter that does not highlight the individual's strengths. Once again, documentation that highlights skills and talents and the "right fit" can assist the counselor in determining eligibility.

Ben, identified with Asperger Syndrome, met with a BVR counselor on several occasions in various locations. This allowed the counselor to observe the difficulties Ben had moving from familiar to unfamiliar environments. Ben also provided the counselor with medical documentation of his diagnosis, a teacher checklist and comments related to difficulties encountered in the classroom and documentation from a therapist regarding the anxiety Ben develops in new situations. The result of this process allowed BVR to find Ben eligible for service and helped identify the necessary services.

Scholarships

Individuals with ASD should also work closely with high school guidance counselors to apply for financial aid, including information about scholarships.

Several state autism societies or foundations offer scholarships both for students with ASD and for students pursuing studies in the field of ASD.

For example, the CVS Pharmacy Charitable Trust provides five scholarships of $1,000 each per year to allow students with ASD to attend the college or trade school of their choice. The Autism Society of America (ASA) administers the program.

The Organization for Autism Research (OAR) administers the Schwallie Family Scholarship, established in 2007 to support qualified individuals with autism or Asperger Syndrome in the United States pursuing postsecondary education. Beginning with the spring semester 2008, OAR presents one award of $3,000 in each of three categories:

1. Four-year undergraduate college or university
2. Two-year undergraduate college
3. Trade, technical or vocational school

Fred, a student with classical autism, required extensive documentation and observations in familiar settings in order for the BVR counselor to make an accurate assessment of Fred's skills and talents. An initial brief assessment in the career center was a failure due to Ben's lack of familiarity with the environment, staff and materials used for the assessment. Using a different means of assessment, the BVR counselor was able to open Ben's case and focus on the appropriate supports, services and environments.

These will be one-time awards for any recipient. To download an application visit: http://www.researchautism.org/news/otherevents/scholarship.asp

School guidance counselors usually have access to scholarship databases and can search based on specific criteria. Check with your local community organizations to find out about resources. The Cleveland Scholarship Program publishes a free two-page handout, *Finding Scholarships,* that includes good tips and lists web resources. It is available for download at http://www.cspohio.org/csp/

Activities or Interventions to Facilitate Transition to Postsecondary Institution

College Fairs – high school guidance departments often invite representatives from colleges and, if possible, disability service coordinators to meet with families and students in the junior or early senior year. This can be an opportunity for students to become more familiar with a particular university. Students can be prepared ahead of time by deciding who they want to talk with and writing questions for representatives.

Campus Visits – provide students with ASD a chance to familiarize themselves with the college campus setting and what to expect. Students who choose to disclose their disability may want to talk with a disability services coordinator to discuss accommodations. Students may also want to see how college classrooms differ from the high school setting and what a dorm room is like to decide what accommodations and supports may be necessary for them to function successfully.

Sarah was interested in three colleges and applied to each. In addition, she visited each campus while classes where in session to get a better idea of what she would encounter the next year. Sarah sat in on a typical freshman class, visited the dorms and walked the campus between the student center and the education buildings. She also discussed her accommodation needs with the disability services coordinator on each campus. Sarah quickly narrowed her choices to two colleges when she realized that she was not comfortable with the class and campus size of one of the schools. She also found the professors of that college to be somewhat less supportive than those on the other two campuses. Without a pre-visit, Sarah would not have been aware of these issues.

College Course Work During the Summer – this is another opportunity for the high school student to experience college life in a limited and less intense way and to begin thinking about needed supports.

Career Development Activities – part-time, summer work, internship and volunteer experiences are critical foundations for successful transition to employment and adulthood. Organized group activities such as campus clubs, hobbies and community organizations may also help students with ASD begin to solidify their strengths and interests that can be linked to future work opportunities.

Most students with disabilities do not have the same after-school and summer opportunities to explore the working world as their typically developing peer group. Students with ASD have some of the fewest opportunities. Transition teams should explore community resources for paid and volunteer experiences both during and after school hours.

OCALI
The Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence

Self-Advocacy/Self-Determination – opportunities for the student with ASD to make choices and decisions about living arrangements, budgeting for personal expenses and making purchases, cooking meals and requesting accommodations all contribute to independence and a successful transition to adulthood.

Summary

Be Prepared Academically

Students must plan their course of study in high school to include the foundation coursework and knowledge needed for understanding concepts and skills presented at the college level. The better a student with ASD is prepared academically by taking all the prerequisite and advanced (if appropriate) coursework in high school, the less difficulty she will experience in college. "Many students with Asperger's/high functioning autism will do best in courses that draw on factual memory and/or visual perceptual skills. Courses that require abstract verbal reasoning, flexible problem solving, extensive writing, or social reasoning are often challenging" (Williams & Palmer, 2004).

Know Your Skills and Preferences

Choosing a college based on personal preferences and environmental factors may be more important for students with ASD than the academic reputation of the school. For example, some students function better on a smaller college campus where it is easier to navigate the campus, engage in social/recreational activities and form friendships. Some students may have difficulty living in a college dorm the first year or two of college, but after they have adjusted to college classes and had some preparatory experience they may be ready to tackle independent living in a dorm.

Get Help with Organization and Study Skills

In a college environment there is no one to check if you have completed assignments or turned them in on time. Therefore, it is important consider questions such as the following: Can the student with ASD manage her time effectively and keep assignments and papers organized? Can the student break down a large project or paper into the small steps and develop a plan for completing each section? Does the student know how to study for a test and take notes during

class? Making these skills part of the high school transition services will ensure a smoother transition to the postsecondary environment. Some colleges offer classes in study skills and note taking.

Obtain as Much Real Work Experience as Possible with Internships, Volunteer and Summer Jobs in Your Chosen Field

The more work experience a student has in the chosen field, the better his chances of obtaining employment after graduation. Many students with ASD graduate without any practical experience in their field and have great difficulty obtaining employment.

Explore a Range of Postsecondary Options, Career Technical Schools, Part-Time Student, Community College, Online or Distance Learning, Alternate Campus-Based Transition Programs
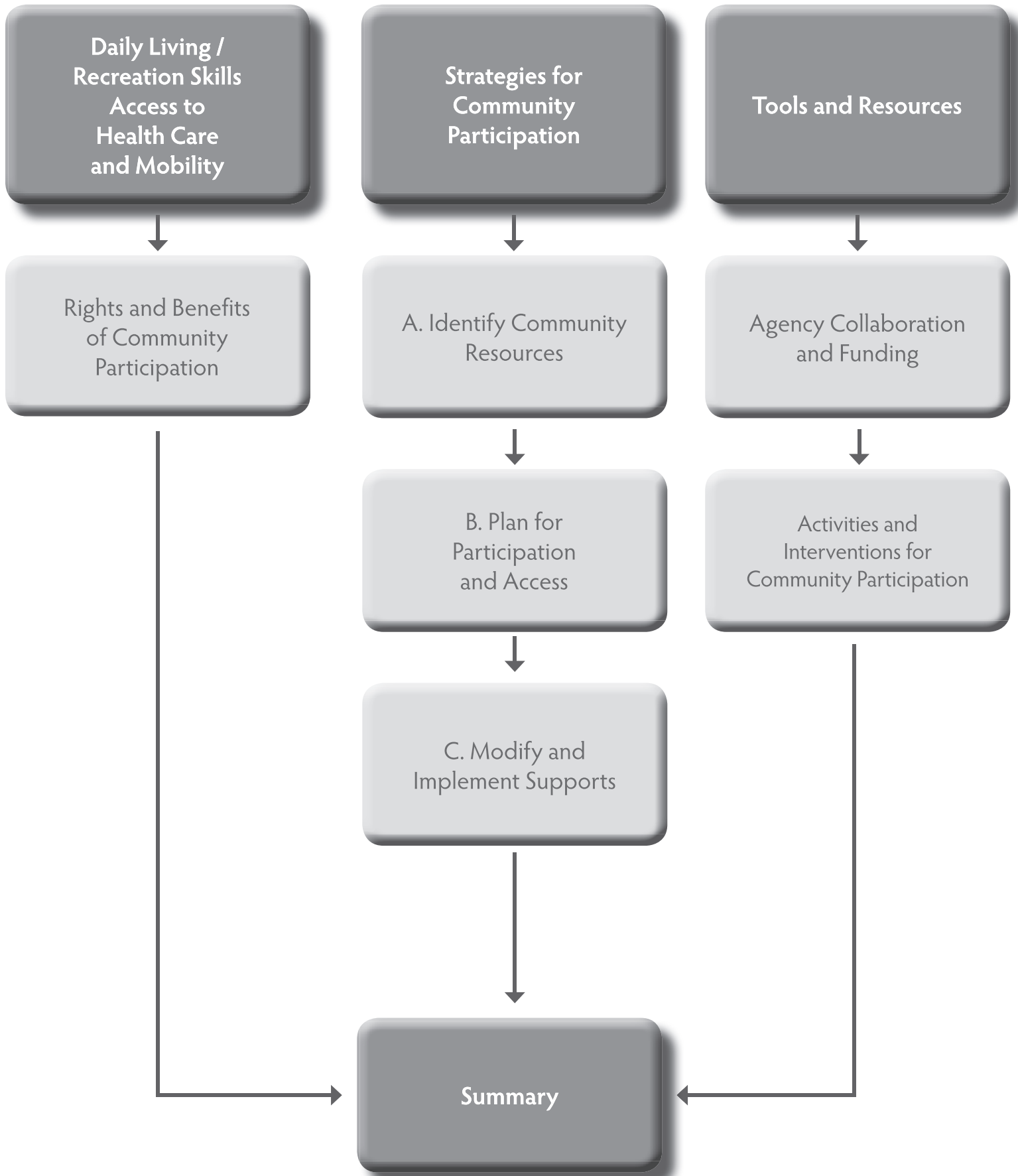
Students with ASD may need to transition gradually into a college environment. Taking courses part time may be less overwhelming than starting with a full-time schedule. The local community college may provide a less stressful environment and more supports. If the student has had opportunities to participate in transition activities on campus during high school, it may be more familiar and comfortable than a totally new environment.

Know Your Legal Rights and Responsibilities for Requesting Academic Adjustments and How to Ask for Them

Accommodations at the postsecondary level are provided only when a student discloses her disability and requests accommodations.

Self-Identity to Request Academic Adjustments

Accommodations that were included in the IEP may carry over to the postsecondary environment. Learning to disclose disability-related needs effectively and developing an accommodation plan are extremely valuable skills. "Effective disclosure skills require that you share information regarding your disability-related needs and also provide creative, practical suggestions for accommodations" (see "National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth" in "Tools and Resources." Unit 6 of *The 411 on Disability Disclosure* provides more details on post secondary disclosure).

Daily Living /
Recreation Skills
Access to
Health Care
and Mobility

Strategies for
Community
Participation

Tools and Resources

Rights and Benefits
of Community
Participation

A. Identify Community
Resources

Agency Collaboration
and Funding

B. Plan for
Participation
and Access

Activities and
Interventions for
Community Participation

C. Modify and
Implement Supports

Summary

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Introduction

"Play is work, and work is play, is a saying common to those providing services to people with autism. The more organized, predictable, structured and consistent nature of work is often a more comfortable environment for people with autism. This structure helps a person with autism understand the environment better, understand what is expected, understand when the task will be completed, and understand what will happen next. When these understandings occur, there are fewer issues with behaviors, and the person with autism completes the required task better. The spontaneous, less-structured nature of play and recreation is much harder for people with autism to comprehend and follow" (*Recreation Services for People with Autism,* UNC Project Autism Guidelines Manual).

"WORK is PLAY and PLAY is WORK!"

Community participation includes daily living skills, recreation and leisure activities along with access to transportation and health care. Instruction of daily living skills, money management, mobility (i.e., transportation skills and navigating the community) and even sexuality can be included in the IEP transition goals and incorporated into home-based training and activities by the family.

> Many of the leisure and recreation activities that students engage in during high school are school-based. Students with ASD may need transition planning and supports to facilitate school-based recreation and, after graduation, for community-based participation and recreation activities.

Recreation and leisure activities are key components of community participation, but daily living skills such as cooking, hygiene, travel/mobility, money management and health care are also necessary for successful everyday functioning. Instruction in sexuality may also be an important consideration for the individual with ASD and his family.

Another developing area of recreation is the use of technology for social skill development and communication. This is evident in the increasing popularity of blogs, emails, chat rooms, virtual environments, social networking and online games. Brigadoon, an island in the online virtual environment Second Life, is a safe place for individuals with ASD to practice and develop social skills. (see "Tools and Resources" for links to research and information about ASD and virtual environments).

