



ODEP

Office of Disability
Employment Policy

Expanding Employment and Career Pathways for Youth and Young Adults on the Autism Spectrum

Transition-Aged Youth Webinar Series
Office of Autism Research Coordination
National Institute of Mental Health

Scott Michael Robertson, PhD
U.S. Department of Labor,
Office of Disability Employment Policy



Driving Change ★ Creating Opportunity



Describe the Presenter's Background



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Outline Webinar Objectives

- Share resources for COVID-19, including for displaced workers and job seekers
- Describe the mission of ODEP and its core initiatives
- Highlight commemoration of 30 Years of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Discuss employment as a social determinant of health
- Share resources on employment access for youth and young adults on the autism spectrum



COVID-19 Impact on U.S.

- Solidarity with individuals and families affected by COVID-19 and displaced workers and job seekers' barriers
- U.S. Department of Labor's website on COVID-19 resources: <https://www.dol.gov/coronavirus>
- CDC's website on COVID-19 and health