The biggest challenge for individuals with ASD in community participation is often their lack of social competence and communication skills. Lack of knowledge and understanding about ASD is also a challenge for recreation, health care and mobility providers when including individuals with ASD in activities and services. However, civil rights legislation such as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disability Act guarantees individuals with disabilities equal access to community recreation activities, organizations and transportation services.

> Riley, a high school junior with ASD, participates in a modified academic curriculum and is making adequate progress in these subjects. However, Riley struggles to participate in social or community activities. His transition team decided Riley should participate in a life skills class with attention to the social components of the curriculum. During his study hall, Riley receives additional opportunities to practice these skills in the office and other areas of the school. Additionally, Riley's transition team arranged for him to join the Key Club, where he will have multiple opportunities to explore community-based activities and volunteerism. Initially, a staff person was assigned to attend the meetings and activities with Riley; however, over the course of time, several peers became mentors and the formal supports were greatly reduced.

The benefits from participating in community recreation and leisure activities are the same for all of us. Such activities allow us to connect with others socially, pursue our interests, develop new skills and, in the case of physical sports, derive the health benefits resulting from regular exercise. All of these benefits contribute to a better quality of life and the development of self-determination for the individual with ASD.

Strategies for Community Participation Overview

One approach to encouraging community participation for individuals with ASD is a three-step process that first looks at identifying recreation opportunities in the community by using a resource mapping strategy. Second, after identifying these resources, plan for participation or access by the individual with ASD. This might be as simple as determining the skills required and doing an environmental inventory to identify needed supports or modifications to ensure a successful experience. If needed, arrange for a mentor or aide to instruct the individual with ASD in performing the activity prior to joining the organized

> Joan, a high school senior with Asperger Syndrome and a mood disorder, was prescribed mood-stabilizing medications. The side effects of these medications caused significant weight gain, which added additional challenges to both the social and recreational aspects of her life. Joan resisted gym classes at school, often either refusing or making an excuse not to participate. However, Joan's transition team discovered that she enjoyed the water and was an adequate swimmer. A little research found that the local fitness center had several "swim clubs" where individuals met at the same time, swam together and sometimes enjoyed a healthy snack following the exercise. Her teacher introduced Joan to this group, and Joan soon became a regular member. This activity allowed Joan to address her weight issue, provided a regular community activity and encouraged socialization.

word of mouth and email notices. Some communities and schools sponsor annual recreation and resource fairs for parents and publish a directory of organizations with specialized or adapted activities for individuals with ASD.

If such opportunities do not exist in a community, one way to approach this identification process is through a strategy known as "mapping." *Mapping* facilitates the identification, collaboration and leveraging of community resources to meet the needs of individuals with ASD. Mapping is a project by an advocacy group or other organization to identify all community recreation opportunities and is used as a basis for matching the interests of individuals with ASD.

> "Community Mapping" is a process that facilitates the identification, collaboration and leveraging of community resources to meet the needs of an individual or group of individuals. The power of mapping is in the focus on what exists in a community and in building partnerships.

activity and continuing afterward as needed. Third, make modifications and implement social, communication, sensory or visual supports necessary for participation. The mentor or aide may be a necessary part of this step on a short- or long-term basis depending on the needs of the individual with ASD.

Identify Community Resources for Recreation and Leisure Activities

Once out of the structure of school how can one find out about organization and activities that meet the recreation/leisure interests of individuals with ASD? One way is to become familiar with the opportunities offered by community recreation programs, regional and county park systems and local youth groups and organizations. Talking with other parents and organizations may also yield an amazing number of activities. In many communities, parent-initiated recreation activities are organized and maintained by one parent or a small group, and access is through

The full power of mapping focuses on what is already present in the community, building partnerships with these organizations and, if needed, doing so across programmatic and geographic boundaries. For example, an adult recreation assessment done by the local Autism Society of America (ASA) chapter determines that several individuals with ASD are interested in astronomy as a leisure activity. There is only one astronomy club sponsored by the planetarium at the natural history museum. After an ASA representative meets with the chair and members of this club, the members agree to include the individuals with ASD in the club and its activities. However, they have no experience with or knowledge about ASD. The ASA representative through parent contacts finds a provider who will prepare the individuals with ASD to participate in the activity. The provider also helps to educate the members of the club, create and implement the necessary social and visual supports and act as a mentor during the astronomy club activities. Since these individuals are eligible for MR/DD services, the provider is paid through waiver and respite funds.

In this example the power of community resource mapping went beyond simply identifying an activity by creatively leveraging several resources in a unique collaboration that met the needs of the individuals with ASD.

For more information on community resource mapping, see the "Tools and Resources" section.

Plan for Participation and Access

Gathering information about the individual's social, communication and sensory needs and interests is a first step for thinking about a good match for community recreation activities. Participation in school or community-based activities may need to be facilitated. An assessment of the skills required to participate and the environmental and sensory demands of the activity is needed in order to plan supports and modifications. Some community recreation programs offer adapted recreation programs for individuals with disabilities. These may be a good starting point for participation in a typical community recreation program.

Coyne and Fullerton (2004) tell about a parent whose son with ASD first participated in an adapted Little League program where there were no scores, everyone was allowed to run the bases and the games and practices were shorter. This was a low-stress introduction to the game for him and a good preparation for his participation in the "regular" Little League team the next year. In their book *Supporting Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Recreation,* Coyne and Fullerton also recommend building on the strengths and interests of the individual with ASD when choosing recreation activities. For example, an individual with ASD who is very concrete and literal is a valued member of a Game Club because of his ability to quickly learn the many rules of different games. Another individual with ASD who likes to take objects apart is a thorough and attentive member of the Computer Recycling Group which needs donated computers disassembled for their parts.

Access to typical community recreation activities or organizations may require a personal contact and meetings to provide awareness and education about characteristics of ASD and how they impact an individual. An individual with ASD may scream if touched in a physical activity because of heightened sensitivity to touch. Other participants need to understand the reason for this behavior and the necessary modifications to be made. Additional considerations include a plan for a gradual introduction to the activity with individualized skill instruction prior to participation, a plan for the development of needed supports and the use of an aide or mentor.

Dominic, a young man with autism, had an amazing ability to spell and his visual memory allowed him to remember even the most unusual words. In his community he became a sought-after team member for games such as *Scrabble.* Others began to understand how to communicate and interact with Dominic by spending time with him and respecting his gaming abilities.

Mary Ann, a teenager with ASD, was a talented runner. She participated in track practices in high school, but the stress of the competitive track meets was overwhelming to her and prevented her from competing. The other girls, however, continued to welcome and encourage Mary Ann to practice and improve her personal time. During her senior year of high school, Mary Ann was introduced to a community running club so that she could continue her exercise routines and also engage in a social activity. The members of the running club were provided basic tips to help reduce Mary Ann's stress and enhance her success in the activity. Suggestions, such as allowing her ample space to run and providing her a running partner that she could follow, were simple, yet important, interventions.

Characteristics of ASD – Socialization

Make Modifications and Implement Needed Supports

Some of the strategies that have been mentioned in the other sections can be easily adapted for use in recreation settings. Examples are included below, but please see Section 4: "Employment" and Section 7: "Residential" for more details.

Implications

Individuals with ASD are challenged to understand changing social norms from situation to situation. This unwritten and untaught social information is often referred to as the "hidden curriculum." A lack of understanding of this social information, social interactions and social expectations may cause the individual to act or react in an unusual manner that is difficult for others to understand. This can be especially stressful and embarrassing for the individual with ASD when in the community where he may encounter people with little experience with ASD.

Strategies

Prepare the individual for the social situation that she will experience in the community. Provide information on what to expect from others and what others will expect from her. Give specific information on what will occur in order to increase the predictability of the situation.
Strategies to assist include:
- Mini schedules, Social Stories™, visual prompts and cues to clarify routines and expectations
- Other visual representations such as diagrams and charts or posted rules to establish routines
- Visual prompts and cues
- Role play
- Five-Point Scale

These strategies should be used consistently and predictably so the individual becomes proficient in the use of the supports. Other visual representations such as diagrams and charts or posted rules may help establish routines. Additionally, when a social experience or activity becomes a regular part of the individual's life, consider providing others in the situation with information about how best to interact with the person with ASD. Help them to understand that they may wish to pace their language, limit questions, allow for personal space, give opportunity for the individual to observe prior to becoming involved, etc. Some individuals with ASD may also need accommodations, such as limiting wait time, providing more choices and modification of rules.

Characteristics of ASD – Communication

Implications

An individual with ASD may be nonverbal or have limited verbal abilities. In new or stressful situations, communication abilities may diminish or shut down completely. In addition, the individual who is verbal may have great difficulty with auditory processing. This person may appear to understand as he can repeat or "echo" a direction or information, but may not have processed the meaning of the words.

Many people with ASD require visual rather than auditory information to understand. Auditory processing problems become more significant in unfamiliar situations. These issues may result in confusion, frustration and even aggressive behavior.

Strategies

▶ Teach the words or vocabulary for a specific situation. In the community or in a recreational activity, new concepts and language may be used.

▶ Use the communication system the individual typically uses in other settings with appropriate vocabulary for the recreational setting.

▶ If the individual has difficulty making decisions or choices, use a visual choice board (words and/or pictures) even for the communicator that is verbal.

▶ Use concrete language and fewer words. Pace language, directions and instructions.

▶ Allow up to 10 seconds of processing time when giving directions or instructions.

▶ Provide substitute communication to replace undesired behaviors. For example, if a person is pushing and shoving people in order to get out of a crowded area, teach or provide a means for her to request to leave or to locate a larger personal space area. If the individual would like to interact with others, but is using inappropriate language or behaviors, provide words or other forms of communication that will allow her to request attention or to have a conversation.

Characteristics of ASD – Executive Function

Implications

Individuals with ASD often have difficulties with organization or executive function. These issues can affect the ability to attend, monitor impulsivity or organize thoughts. These challenges may result in being unable to easily learn how to begin tasks, sequence steps or complete an activity. When an individual does not feel competent in these areas, he may avoid trying new recreational or social activities.

Strategies

- ▶ Use a visual schedule and/or color-code equipment.

- ▶ Provide step-by-step sequences to complete an activity, often in a visual format.

- ▶ Use templates and completed models to assist in understanding instructions.

- ▶ Create and use routines that become predictable and allow the person to participate. Teach new routines gradually and systematically.

- ▶ Allow the individual to observe, sometimes for an extended period of time, prior to participating.

- ▶ Video tape activities and routines that the individual can "study" to become primed for the activity.

- ▶ Use templates and completed models to assist the individual understand instructions.

Characteristics of ASD – Sensory Processing

Implications

Sensory processing challenges can be a barrier to community participation. The individual with ASD may find some of the activities or environments overwhelming or even painful when she has little control to change them. The auditory and visual environment may be intense and confusing. The pace of activities can be stressful. Space issues, such as crowded theaters, malls, and sporting events, can be intolerable. Even when the conditions are not uncomfortable, the amount and complexity of the sensory environment may require great effort to understand. Individuals with ASD may be unable to process the complex information and may shut down (not respond) or experience behavior escalations due to the sensory environment.

Strategies

▶ Search for community environments that match the sensory needs of the individual. At times, the scheduling of community activities is as important as the activities themselves. For example, choosing to see a movie several days after its release may be a better choice than battling the crowds on opening night. Similarly, avoiding "two for one" nights at restaurants or arranging a lunch date for 11:00 a.m. instead of noon may be a good strategy for addressing the sensory needs of the individual.

▶ Change/modify/eliminate the sensory triggers in the environment when possible such as loud noises or flashing lights. Auditory stimulation and personal space issues are frequently cited as areas of concern.

▶ Screen out loud noise and bright lights with earplugs or sunglasses. Allow the use of iPods or CD players. Consider turning some lights off or using indirect lighting

▶ Allow the person to take frequent breaks from an event. Often, as the anxiety is reduced, the person will choose to stay longer, knowing that he can move out of the difficult area, if needed.

▶ Use timers, clocks or reliable visual routines to assist the individual in understanding how long an activity will last and what will happen next (start a new activity, go home, etc.).

▶ When possible, teach relaxation/calming or self-regulatory strategies that can help the individual cope with difficult situations.

▶ Be willing to search for alternative activities as some sensory experiences cannot be modified enough to truly allow the individual to enjoy and engage in the experience.

Recreation providers need encouragement and support for looking beyond the behavior when including individuals with ASD in recreation. They may benefit from access to an ASD consultant, especially if a regular aide or mentor is not assisting the individual with ASD. Such a consultant may be able to evaluate a problem situation or behavior and make recommendations. If the environment or other participants change, new modifications might be necessary.

Tools and Resources

Coyne, P., & Fullerton, A. (2004). *Supporting individuals with autism spectrum in recreation.* Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publishing.

Essential Tools: Community Resource Mapping
http://www.ncset.org/publications/essentialtools/mapping
A 52-page publication on implementing the four-step process of community mapping.

UNC (University of North Carolina) Project Autism Guidelines Manual: Recreation Services for People with Autism
http://www.unc.edu/depts/recreate/crds/autism/table.html
Lists information about conducting an assessment for recreation and teaching the skills needed for both the activity and social participation.

Autistic Self-Advocacy Network (ASAN)
http://www.autisticadvocacy.org/modules/smartsection/category.php?categoryid=3
A non-profit organization run by individuals on the spectrum. ASAN is starting a project to provide mentors to assist in developing social support.

Toon Doo
http://www.toondoo.com
A free online comic strip creator. Comic strips can be used as graphic representations for Social Stories™ and as a way for individuals with ASD to write about their experiences as a leisure activity, as a hobby or interest. Type "social stories" in the search box to see examples of several social stories.

Wrong Planet
http://www.wrongplanet.net/
A web community designed for individuals (and parents) with Asperger Syndrome, autism, ADHD, and other PDDs (Pervasive Developmental Disorders).

Grasp
http://www.grasp.org/
A support group network with education and information clearinghouse.

Second Life
http://www.secondlife.com
A 3D virtual world where users can socialize, connect and create through voice and text chat.

Second Life and ASD
http://www.slnn.com/index.php?SCREEN=article&about=aspergers-syndrome-brigadoon
http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7012645/print/1/displaymode/1098/
Two articles that explain how Brigadoon, an island in the virtual world of *Second Life,* provides opportunities for individuals with ASD to practice social skills.

Agency Collaboration and Funding Related to Community Participation

Community organizations can partner with autism advocacy groups to educate recreation, health care and mobility providers about the characteristics of individuals with ASD and the types of support they need to participate in programming.

In some cases when an individual with ASD has unique interests and may not know how to connect with others who have similar interests, agencies may act as advocates to help identify and access community resources and also design and implement supports for successful participation.

Some advocacy groups, community organizations or MR/DD agencies may have funding to pay mentors, aides or coaches to allow an individual with ASD to be included in the activity.

Activities or Interventions to Facilitate Successful Community Participation

Including recreation and daily living skills instruction along with travel training in IEP transition services will help individuals with ASD and their families begin to think about what skills and supports they need for successful post- school community participation. Developing these skills and interests is also a part of the self-determination process, which helps with making choices and decisions that impact quality of life.

Schools and community organizations can host resource fairs and publish directories of available recreation programs. Community organizations can provide parents opportunities to network and find out about informal recreation activities that have been developed by other parents.

Faith-based activities are also often an option in the community. Many churches, synagogues and other faith-based groups provide both specific activities or individualized supports for individuals with disabilities, including those with ASD. In many cases the individual does not have to be a member of the group or be of the same faith to access these activities.

Summary

Individuals with ASD Often Need Supports for Community Activities

Students and adults with ASD often have social and communication challenges that require ongoing supports and services to engage in community activities. With access to an appropriate structure and supports, individuals with ASD can develop the skills necessary to participate and enjoy recreational interests.

Scott, a young man with ASD, lived in a town with an active Jewish community. The local synagogue hosted a weekly social night for young people that included movies, video games, board games, music and snacks. When Scott's family inquired about his possible participation, he was welcomed to see if he would like to join on a weekly basis. Scott's older brother attended for several weeks with Scott, and later a paid support person accompanied him as a facilitator. Eventually, several of the peers became comfortable with Scott to the point that the paid support was only necessary for short periods of time.

Wide Range of Community Skills and Activities

Community participation encompasses a wide range of skills and abilities, such as daily living skills, recreation and access to medical care and transportation.

The Law Does Not Allow Exclusion of Individuals with ASD in Community Settings

"Schools, YMCAs, parks and recreation departments, and other organizations that provide recreation programs can not exclude potential program participants from services, programs or activities on the basis of disability" (Coyne & Fullerton, 2004 p. 11).

Funding Coaches or Mentors for Activities

Respite funds or waivers from MR/DD may be considered as a way to pay for ongoing supports needed to participate in community recreation for eligible individuals

The Best Program Meets the Needs of the Individual with ASD

Regular recreation programs are not necessarily better than adapted recreation programs. Choose the program that best meets the needs of the individual with ASD.

Technology Provides Recreation Opportunities

With adult supervision, technology and social networking sites may provide social interaction and recreation opportunities for some individuals with ASD.

Creative Planning

Creativity is often key to developing opportunities that match the interests of the individual with ASD.
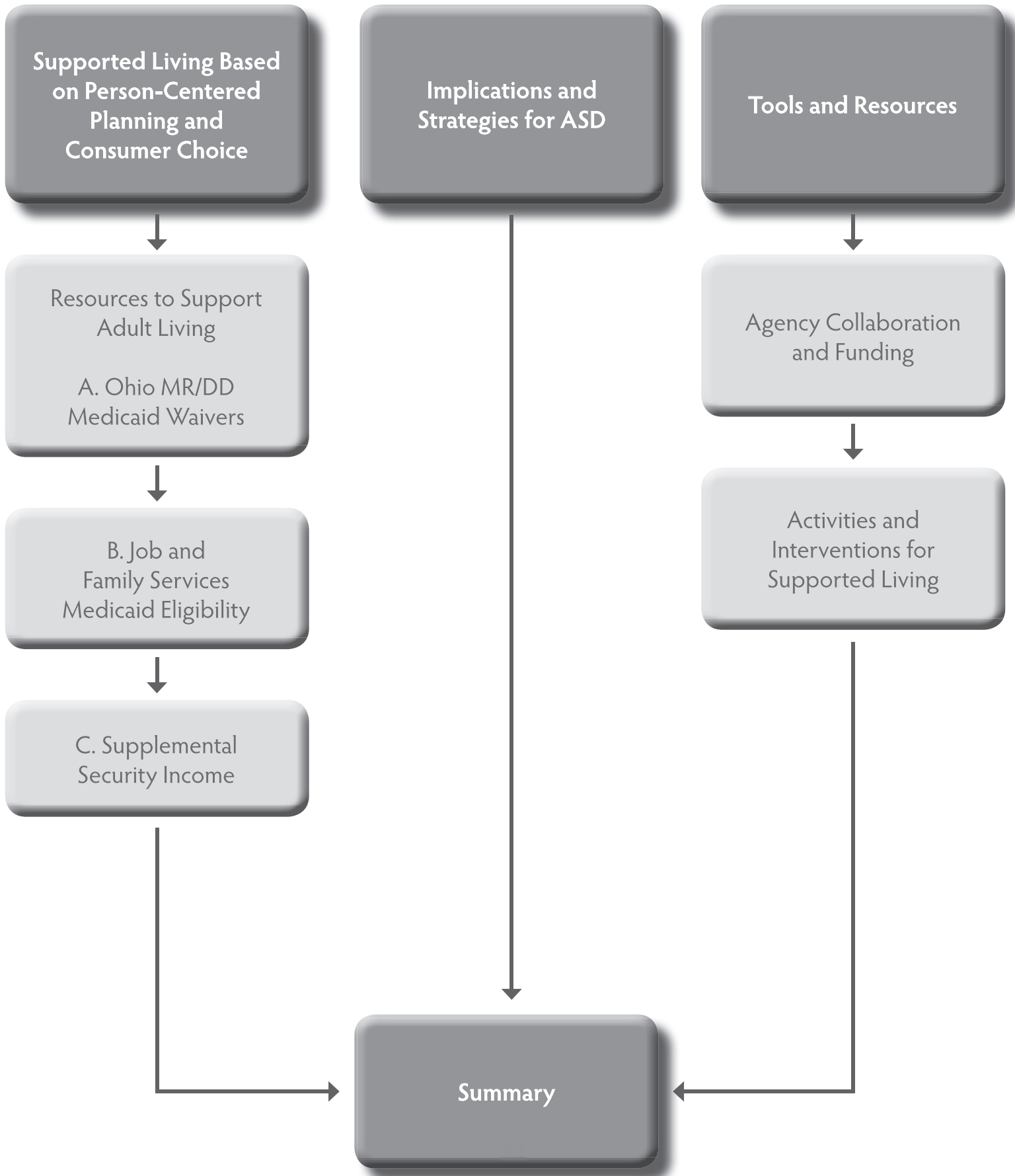
Parents as Resources

Other parents in the community are valuable resources for information and support. Parent-developed recreation programs serve many individuals with ASD but may be known only through informal networks.

Not Everyone Has to Participate

"Respect the right of anyone to choose to spend most or all of their leisure time alone when the choice is based on having had exposure to recreation options with appropriate supports" (Coyne & Fullerton, 2004, p.xvii).

Supported Living Based on Person-Centered Planning and Consumer Choice

Implications and Strategies for ASD

Tools and Resources

Resources to Support Adult Living

A. Ohio MR/DD Medicaid Waivers

Agency Collaboration and Funding

B. Job and Family Services Medicaid Eligibility

Activities and Interventions for Supported Living

C. Supplemental Security Income

Summary

SUPPORTED LIVING

Guiding Questions:

- ▶ What is supported living?
- ▶ When should planning begin for residential services after high school?
- ▶ What agencies and organizations help with financial assistance for supported living?
- ▶ Where can I get more information about other resources?

General Information

Just as there is a wide spectrum of individuals with ASD, there are different types of residential or adult living options. Residential options range from individuals choosing to live independently in the community or living in their own homes using supports provided by the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation Developmental Disabilities (ODMRDD). A few individuals may need to consider a more restrictive living environment such as an institutional residential option. This includes residential services offered through state-run Developmental Centers and in Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Retarded (ICFMR). However, the current trend and best practices in serving adults with ASD *do not* encourage institutional settings. Instead, the focus for supported adult living is on developing natural environments with individualized support systems.

Supported Living Model

Supported living is a service model based on principles that emphasize a person's choice, self-determination and community integration. Supported living can be in a private home, apartment or in a group home or apartment complex operated by a private agency. Options generally are guided by the individual's lifestyle choices, but are influenced by the reality of the level of available funding.

The supported living movement has aligned itself with person-centered planning and consumer choice. This should result in a fundamental change in the way services are provided and decisions made about supported living choices. From the person-centered perspective, the individual with the disability (consumer) is seen as the employer who pays the vendor (supported living providers) to make available the services the consumer/employer has determined are necessary. The consumer, her family and supported living workers work cooperatively to determine and plan these services. However, this process may require a shift in thinking and can be difficult for some agencies or providers that are not familiar with the person-centered planning concept.

While it is understandable that changing one's perspective can be difficult, most people acknowledge the positive results and personal growth that occur when individuals are supported to make personal choices related to their own adult living. Opportunity to make these life decisions is the core of self-determination.

Individuals with ASD should be supported as they learn to direct these decisions in their own lives based on their lifestyle preferences and the available resources. Supporting a person with a disability to make these choices can be complex depending on the individual's cognitive and decision-making skills, the skills of the supported living workers and available resources. Continued efforts to develop more effective services and expertise in this area are required in order to assist individuals with ASD in realizing person-centered lives.

Person-Centered Planning

Person centered planning for individuals with ASD provides an opportunity to reflect on the types of living arrangements that they may want and the supports they may need to make the vision a reality. Obtaining a supported living option that meets the consumer's needs requires significant planning. Future living options should be discussed early in the transition process. The individual and the family must reflect on and think about their future living situation and available options. The Vision Statement and the transition services on the IEP may be one of the first opportunities to document what is needed to achieve the residential living goals. Future planning tools such as MAPS (Making Action Plans), PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) and Circle of Support (Friends) may assist in the process. (See "Tools and Resources" for more information).

Resources to Support Adult Living

Potential funding sources for supported living or residential services should be investigated well in advance of when one expects to need the services. It is never too early to begin. Obtaining services can be a complex and lengthy process. One must qualify for funding from the adult services agency based on need and functional limitations, not simply on diagnosis. This requires review of the individual's resources as well as identification of challenges and lack of adult living skills.

Ohio Department of Mental Retardation Developmental Disability (MR/DD)

In Ohio, the Department of Mental Retardation Developmental Disability (MR/DD) is often the gateway agency for resources to fund residential services and supports. MR/DD is often the administrator of supported living funds, regardless of where the supports are located or which provider is selected.

Get to know your local MR/DD services and supports administrator. Obtaining eligibility for MR/DD services by age 16, as well as establishing a relationship with the SSA (Service and Support Administrator) should occur early and be a priority activity in the transition process. The parent/guardian can contact the local county board of MR/DD at any time without obligation. Referral to the intake department of a local MR/DD allows for determination of eligibility, followed by a discussion of needed and available services. Individuals may choose to take advantage of the available services or place their name on a waiting list for services that are currently unavailable.

Medicaid Waivers

Medicaid Waiver funds offer individuals with developmental disabilities (including ASD) the support needed to live at home or in the community rather than in a restricted institutional environment. Ongoing residential or supported living funds are frequently provided through a Medicaid Waiver. "A waiver is one way that Medicaid enables an individual with mental retardation, developmental disabilities or significant health care needs to live at home or in the community. While some eligibility requirements are "waived" for these programs, the individual must require a *protective level of care* related to daily living skills or skilled medical care. The financial criteria are based only on the income of the individual" (http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/svc/alpha/c/special-needs/resources/finance.htm#waivers).

These waivers, also known as the Home and Community Based Services Waiver, administered through the local county MR/DD allow a person to get services that are not normally covered under the state's Medicaid plan. Two waivers are administered by ODMRDD

Level One Waiver

The Level One Waiver has significant limitations in terms of the amount of funds available for supported living services. Someone requiring a very limited amount of assistance (for example, occasional supervision or respite for the natural supports in their life) may be sufficiently funded through this waiver. A Level One Waiver can provide up to $5,000 a year for personal care or respite. A limited amount of emergency assistance is also available.

Individual Options (IO) Waiver

Most individuals who require ongoing assistance in supported living or residential services require the Individual Options (IO) Waiver, which can offer a higher level of funding in the area of supported living.

The Individual Options Waiver can provide:
- Homemaker/personal care
- Home modifications and adaptations
- Transportation
- Respite care
- Social work
- Home-delivered meals
- Nutrition
- Interpreter services
- Specialized adaptive or assistive medical equipment and supplies
- Supported employment
- Day habilitation
- Adult day services

Waivers are limited and counties usually have waiting lists for these resources. In fact, many individuals wait for years to obtain a Medicaid Waiver as the county boards of MR/DD must not only must consider the length of time an individual has been waiting for services, but also the level of need, and how critical the situation is.

Eligibility for Waivers

In the case of either type of waiver, individuals are determined eligible based on the identification of *functional limitations* in three of the targeted areas:

- ▶ Self-care
- ▶ Self-direction
- ▶ Learning
- ▶ Mobility
- ▶ Economic self-sufficiency (age 16+)
- ▶ Understanding and using language
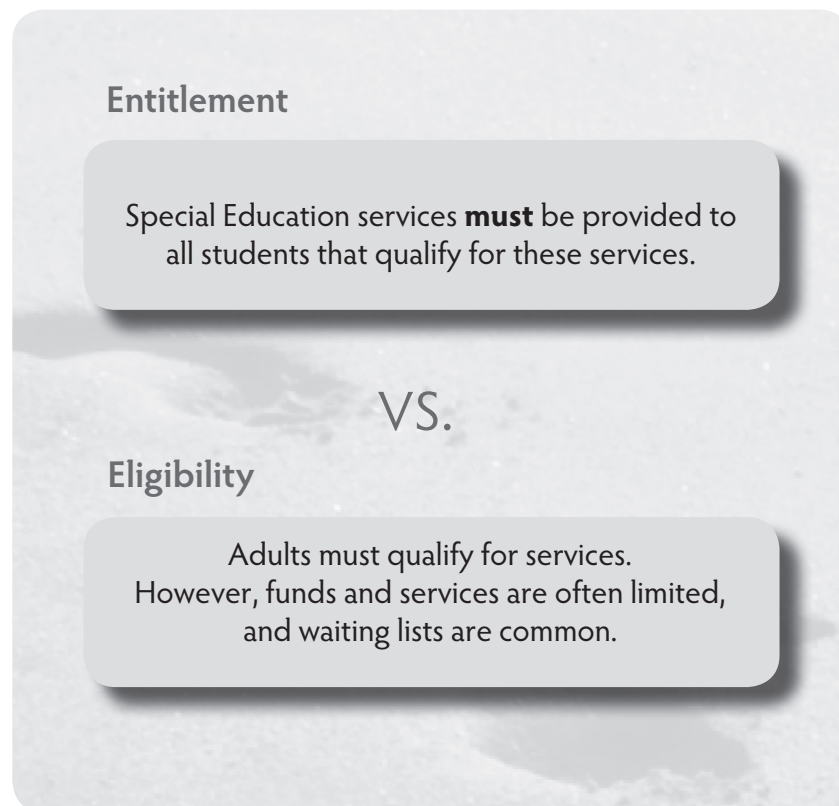- ▶ Capacity for independent living

Medicaid eligibility takes into consideration:

- ▶ Income (how much money one makes each month)
- ▶ Financial assets (what one owns, trusts, savings, investment, etc.)
- ▶ Health, disability and age

An individual must be eligible for Medicaid in order to obtain and maintain eligibility for waiver services. The individuals's local Job and Family Services office determines Medicaid eligibility.

Entitlement vs. Eligibility

Resources are limited, and waiting lists for Medicaid Waivers and other services exist in the adult services world. Adult service providers attempt to stretch dollars by exploring creative ways to serve individuals in natural environments. However, services provided to adults are different from those provided to students. Students with disabilities are *entitled* to educational services, regardless of how many other students are entitled to the same services or the extent of need. However, adults must become *eligible* for services based on need and deficits. Once eligible, individuals may have to wait for services to become available or may accept a different type of service. Eligibility in the adult world does not imply immediate, exhaustive or free services. Understanding eligibility qualifications and how adult systems function *before* applying helps in the planning process.

Entitlement

Special Education services **must** be provided to all students that qualify for these services.

VS.

Eligibility

Adults must qualify for services. However, funds and services are often limited, and waiting lists are common.

Once found eligible and a waiver slot has become available for the individual, an acuity assessment is completed to determine the level of funding necessary to support the individual in daily living.

Acuity Assessment (AAI)

The Acuity Assessment Instrument (AAI) is used to determine the level of staffing and budget limitations for an individual's non-residential services. (The ODDP determines level of funding for residential service. See the following section.)

Eligibility for a waiver does not imply a "blank check." Not all individuals receiving a Medicaid Waiver receive the same level of funding for services. An AAI is utilized to determine the service need for each individual and assigns each participant to one of four acuity groups. Staff to participant ratio and funding limits separates acuity groups (see web cast on "Acuity Assessment" at http://www.ocali.org).

Ohio Developmental Disabilities Profile (ODDP)

The Ohio Developmental Disabilities Profile (ODDP) is an assessment tool for individuals enrolled on the Individual Options Waiver. The ODDP contains a series of questions designed to determine an individual's service needs. The answers to the questions are scored by the Ohio Department of MR/DD.

The purpose of the ODDP is to ensure that individuals across the state of Ohio who have similar needs and circumstances receive waiver services at comparable levels of funding. When a person is enrolled in the Individual Options Waiver, the assessment is completed as part of the enrollment process. Service and Support Administrators (SSAs) complete the assessment with the entire team.

Nine funding ranges are associated with the ODDP, allowing annual budgets from $5001 to $500,000. The ODDP is composed of 40 questions covering 10 areas:

- ▶ Identifying information
- ▶ Residential
- ▶ Disability description
- ▶ Medical information
- ▶ Sensory/motor information
- ▶ Cognitive/communication information
- ▶ Behavior
- ▶ Self-care and daily living skills
- ▶ Routine voluntary caregivers
- ▶ Clinical services

Other Community Living Resources

There are restrictions on Medicaid Waivers in terms of how much funding can be provided and what types of services can be funded. MR/DD Medicaid Waivers are not able to provide funding for certain aspects of residential living (such as room and board), and services can vary depending on which waiver is being utilized. Assistance for completing daily routines, personal care and health and safety issues may be the focus of many of the supported living services that an individual receives through a Medicaid waiver.

Funds to pay for rent or mortgage are **not** funded waiver services. Instead, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), the consumer's wages, agency and family contributions may be potential resources for room and board. Additionally, work-related expenses and Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) plans through Social Security might help an individual to obtain a higher level of SSI funding, thus making available more dollars for living expenses. (For more information, see Medicaid and SSI web cast at http://www.ocali.org).

Independent Adult Living and ASD

Some individuals with ASD may not have the functional skills needed to live and be independent in the community. Even those with high academic and verbal skills may not be able to cook a meal, make a successful phone call or pay a bill without assistance. However, many individuals do have strengths that will allow them to live independently with necessary supports.

Some youth and adults with ASD appear so capable that their needs go unrecognized. These individuals and their advocates should become skilled at communicating both their strengths and needs when approaching agencies and supported living providers. Understanding what types of supported living resources are available and how one can access and become eligible for these resources is a critical component of transition planning.

Characteristics of ASD – Sensory

Please review the "Implication" area in other sections of these guidelines for a more complete overview of characteristics and strategies. This section only highlights a few areas that may not be covered in the other sections.

Implications

New living situations can bring about sometimes overwhelming sensory processing challenges. In addition, the stress that accompanies moving to a new environment – often with "strangers" – can exacerbate sensory sensitivities and anxiety reactions. These reactions must be monitored carefully.

Before moving to a new situation, do an informal, yet thorough assessment of the sensory environment. Assess the environment for:

1. Auditory stimulation. Check both inside and outside of the living situation. Do housemates prefer loud music or TV? Is there a lot of street traffic or trains running nearby?

2. Space. How much and what type of personal space will be available? Is it sufficient? Is it always available?

3. Movement activities. Can the individual walk, run, pace or engage in other movement activities on a regular basis?

4. Odors. Is the environment free of stimulating odors? Are there strong odors such as perfumes, cleaning products or soaps, foods, air fresheners, animals, flowers, etc., that the person will encounter on a daily basis?

5. Diet. Will the individual's diet change? Will there be foods available that she likes? Or will she be offered food that she does not care for? How will this affect the living situation? The taste, texture and smell of foods may affect some individuals with ASD very strongly.

6. Visual clutter or lack of visual stimulation. What does the environment look like? Will it be calming or overwhelming? Will the individual be able to modify the environment as necessary?

Strategies

1. As necessary, identify specific personal space where the individual can be alone, keep comfort items, and experience limited auditory stimulation (e.g., quiet) and reduced or selected visual stimuli.
    i. Support staff, and others who may live in the same home or apartment must respect the individual's space.
    ii. Specific and individual personal space is key to making a new living situation comfortable and acceptable.

Characteristics of ASD – Sensory – Strategies (con't.)

2. Use white-noise headphones to help block out unwanted noise that can periodically occur. Speaking in calm, low tones – even whispers – can also assist an auditorily defensive individual.

3. Install darkening window shades to reduce natural lighting from large windows when too bright. Choices of low dim lights and bright lights in various rooms may also be necessary. In extreme situations, an individual may choose to wear sunglasses inside to reduce glare.

4. Try using rocking chairs, gliders, porch swings or other chairs that have motion for their calming effect. This will allow the individual to engage in this activity in multiple settings and not be required to stay in one room in order to get desired vestibular (movement) input.

5. Attempt to reduce or eliminate strong odor.
   i. Use natural cleaning products and/or open windows to eliminate strong fumes.
   ii. Avoid perfumes and colognes, as well as strong-smelling lotions, soaps and hairsprays until it is clear what the individual can tolerate the odors of these products.
   iii. Be aware when cooking that some food odors can be overwhelming, such as onions or garlic.
   iv. Remember the use of natural scents, such as mild lavender, can be calming to some people.

6. Consider a visually organized environment to help reduce anxiety. Visual organization, such as schedules, timers and predictable structure, can assist the person. On the other hand, lack of visual cues and the presence of visual clutter may cause the individual to become confused.

7. Provide a variety of food options. Allow the individual to have control (to the extent possible) of what he will eat and when he will eat. Foods that some people find calming/organizing include crunchy and salty foods. In addition, drinking through straws and sucking on candies or chewing gum can provide relaxing input.

8. Have the individual visit the new living situation often prior to moving. Discuss with or observe the individual regarding potential sensory issues. If possible any necessary modifications prior to moving. Ongoing assessment will be necessary.

Characteristics of ASD – Communication and Socialization

Implications

Individuals with ASD may have difficulty communicating verbally. It may be hard for them to express their likes and dislikes and, instead, they may respond with unusual behavior.

When moving into a new living situation, individuals with ASD will encounter new and sometimes stressful situations and may not be able to express how they feel or ask for clarification. This is true for even the most verbal. As a result, the person may engage in unusual behaviors, shut down or refuse to communicate.

Some individuals with ASD may not know how to communicate about medical or emergency situations in the new setting. This is important to address and monitor.

Often individuals will struggle to learn how to socialize in a new living situation, with roommates or those living in the neighborhood or apartment complex.

Characteristics of ASD – Communication and Socialization

Strategies

1. In general, use simple, concrete communication either spoken or written.

2. Develop individualized communication and organization supports. This may include picture schedules, checklists, calendars, timers, choice boards (pictures or words), frequent review of schedules, scripting and narratives of events that will occur, review of previous events and teaching new vocabulary or providing new communication supports for the situations, people, and emotional expressions that one encounters in the living situation. (See previous sections for more suggestions related to communication and organization.)

3. Program vocabulary for AAC device users, as necessary, and know what back-up options to use in case of an AAC failure.

4. Provide an instruction checklist and role-play practice for communication around medical issues and emergency situations. For example, how and who to call for broken water heater, how to gauge the level of emergency for a paper cut versus serious deep wound, etc.

5. Continue to develop individual communication systems to express likes and dislikes to help prevent minor situations from escalating into behavior problems.

6. Socially, support alternative recreation options if different from what is traditionally planned or from what housemates may want to do. At times, it may be best to allow the individual to choose to be alone. Passive socialization such as listening to music together may be the best choice of socialization on days when an individual is tired/stressed and unable to maintain social interactions. However, for those who do desire to participate, provide social instruction and skill development to promote competence in both social and recreational aspects of a situation.

Characteristics of ASD – Executive Function and Organization

Implications

Individuals with ASD often struggle to organize their daily routines, especially if the routines change frequently. This may appear as difficulty in getting started or completing even simple household tasks. *(For more detail, see "Executive Function and Organization" in previous sections of the* Transition Guidelines.)

Strategies

1. Provide visual schedules for routine activities, even if the individual does not seem to use the support each day. Having it available for days when it is necessary, or as a reassurance that nothing has changed, can avoid a potential crisis. Individualize the items on each schedule/routine as well the type of visual schedule (pictures, objects, words, photographs, large, small, many, few, etc.).

2. Include visual routines such as:
   i. Morning and evening schedule
   ii. Grooming
   iii. Dressing (allow choices, but assist in remembering what types of clothing to wear)
   iv. Mealtime – preparation and clean-up
   v. Household tasks such as vacuuming, laundry, yard work, changing beds, etc.
   vi. Checklist of things to do when one has to wait (for transportation, dinner, family and friends to visit, etc.)

3. Provide training on how to use the schedules and prompt the use of the schedules, if necessary. Do not assume the individual simply understands unless she has had exposure and instruction on how to use the visual supports. Have assigned staff person assist as needed.

4. Review schedule changes for staff or routines. Provide this information in a format the individual understands.

Characteristics of ASD – Ritualistic and Repetitive Behavior

Implications

In an attempt to gain some familiarity and control, or to interact with others, individuals with ASD may revert to comfortable and familiar behavior or topical interests.

The verbal individual may attempt to engage staff or roommates in discussions about special interests. The less verbal individual may adhere to rigid routines or items.

Strategies

1. Review the structure, organization, predictability and communication supports that are available in the home. When these supports are not sufficient, the individual may demonstrate significant rigidity and ritualistic behavior.

2. Determine if there are sufficient activities and enough structure during free time so the individual is not bored. Provide choices and a variety of opportunities to experience interesting activities.

3. Research the availability of clubs or groups in the community or online that share the individual's special interest. For example, history, weather, cars, trains, cartooning, drawing, gaming, movies, walking/hiking, animals, etc. Often this requires significant searching and creativity.

4. Teach new social interactions and social scripting. Create games that allow for exchanges and interactions with staff and housemates in order to expand the ability for the individual to socialize. Encourage the individual to work with another person when doing chores.

Characteristics of ASD – Other

Implications

The level of family involvement in residential planning and in the individual's adult life will vary.

Some families spend a great deal of time planning for this period in their son's or daughter's life. Others find, due to unexpected life circumstances, they must help the individual locate a new living situation rapidly.

Some families have more monetary and emotional resources available to enable them to participate than others.

Variations in the type and level of participation may also occur based on cultural values and beliefs.

Strategies

1. Involve the family in the process early so they are able to develop a relationship and trust with the supported living staff. Individuals with ASD may move into a new living setting gradually to allow time for adjustment and establishing new routines.

2. Eliminate judging of families based on how they have parented the individual and the extent to which they are involved. Judgments are often unfounded and interfere with a working relationship with the family. This leads to difficulties for the individual who needs the support of both his family and the formal support staff.

3. Regardless of when the planning begins, provide extensive opportunities for family members and friends to discuss the vision that they have developed over the years with the individual and how they perceive the adult living situation as it unfolds.

4. Be aware that the move to a new living situation is likely the most difficult and emotional transition for BOTH the family and the individual with ASD. Residential support staff and agencies should be trained not only in how to support an individual with ASD, but also in how to communicate and work with a family that is letting go of the daily care and interaction of their now adult child. This cannot be taken lightly or reduced to a policy and given a limited timeline.

Tools and Resources

"I Wake Up for MY Dream!" by Kim Davis

http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/education/My-Dream.html

An article from Indiana Regional Autism Center (IRAC) that gives detailed explanations of futures planning tools such as Circles of Support, MAPS and PATH.

Supported Living: What's the Difference
by John O'Brien

http://thechp.syr.edu/rsapub.htm

The author makes a strong case for supported living workers to work cooperatively with individuals with disabilities to provide the supported living assistance they need, rather than trying to control and determine services.

Hulgin, K. (1997). *Supported living: It's a new direction.* Retrieved August 25, 2008 from http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/adultoptions/suptdLIV.html

An article from Indiana Regional Autism Center (IRAC) that advocates for smaller living settings for individuals with disabilities and describes some of the challenges and barriers encountered by individuals with disabilities, their families, agencies and staff that provide supported living services.

The Puzzle of Lifestyle Planning by Nancy Kalina.

http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/adultoptions/puzzle.html

An article from Indiana Regional Autism Center (IRAC) that poses a set of questions in nine different areas to help individuals with ASD make choices that reflect their wishes and visions. The questions on residential, communication and supports are very relevant for residential planning.

Cincinnati Children's Medical Center Special Needs Resources

http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/svc/alpha/c/special-needs/resources/MR/DD.htm#waivers

This website describes the general eligibility factors for Mental Retardation/Developmental Disability (MR/DD) services. The site also gives a brief overview of the Medicaid home and community waivers program administered by MR/DD. Individuals on waivers have more choices about where they will live and who provide the services they need. Only a limited number of waivers are available and there are often waiting lists.

Ohio MR/DD

http://www.mrdd.ohio.gov/residential/odMR/DD.htm has information on residential resources, and http://www.mrdd.ohio.gov/families/self.htm has information on self-determination/self-advocacy on this website.

The Center for Self Determination

http://www.self-determination.com/

Contains information on how self-determination can foster independent living in a resource guide on state Medicaid programs.

Agency Collaboration and Funding Related to Residential Planning

Individuals with ASD and their families need to develop a vision about the residential options they desire early in the transition process. Collaborative services with other agencies around eligibility, funding and waiting lists should be documented in the transition goals on the IEP. Families may need to educate themselves to understand the qualifications for funding sources and determine what they will need to fund their residential option. A consistent form of documentation between agencies makes it easier for families and individuals with ASD to navigate between systems, especially during the transition from school to community.

Agencies, school and families can work together to cultivate a supported living philosophy that is person-centered and takes into account the characteristics of ASD and respects the right of the individual with ASD to make decisions. In a supported living model, agencies must recognize that the individual with ASD is the consumer/employer and designate who provides supported living services. The supported living staff are the providers who support the living goals of the consumer.

Activities or Interventions to Facilitate Successful Residential Planning

Families and school personnel can work together to develop self-determination and functional living skills necessary for independent living. This skill training can be included in the transition services plan. Individuals with ASD may need opportunities to experience natural consequences as part of independent living. For example, fatigue may be a natural consequence in a living situation when an individual with ASD stays up late watching television and has to get up early. Weight gain may be a natural consequence for an individual with ASD who chooses to use his extra money to buy fast food, chips and candy. Many questions need to be discussed and answered by the individual and his support team. These include:

▸ What is the role of the provider in a person-centered, supported living situation?

▸ How can the provider help the individual with ASD explore other options in the examples above and still respect the right of the individual to make choices?

Summary

Supported Living

"Individuals with autism and their families need the opportunity to learn about supported living as an alternative approach to congregate services. It is not enough to simply ask an individual where s/he wants to live. Many individuals need experience, the opportunity to explore their preferences and input from people who know them well to make such decisions. Families also need the opportunity to learn…that individuals with ASD can live on their own with supports" (http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/adultoptions/suptdLIV.html).

Flexible Services

Service agencies may need to make fundamental changes in the way they are organized to provide supported living services. This approach requires an organization to be personal, flexible and innovative. It requires change in organizational structures and staff roles and responsibilities (Hulgin, 1997). Supported living staff may need to find new ways to relate to persons with disabilities that are not based on control but on cooperation and responsiveness to the consumer's needs and wishes.

Eligibility Requirements

Funding for adult supported living is obtained by meeting eligibility requirements. Self-advocacy and the determination of the individual and his support network in following through with all the steps in the process are important. Eligibility for adult services is based on the individual's need and his assessed functional limitations. Advocating for the appropriate supports is often necessary. The level of funding received is based on demonstrated need and functional limitations.

Medicaid Waivers

With the Home and Community-Based Waiver program, the state (usually administered by MR/DD) applies for and receives permission to use Medicaid funds to assist and keep people with disabilities in the community. Many of the restrictive requirements of using Medicaid monies are usually waived in these programs. Individuals should apply early since there are waiting lists for these waivers and limited numbers of waivers are available.

Appendices

The Right Match: Employment

This checklist will assist you identifying your personal work style and the "fit" of your personal style to the potential employment. Note: Employer input may be helpful for completing portions of this checklist.

> Making the "Right Match" requires attention to several areas:
> 1. Personal work/ learning style and the fit to the job
> 2. The physical components and requirements of the employment
> 3. The social components and expectations of the work environment

1. Personal Work/Learning Style

What are your likes and dislikes?

What are you good at doing?

What do you like to do?

Do you have any hobbies or special interests that could translate into a job/career?

What do you absolutely hate or refuse to do?

Where and when do you like to work?

Note: Some information adapted from Zaks, Z. (2006) *Life and love: Positive strategies for autistic adults.* Shawnee Mission, KS: AAPC

Sensory Issues

What environmental or other conditions are intolerable?

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Consider issues of:
- [ ] Personal space
- [ ] Temperature
- [ ] Sounds/pitch/multiple
- [ ] Lighting/visual environment
- [ ] Odors

What environmental conditions do you prefer?

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Do you have any specific sensory issues you need to prepare for in advance of entering a new environment?

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Social Style

To what degree do you enjoy socializing?
- [ ] A lot!
- [ ] At least a couple times every day
- [ ] Just a little or only with a few people that I know
- [ ] Almost never
- [ ] I prefer to work by myself where I do not need to socially interact

Does socializing make you anxious?
- [ ] Yes, very much
- [ ] Yes, but not all day long
- [ ] Yes, very occasionally
- [ ] No, I am not anxious in social situations

Do you know if you have trouble understanding other people's words or body language?
- [ ] Yes, I do have trouble understanding people.
- [ ] I get confused easily
- [ ] Yes, but only sometimes I have trouble understanding people
- [ ] No, I find it easy to discuss and interact with others
- [ ] I have no idea! Maybe/maybe not.

What size/type of group do you like to work with?
- ☐ Small group
- ☐ Medium group
- ☐ Large group
- ☐ Alone

Communication Style

Do you enjoy talking to other people?
- ☐ Yes, a lot!
- ☐ No, almost never
- ☐ Sometimes and with some people

Do you enjoy listening to others?
- ☐ Yes, a lot!
- ☐ No, almost never
- ☐ Sometimes and to some people

Is conversing, formally and informally, easy or difficult for you?
- ☐ It is very hard and takes a lot of energy
- ☐ It is difficult, but I can manage for a short time
- ☐ It is easy. I can talk a lot as long as it is something I know about
- ☐ It is easy, even if it is something that I do not know much about

Are questions easy for you to answer?
- ☐ Yes, I try to answer almost every question that is asked of me
- ☐ Yes, most of the time
- ☐ Not always. It is difficult to know what people are asking me about
- ☐ No, I always have trouble answering questions

Would you rather use electronic means as the primary mode of communication with your boss?
- ☐ Yes, I would like to communicate using email if possible
- ☐ No, I like talking to my boss
- ☐ I don't care. I can do either or both

Project Style

Do you work better:
- ☐ on your own
- ☐ with a leader
- ☐ with a group

Do you like:
- ☐ concrete tasks
- ☐ open-ended projects
- ☐ combination

If you usually work alone but then collaborate with others on a special project, would the switch be a big problem?
- ☐ No problem
- ☐ I can do it, but I need to be prepared
- ☐ I will likely have great difficulty with that type of change
- ☐ I cannot make that type of change

Do you mind repetitive work?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Some of the time

Are you easily distracted from a job or task?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Never

Action Level

Do you move:
- ☐ Slowly
- ☐ Quickly
- ☐ About the same speed as everyone else

Do you need:
- ☐ A lot of action and movement
- ☐ To be primarily still
- ☐ To have opportunities for both throughout the day

Do you prefer the location of the job:
- ☐ To be on a large campus or site
- ☐ To be on a small campus or site
- ☐ To require the use of multiple buildings/sites
- ☐ To be housed in one building

Personal Issues

Do you have any anxiety issues to consider?
- ☐ Yes. Significant issues
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ No. Never

What causes the anxiety to be worse?

What makes situations less anxious?

[ ]

Clothing

Would you consider dressing in the following for the job?
☐ Formal/business wear
☐ Uniform
☐ Heavy clothing (for cold weather)
☐ Casual business wear
☐ Jeans
☐ Shorts

Do you need help knowing if your appearance is acceptable to a group or situation?
☐ Yes. I cannot read what others think of me
☐ Sometimes it is hard to tell what others are thinking
☐ No. I can read what others think
☐ I don't know

2. Physical Components of the Potential Employment

Is there an acceptable sensory environment?

[ ]

Is the personal space compatible?
☐ Yes
☐ Too small
☐ Too large
☐ Too many people sharing

Is the temperature OK?
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I can accommodate

Are the sounds/noises acceptable?
☐ Yes, I am fine with the noise or sounds
☐ No, I cannot possibly work in this noise
☐ Not sure, but I believe I can use accommodations to make it work for me

Is the lighting or visual environment acceptable?
- ☐ Yes, I have enough light, it is pleasant, and the visual environment appears to be well organized
- ☐ No, there are several issues regarding the lighting and visual environment that I cannot tolerate
- ☐ Maybe, however I believe that changes can be made easily to accommodate

Are the smells in the workplace acceptable?
- ☐ Yes, I don't notice many odors
- ☐ No, I find the odors in the workplace offensive
- ☐ Sometimes there are smells that bother me

Are the hours/days of employment acceptable?
 If the schedule changes from week to week, will that be acceptable?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

 If the amount of hours increases or deceases periodically, will that be acceptable?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

Is the quality required of the work acceptable?
- ☐ Too high
- ☐ Too low
- ☐ Acceptable

Are the production requirements acceptable?
- ☐ Too high
- ☐ Too low
- ☐ Acceptable

Are the pay, benefits, vacation and holiday acceptable?

- ☐ Pay rate is acceptable
- ☐ Pay rate is not acceptable

- ☐ Vacations and holidays work for me
- ☐ Vacations and holidays are not acceptable

- ☐ Benefits are fine
- ☐ Benefits are not sufficient

Do you anticipate the need to take time off due to anxiety or stress?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not know

Transportation

Is transportation to work necessary?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Can you tolerate:
- ☐ Car
- ☐ Taxi
- ☐ Public bus
- ☐ Van
- ☐ Bike
- ☐ Walking

Do you need to know exact times transportation will arrive?
- ☐ Yes within 5 minutes
- ☐ Within 20 minutes
- ☐ I can wait a long time

Are any modifications required due to weather?
- ☐ I can't wait as long when it is too hot, cold, wet
- ☐ I will need alternate transportation when it is raining/snowing
- ☐ The weather does not affect the transportation

3. Social Components

Does the employer offer and support coworker training and awareness on ASD and disability in order to facilitate the acceptance, appreciation and inclusion of the employee with ASD?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Yes, but it needs to be expanded/modified
- ☐ No, but the employer is planning to include this training soon
- ☐ No

What is the level of interaction(s) expected or accepted?
- ☐ Formal: greetings and manners
- ☐ Informal: small talk and sharing personal life
- ☐ Email for office communication
- ☐ Phone interaction is necessary

Have the job expectations been clearly defined? (Check all that apply).
- ☐ Clearly defined boundaries of interaction with coworkers and boss
- ☐ Timelines are clear
- ☐ Navigation skills/requirements to function in the work group
- ☐ Expectations for break-time/mealtime (Are you expected to take a break? Where can or do employees go for breaks/meals? How long?)

Grooming and hygiene

What will be the expectation of dress:
- ☐ Business wear
- ☐ Casual wear
- ☐ Jeans
- ☐ Uniform

Expectations of grooming
- ☐ Meticulous grooming/dress is expected (nails manicured/clean, styled hair, make-up)
- ☐ Casual is acceptable (hair pulled up, hats, sandals)
- ☐ Coworkers expect others to bathe, wash hair, use deodorant everyday
- ☐ Coworkers are more flexible in their acceptance of hygiene. Skipping a day of washing is acceptable as long as I do not appear or smell dirty

Is there someone in the workplace who can *respectfully* facilitate acceptable grooming and hygiene?
- ☐ Yes – This person has already been identified
- ☐ There are several possibilities, no one has been identified
- ☐ No – There is no one available
- ☐ The potential employee does not want to be reminded of these issues by coworkers. Need to create other interventions in this area if grooming/hygiene becomes unacceptable

Other observations or issues that have been noted:

1) Highlight items that could potentially be a major barrier to obtaining or maintaining the employment.
2) Determine if interventions, supports and accommodations can be created to address areas where there is a mismatch between personal work style, environment and social expectations of the potential employment.

The Right Match: Postsecondary

This checklist will assist you identifying your personal work style and the "fit" of your personal style to the potential employment. Note: Educational program input may be helpful for completing portions of this checklist.

> Making the "Right Match" requires attention to several areas:
> 1. Personal work/ learning style and the fit to the educational program
> 2. The physical components and requirements of the educational program
> 3. The social components and expectations of the educational program

1. Personal Work/Learning Style

What are your likes and dislikes?

What are you good at doing?

What do you like to do?

Do you have any hobbies or special interests that could translate into a job/career?

What do you absolutely hate or refuse to do or study? Could this change if your program requires it?

Where and when do you like to study/attend class?

- How many classes in a day is enough? Or too much?
- How early can you reasonably start your classes?
- How late can you attend class and still learn?

- Do you study in your room? library? elsewhere?
- Do you need to study where it is quiet? silent? noisy?

Note: Some information adapted from Zaks, Z. (2006) *Life and love: Positive strategies for autistic adults*. Shawnee Mission, KS: AAPC

Sensory Issues

What environmental or other conditions are intolerable?

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Consider issues of:
- ☐ Personal space
- ☐ Temperature
- ☐ Sounds/pitch/multiple
- ☐ Lighting/visual environment
- ☐ Odors

What environmental conditions do you prefer?

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Do you have any specific sensory issues you need to prepare for in advance of entering a new environment?

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Living Arrangements

What types of living arrangements do you prefer? Which types can you tolerate?

	Prefer	Tolerate
Roommates? How many?	☐ Yes ☐ No How many?	☐ Yes ☐ No How many?
Assigned roommates?	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
Private room or apartment?	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
Share bedroom?	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
Location?	☐ On campus ☐ Off campus	☐ On campus ☐ Off campus
Close to classes?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Does not matter	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Does not matter
Curfew times?	Time:	Time:
Visting hours?	Time:	Time:
Live at home or commute?	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you know how to use laundry facilities?
- ☐ Yes, I can use laundry resource in the building, on campus or in the community
- ☐ Yes, I can use the resources if they are within close proximity to my living situation
- ☐ Somewhat; I need to have someone show me how to use the available facilities
- ☐ No, I am not familiar with using laundry facilities

What are your preferred ways for meal preparation?

I prefer to prepare most of my meals
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

Where are you willing to do meal preparation?
- ☐ In the apartment/dorm room
- ☐ On the same floor
- ☐ Somewhere within the building

I prefer to purchase most of my meals in a cafeteria or restaurant
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

Social Style

To what degree do you enjoy socializing?
- ☐ A lot!
- ☐ At least a couple times every day
- ☐ Just a little or only with a few people that I know
- ☐ Almost never
- ☐ I prefer to work by myself where I do not need to socially interact

Does socializing make you anxious?
- ☐ Yes, very much
- ☐ Yes, but not all day long
- ☐ Yes, very occasionally
- ☐ No, I am not anxious in social situations

Do you know if you have trouble understanding other people's words or body language?
- ☐ Yes, I do have trouble understanding people.
- ☐ I get confused easily
- ☐ Yes, but only sometimes I have trouble understanding people
- ☐ No, I find it easy to discuss and interact with others
- ☐ I have no idea! Maybe/maybe not.

What size/type of group do you like to work with?
- ☐ Small group
- ☐ Medium group
- ☐ Large group
- ☐ Alone

Communication Style

Do you enjoy talking to other people?
- ☐ Yes, a lot!
- ☐ No, almost never
- ☐ Sometimes and with some people

Do you enjoy listening to others?
- ☐ Yes, a lot!
- ☐ No, almost never
- ☐ Sometimes and to some people

Is conversing, formally and informally, easy or difficult for you?
- ☐ It is very hard and takes a lot of energy
- ☐ It is difficult, but I can manage for a short time
- ☐ It is easy. I can talk a lot as long as it is something I know about
- ☐ It is easy, even if it is something that I do not know much about

Are questions easy for you to answer?
- ☐ Yes, I try to answer almost every question that is asked of me
- ☐ Yes, most of the time
- ☐ Not always. It is difficult to know what people are asking me about
- ☐ No, I always have trouble answering questions

Would you rather use electronic means as the primary mode of communication with your boss?
- ☐ Yes, I would like to communicate using email if possible
- ☐ No, I like talking to my boss
- ☐ I don't care. I can do either or both

Project Style

Do you work better:
- ☐ on your own
- ☐ with a leader
- ☐ with a group

Do you like:
- ☐ concrete tasks
- ☐ open-ended projects
- ☐ combination

If you usually work alone but then collaborate with others on a special project, would the switch be a big problem?
- ☐ No problem
- ☐ I can do it, but I need to be prepared
- ☐ I will likely have great difficulty with that type of change
- ☐ I cannot make that type of change

Do you mind repetitive work or assignments that seem to be repetitive?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Some of the time

Are you easily distracted from a job or from studying/class work?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Never

Action Level

Do you move:
- ☐ Slowly
- ☐ Quickly
- ☐ About the same speed as everyone else

Do you need:
- ☐ A lot of action and movement, including studying or clas
- ☐ To be primarily still
- ☐ To have opportunities for both throughout the day

Do you prefer postsecondary education:
- ☐ To be on a large campus or school
- ☐ To be on a small campus or school
- ☐ To require the use of multiple buildings/sites
- ☐ To be housed in one building

Personal Issues

Do you have any anxiety issues to consider?
- ☐ Yes. Significant issues
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ No. Never

What causes the anxiety to be worse?

What makes situations less anxious?

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Clothing

Would you be willing, or able, to dress in the following for school?
- ☐ Casual business wear
- ☐ Jeans
- ☐ Shorts
- ☐ Business wear
- ☐ Uniform
- ☐ Heavy clothing (for cold weather)

Do you need help knowing if your appearance is acceptable to a group or situation?
- ☐ Yes. I cannot tell what others think of me
- ☐ Sometimes it is hard to tell what others are thinking
- ☐ No. I can read what others think
- ☐ I don't know

2. Physical Components of the Potential Employment

What is the social atmosphere in the school program?
- ☐ Able to "hide in the crowd"
- ☐ Frequent individualized attention to students
- ☐ Available small groups organized around special interests
- ☐ Many organized clubs are available to all
- ☐ Informal social groups are the norm
- ☐ Most students live on campus and socialize within a dorm
- ☐ Most students live off campus and socialize between classes
- ☐ Athletic events are major courses of social opportunities an interactions

How many students are enrolled in the program/school?

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How many students live on camputs?

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How many students commute?

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What is the average class size?

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Is there an acceptable sensory environment in which to learn and study?

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Is the personal space compatible?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Too small
- ☐ Too large
- ☐ Too many people sharing

Is the temperature OK?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I can accommodate

Are the sounds/noises acceptable?
- ☐ Yes, I am fine with the noise or sounds
- ☐ No, I cannot possibly work in this noise
- ☐ Not sure, but I believe I can use accommodations to make it work for me

Is the lighting or visual environment acceptable?
- ☐ Yes, I have enough light, it is pleasant, and the visual environment appears to be well organized
- ☐ No, there are several issues regarding the lighting and visual environment that I cannot tolerate
- ☐ Maybe, however I believe that changes can be made easily to accommodate

Are the smells acceptable?
- ☐ Yes, I don't notice many odors
- ☐ No, I find the odors in the workplace offensive
- ☐ Sometimes there are smells that bother me

Are the needed classes scheduled at times that you prefer or that are acceptable?
- ☐ Yes, I am fine with the times classes are offered
- ☐ Probably. I think I can manage the class times
- ☐ No, I am concerned about some of the times that I am scheduled to attend class

How does the organization of the campus impact your needs and preferences?

Are you comfortable with the number of campus buildings?
- ☐ Yes. This is no problem.
- ☐ Maybe. But I think I will find my way
- ☐ No, I will need help.

Are you comfortable with the size of campus buildings?
- ☐ Yes, I am fine with the buildings
- ☐ Maybe. I think I may only need to explore them.
- ☐ No (list reasons why below)

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Are there specific buildings/areas on campus designated for specific majors? If so, consider those that are in your major.

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I don't know

Are those building close to where you will live?
☐ Yes
☐ No

Is parking/transportation available to those bulidngs?
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I don't know

Are the expectations for coursework reasonable for you?
☐ Too heavy
☐ Deadlines can be met
☐ Organizational issues are manageable and supports are available

Is the schedule flexible enough to accommodate issues of an occasional stress reaction?
☐ Yes, there is great flexibility built into the schedule
☐ Yes, somewhat. I can take an occasional "night off"
☐ No, the schedule seems somewhat rigid

Other Considerations Regarding Classes and Coursework

Is pre-registration, registration assistance or priority class registration available?
☐ Yes, all of these options are available
☐ Yes, some of these options are available
☐ No, none of the options are available

Are mentorship or apprenticeship programs available?
☐ Yes, a formal program is in place
☐ Yes, although it is somewhat informal or loosely organized
☐ No, there are no provisions

Are tutors available to assist with class work or assignments?
☐ Yes, tutors are available and easily accessed for many academic issues
☐ Yes; however, they are limited in availability and use
☐ No, there are no tutoring programs associated with this program

Is adaptive technology such as listening devices or talking computers available?
☐ Yes, extensively
☐ Yes, basic technology
☐ No, not really

Are you willing to invest the necessary time in required courses that may not be of high interest?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No

Is it possible to "test out" of some of the basic courses?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Are course substitutions an option?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Transportation

Is transportation to class/campus necessary?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Can you tolerate:
- ☐ Car
- ☐ Taxi
- ☐ Public bus
- ☐ Van
- ☐ Bike
- ☐ Walking

How long is the average walk from class to class?

Are you able to manage the walk and be in class on time?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Most of the time

Do you need to know exact times transportation will arrive?
- ☐ Yes within 5 minutes
- ☐ Within 20 minutes
- ☐ I can wait a long time

Are any modifications required due to weather?
- ☐ I can't wait as long when it is too hot, cold, wet
- ☐ I will need alternate transportation when it is raining/snowing
- ☐ The weather does not affect the transportation

3. Social Components

Does the educational program offer and support peer training and awareness of ASD and disability in order to facilitate the acceptance, appreciation and inclusion of students with ASD?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Yes, but it needs to be expanded/modified
- ☐ No, but the school program is planning to include this training soon
- ☐ No

What is the level of interaction(s) expected or accepted?
- ☐ Formal: greetings and manners
- ☐ Informal: small talk and sharing personal life
- ☐ Email for office communication
- ☐ Phone interaction is necessary

Have the following expectations of the educational program been clearly defined? (Check all that apply).
- ☐ Clearly defined boundaries of interaction with classmates, peers, faculty
- ☐ Relationships between classmates vs. roommates vs. casual acquaintances vs. upper classmates, etc.
- ☐ Timelines for assignments
- ☐ Navigation sills/requirements to function in a work group or class
- ☐ Expectations for break-time/mealtime (Where can or do students go for breaks/meals?)

Grooming and hygiene

What will be the expectation of dress:
- ☐ Business wear
- ☐ Casual wear
- ☐ Jeans
- ☐ Uniform

Expectations of grooming
- ☐ Meticulous grooming/dress is expected (nails manicured/clean, styled hair, make-up)
- ☐ Casual is acceptable (hair pulled up, hats, sandals)
- ☐ Faculty and students expect others to bathe, wash hair, use deodorant everyday
- ☐ Faculty and students are more flexible in their acceptance of hygiene. Skipping a day of washing is acceptable as long as I do not appear or smell dirty

Is there someone in the workplace who can *respectfully* facilitate acceptable grooming and hygiene?
- ☐ Yes – This person has already been identified
- ☐ There are several possibilities, no one has been identified
- ☐ No – There is no one available
- ☐ The potential student does not want to be reminded of these issues. Need to create other interventions in this area if grooming/hygiene becomes unacceptable

Living Arrangements

What opportunities for recreation are offered on campus? In the community?

What opportunities for entertainment are offered on campus? In the community?

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What opportunities for shopping are available on campus? In the community?

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How safe is the campus? The community?

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What types of living arrangements are available? (Check all that apply).
☐ Roommate(s) How many?
☐ Private room
☐ On campus
☐ Off campus
☐ Assigned roommate
☐ One can request or make own arrangements
☐ Private bedroom
☐ Shared bedroom
☐ Dorms/apartments close to classes/library
☐ Dorms/apartments far from classes/library
☐ Planned activities for residents
☐ Live at home
☐

What are the curfews?

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What are the visiting hours?

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Do the housing arrangements have the resources for laundry, meals, etc.
☐ Yes, in the apartment
☐ Yes, on the same floor
☐ Yes, within the building
☐ Yes, within a short distance of the building
☐ No, one must leave the area

Do housing arrangements have resources for meals or meal preparation?
- ☐ Yes, meals may be prepared in the apartment
- ☐ Yes, meals may be prepared on the same floor
- ☐ Yes, food may be purchased within the building
- ☐ Yes, food may be purchased within a short distance of the building
- ☐ Yes, there is a cafeteria on campus that is available
- ☐ Yes, there are many fast food restaurants close by
- ☐ No, one must leave the area/campus in order to find restaurants
- ☐ One must leave the campus to purchase groceries

1) Highlight items that could potentially be a major barrier to obtaining or maintaining enrollment in the program.

2) Determine if interventions, supports and accommodations can be created to address areas where there is a mismatch between personal work style, environment and social expectations of the potential education program.

Employability/Life Skills Assessment

Ages 14-21 years

developed by
Roberta Weaver
And Joseph R. DeLuca

STUDENT INFORMATION

Name: _____   Birthdate: _____

RATIONALE

Employability skills are those personal social behaviors and daily living habits that have been identified by employers and young entry-level workers as essential for obtaining employment and for success in the work place. These are life skills that must be taught with the same rigor as basic skills. The development of such skills is a life long process, with performance being relative to a student's ability and age. Teachers at all age levels have the responsibility to teach employability skills.

GENERAL DIRECTIONS

This criterion-referenced checklist may be used yearly, beginning at the age of 14, to assess student's level of performance in the twenty-four critical employability skill areas identified by Ohio's Employability Skills Project. Three descriptors are provided for each skill. **Student performance should be rated using the following scale: 3 = usually, 2 = sometimes, 1= seldom, 0 = never.**

EXAMPLE (for a 14 year old student)

I. SELF HELP SKILLS

AGE

A. Demonstrates personal hygiene and grooming by:

— meeting teacher expectation for cleanliness.

— meeting teacher expectation for good grooming (hair combed, shirt tucked in, etc.

— meeting teacher expectation for consistent, independent personal hygiene and grooming.

	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	2							
	1							
	1							
T	4							

AGE

B. Dresses appropriately by:

— choosing and wearing clothes that are appropriate for the weather/activity/social custom.

— identifying when clothes should not be worn (dirty, ill fitting, etc.).

— wearing clothes that are in good condition, clean and pressed with detail given to appearance.

	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	2							
	3							
	1							
T	6							

Scores for each descriptor are added, provided a value that can be recorded on the Student Profile of Employability Skills. When completed, the profile yields a graphic representation of employability skills performance that will help in planning instruction.

SCORE	SELF-HELP SKILLS				WORK HABITS			TASK RELATED		WORK QUANTITY			WORK QUALITY		RELATIONS: SUPERVISOR			RELATIONS: PEERS			WORK ATTITUDES				SCORE	AGE
	HYGIENE, GROOMING	DRESSES APPROPRIATELY	TRAVELS INDEPENDENTLY	COMMUNICATES EFFECTIVELY	ATTENDS, ON TIME	STAYS ON TASK	WORKS INDEPENDENTLY	CARES FOR TOOLS, ETC.	PRACTICES SAFETY	COMPLETES WORK	EXHIBITS STAMINA	ADAPTS TO DEMANDS	CHOICES, DECISIONS	CORRECTS MISTAKES	ACCEPTS CRITICISM	FOLLOWS DIRECTIONS	SEEKS HELP	WORKS COOPERATIVELY	SHOWS RESPECT	LANGUAGE, MANNERS	PERSONAL GOALS	SHOWS INITIATIVE	VALUES, REWARDS	PRIDE IN WORK		
9																									9	14 YEARS
8																									8	
7																									7	
6																									6	
5																									5	
4																									4	
3																									3	
2																									2	
1																									1	
0																									0	

OHIO'S EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS PROJECT

KEY: 3 = USUALLY, 2 = SOMETIMES, 1 = SELDOM, 0 = NEVER

I. SELF HELP SKILLS

AGE

A. *Demonstrates personal hygiene and grooming by:*

14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21

— meeting teacher expectation for cleanliness.

— meeting teacher expectation for good grooming (hair combed, shirt tucked in, etc.).

— meeting teacher expectation for consistent, independent personal hygiene and grooming.   **T**

B. *Dresses appropriately by:*

— choosing and wearing clothes that are appropriate for the weather/activity/social custom.

— identifying when clothes should not be worn (dirty, ill fitting, etc.).

— wearing clothes that are in good condition, clean and pressed with detail given to appearance.   **T**

C. *Travels independently by:*

— walking or riding to school, following safety rules.

— getting around the school building or grounds.

— getting around the community.   **T**

D. *Communicates effectively by:*

— demonstrating effective listening skills, including eye contact.

— expressing self, answering and asking questions.

— demonstrating expected conversational skills (turn taking, choice of appropriate topic, etc.).   **T**

II. GENERAL WORK HABITS

A. *Attends regularly/arrives on time by:*

— having no unexcused absences.

— arriving at class, school, or work on time.

— following school procedures when tardy or absent.   **T**

B. *Stays on task by:*

— meeting teacher expectations regarding length of time on task.

— completing a task without being distracted.

— returning to task if distracted.   **T**

C. *Works independently by:*

AGE

14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21

— locating materials.

— beginning work promptly.

— asking peers/teachers questions about a given task at the appropriate time.   **T**

III. TASK RELATED SKILLS

A. *Cares for tools, materials, and work area by:*

— meeting expectations for the use of tools and materials (scissors, paste, screwdriver, etc.).

— locating and returning work materials and belongings to the proper storage area.

— maintaining and caring for work and living area.   **T**

B. *Practices safety rules by:*

— stating and using safety rules appropriate to grade level and situation.

— using tools and materials only for their specified purpose.

— demonstrating correct safety procedures in simulated emergency situations.   **T**

IV. QUANTITY OF WORK

A. *Completes work on time by:*

— completing work on time with teacher prompts.

— completing work on time without teacher prompts.

— working at an acceptable speed for a given task.   **T**

B. *Exhibits stamina by:*

— finishing age-appropriate tasks without a break.

— maintaining an acceptable level of speed without tiring.

— completing new tasks without diminishing the level of performance of former tasks.   **T**

C. *Adapts to increased demands in workload by:*

— responding to additional tasks with teacher prompts.

— attempting new tasks without demonstrating frustration.

— responding to additional tasks without teacher prompts.   **T**

OHIO'S EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS PROJECT

KEY: 3 = USUALLY, 2 = SOMETIMES, 1 = SELDOM, 0 = NEVER

V. QUALITY OF WORK

AGE

A. *Makes appropriate choices and decisions by:*

14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21

— choosing an appropriate solution when given options.

— making age-appropriate decisions without teacher intervention.

— responding to a problem situation with reasonable alternative solutions.

T

B. *Recognizes and corrects mistakes by:*

— examining work for errors before submitting it.

— using self-check methods to evaluate work.

— making corrections once an error has been identified.

T

VI. RELATIONSHIP TO SUPERVISOR/TEACHER

A. *Accepts constructive criticism from supervisor/teacher by:*

— listening to constructive criticism without making inappropriate gestures or comments.

— making specified changes based on constructive criticism.

— identifying that changes have been made and that performance has improved.

T

B. *Follows directions from supervisor/ teacher by:*

— correctly completing tasks following verbal directions.

— correctly completing tasks following written directions

— communicating and accepting consequences for not following directions.

T

C. *Seeks help when needed by:*

— identifying when help is needed.

— asking for assistance when help is needed.

— using requested information to remedy the problem.

T

VII. RELATIONSHIP TO PEERS

A. *Works cooperatively with peers by:*

— working well with others.

— seeking help from co-workers.

— directing co-workers without being overbearing.

T

AGE

B. *Shows respect for the rights and property of others by:*

14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21

— taking turns.

— asking permission to use another's property.

— treating borrowed property with respect.

T

C. *Uses appropriate language and manners with peers by:*

— using everyday manners (please, thank you).

— avoiding teasing/ridiculing others.

— using language appropriate for a given situation.

T

VIII. WORK ATTITUDES

A. *Develops and seeks personal goals by:*

— demonstrating short term personal goals such as completing daily work.

— explaining planned activities for after school, weekend or vacation.

— seeking and developing personal goals that are viable and consistent with abilities and limitations.

T

B. *Shows initiative by:*

— beginning a task as soon as requested to do so.

— beginning a task without prompting.

— asking for additional work or directions once a task is completed

T

C. *Accepts societal values and rewards by:*

— acknowledging various types of rewards for work well done (stickers, free time, etc.).

— recognizing when good work has been done.

— responding appropriately when praised for doing a good job.

T

D. *Takes pride in working by:*

— sharing accomplishments with others (takes papers home, collects stickers, responds to point systems/ grades.

— working for positions requiring improvement in skills.

— contributing to the common good of the group.

T

OHIO'S EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS PROJECT

CHILD PROFILE OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Category	Skills
SELF-HELP SKILLS	HYGIENE, GROOMING; DRESSES APPROPRIATELY; TRAVELS INDEPENDENTLY; COMMUNICATES EFFECTIVELY
WORK HABITS	ATTENDS, ON TIME; STAYS ON TASK; WORKS INDEPENDENTLY
TASK RELATED	CARES FOR TOOLS, ETC.; PRACTICES SAFETY
WORK QUANTITY	COMPLETES WORK; EXHIBITS STAMINA; ADAPTS TO DEMANDS
WORK QUALITY	CHOICES, DECISIONS; CORRECTS MISTAKES
RELATIONS: SUPERVI-	ACCEPTS CRITICISM; FOLLOWS DIRECTIONS; SEEKS HELP
RELATIONS: PEERS	WORKS COOPERATIVELY; SHOWS RESPECT; LANGUAGE, MANNERS
WORK ATTITUDES	PERSONAL GOALS; SHOWS INITIATIVE; VALUES, REWARDS; PRIDE IN WORK

SCORE: 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

AGE rows: 14 YEARS, 15 YEARS, 16 YEARS, 17 YEARS, 18 YEARS, 19 YEARS, 20 YEARS, 21 YEARS

Completed by _____
Date Administered _____

OHIO'S EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS PROJECT

Employability/Life Skills Assessment
Parent Form
Ages 14-21 years

developed by
Roberta Weaver
And Joseph R. DeLuca

CHILD'S INFORMATION

Name: _____   Birthdate: _____

RATIONALE

Employability skills are those personal social behaviors and daily living habits that have been identified by employers and young entry-level workers as essential for obtaining employment and for success in the work place. These are life skills that must be taught with the same rigor as basic skills. The development of such skills is a life long process, with performance being relative to a child's ability and age. Parents have the responsibility to teach and expect employability skills from children of all ages.

GENERAL DIRECTIONS

This criterion-referenced checklist may be used yearly, beginning at the age of 14, to assess child's level of performance in the twenty-four critical employability skill areas identified by Ohio's Employability Skills Project. Three descriptors are provided for each skill. **Child performance should be rated using the following scale: 3 = usually, 2 = sometimes, 1= seldom, 0 = never.**

EXAMPLE (for a 14 year old child)

I. SELF HELP SKILLS

AGE

A. Demonstrates personal hygiene and grooming by:

	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
— meeting parent expectation for cleanliness.	2							
— meeting parent expectation for good grooming (hair combed, shirt tucked in, etc.	1							
— meeting parent expectation for consistent, independent personal hygiene and grooming.	1							
T	4							

AGE

B. Dresses appropriately by:

	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
— choosing and wearing clothes that are appropriate for the weather/activity/ social custom.	2							
— identifying when clothes should not be worn (dirty, ill fitting, etc.).	3							
— wearing clothes that are in good condition, clean and pressed with detail given to appearance.	1							
T	6							

Scores for each descriptor are added, provided a value that can be recorded on the Child Profile of Employability Skills. When completed, the profile yields a graphic representation of employability skills performance that will help in planning instruction.

S C O R E	SELF-HELP SKILLS				WORK HABITS			TASK RELATED		WORK QUANTITY			WORK QUALITY		RELATIONS: SUPERVISOR			RELATIONS: PEERS			WORK ATTITUDES				S C O R E	A G E
	HYGIENE, GROOMING	DRESSES APPROPRIATELY	TRAVELS INDEPENDENTLY	COMMUNICATES EFFECTIVELY	ATTENDS, ON TIME	STAYS ON TASK	WORKS INDEPENDENTLY	CARES FOR TOOLS, ETC.	PRACTICES SAFETY	COMPLETES WORK	EXHIBITS STAMINA	ADAPTS TO DEMANDS	CHOICES, DECISIONS	CORRECTS MISTAKES	ACCEPTS CRITICISM	FOLLOWS DIRECTIONS	SEEKS HELP	WORKS COOPERATIVELY	SHOWS RESPECT	LANGUAGE, MANNERS	PERSONAL GOALS	SHOWS INITIATIVE	VALUES, REWARDS	PRIDE IN WORK		
9																									9	
8																									8	
7																									7	14
6																									6	Y
5																									5	E
4																									4	A
3																									3	R
2																									2	S
1																									1	
0																									0	

OHIO'S EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS PROJECT

KEY: 3 = USUALLY, 2 = SOMETIMES, 1 = SELDOM, 0 = NEVER

I. SELF HELP SKILLS

AGE

A. *Demonstrates personal hygiene and grooming by:*

14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21

— meeting parent expectation for cleanliness.

— meeting parent expectation for good grooming (hair combed, shirt tucked in, etc.)

— meeting parent expectation for daily independent personal hygiene and grooming. **T**

B. *Dresses appropriately by:*

— choosing and wearing clothes that are appropriate for the weather/activity/social custom.

— identifying when clothes should not be worn (dirty, ill fitting, etc.).

— wearing clothes that are in good condition, clean and pressed with detail given to appearance. **T**

C. *Demonstrates mobility skills by:*

— walking or riding in the neighborhood, following safety rules.

— getting around the neighborhood and when on outings, public buildings.

— getting around the community. **T**

D. *Communicates effectively by:*

— demonstrating effective listening skills, including eye contact.

— expressing self, answering and asking questions.

— demonstrating expected conversational skills (turn taking, choice of appropriate topic, etc.). **T**

II. GENERAL WORK HABITS

A. *Demonstrates awareness of time by:*

— being ready for school on time.

— being on time for scheduled family/leisure activities.

— following family rules for reporting when delayed. **T**

B. *Stays on task by:*

— meeting parent expectations regarding length of time on task.

— completing a task without being distracted.

— returning to task if distracted. **T**

C. Works independently by:

AGE

14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21

— locating materials.

— beginning work promptly.

— asking family members/peers questions about a given task at the appropriate time. **T**

III. TASK RELATED SKILLS

A. *Cares for work and living area by:*

— meeting expectations for the use of work materials and belongings.

— locating and returning work materials and belongings to the proper storage area.

— maintaining and caring for work and living area. **T**

B. *Practices safety rules by:*

— using proper caution around stove, electricity, water, stairs, etc.

— using tools and materials only for their specified purpose.

— demonstrating correct safety procedures in simulated emergency situations. **T**

IV. QUANTITY OF WORK

A. *Completes tasks on time by:*

— completing tasks on time with parent prompts.

— completing tasks on time with-out parent prompts.

— working at an acceptable speed for a given task. **T**

B. *Exhibits stamina by:*

— finishing age-appropriate tasks without a break.

— maintaining an acceptable level of speed without tiring.

— completing/learning new tasks without diminishing the level of performance of former tasks. **T**

C. *Adapts to increased demands in workload by:*

— responding to additional tasks with parent prompts.

— attempting new tasks without demonstrating frustration.

— responding to additional tasks without parent prompts. **T**

OHIO'S EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS PROJECT

V. QUALITY OF WORK

AGE

A. *Makes appropriate choices and decisions by:*

14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21

— choosing an appropriate solution when given options.

— making age-appropriate decisions without parent intervention.

— responding to a problem situation with reasonable alternative solutions.

T

B. *Recognizes and corrects mistakes by:*

— checking to see if task is correct before considering it complete.

— using self-check methods to evaluate tasks.

— making corrections once an error has been identified.

T

VI. RELATIONSHIP TO PARENT/ADULT

A. *Accepts constructive criticism from parent/adult by:*

— listening to constructive criticism without making inappropriate gestures or comments.

— making specified changes based on constructive criticism.

— identifying that changes have been made and that performance has improved.

T

B. *Follows directions from parent/adult by:*

— correctly completing tasks following verbal directions.

— correctly completing tasks following written directions

— communicating and accepting consequences for not following directions.

T

C. *Seeks help when needed by:*

— identifying when help is needed.

— asking for assistance when help is needed.

— using requested information to remedy the problem.

T

VII. RELATIONSHIP TO PEERS

A. *Cooperates with peers by:*

— getting along well with others.

— seeking help from peers.

— directing peers without being overbearing.

T

AGE

B. *Shows respect for the rights and property of others by:*

14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21

— taking turns.

— asking permission to use another's property.

— treating borrowed property with respect.

T

C. *Uses appropriate language and manners with peers by:*

— using everyday manners (please, thank you).

— avoiding teasing/ridiculing others.

— using language appropriate for a given situation.

T

VIII. WORK ATTITUDES

A. *Develops and seeks personal goals by:*

— demonstrating short term personal goals such as completing daily tasks.

— explaining planned activities for after school, weekend or vacation.

— seeking and developing personal goals that are viable and consistent with ability level.

T

B. *Shows initiative by:*

— beginning a task as soon as requested to do so.

— beginning a task without prompting.

— asking for additional work or directions once a task is completed.

T

C. *Accepts societal values and rewards by:*

— acknowledging various types of rewards for work well done.

— recognizing when good work has been done.

— responding appropriately when praised for doing a good job.

T

D. *Takes pride in working by:*

— sharing accomplishments with others.

— striving for situations requiring improvement and/or expansion in skills.

— contributing to the common good of the family.

T

OHIO'S EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS PROJECT

CHILD PROFILE OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Category	Columns
SELF-HELP SKILLS	HYGIENE, GROOMING; DRESSES APPROPRIATELY; TRAVELS INDEPENDENTLY; COMMUNICATES EFFECTIVELY
WORK HABITS	ATTENDS, ON TIME; STAYS ON TASK; WORKS INDEPENDENTLY
TASK RELATED	CARES FOR TOOLS, ETC.; PRACTICES SAFETY
WORK QUANTITY	COMPLETES WORK; EXHIBITS STAMINA; ADAPTS TO DEMANDS
WORK QUALITY	CHOICES, DECISIONS; CORRECTS MISTAKES
RELATIONS: SUPERVI-	ACCEPTS CRITICISM; FOLLOWS DIRECTIONS; SEEKS HELP
RELATIONS: PEERS	WORKS COOPERATIVELY; SHOWS RESPECT; LANGUAGE, MANNERS
WORK ATTITUDES	PERSONAL GOALS; SHOWS INITIATIVE; VALUES, REWARDS; PRIDE IN WORK

SCORE column (left and right): 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

AGE blocks: 14 YEARS, 15 YEARS, 16 YEARS, 17 YEARS, 18 YEARS, 19 YEARS, 20 YEARS, 21 YEARS

Completed by _____

Date Administered _____

OHIO'S EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS PROJECT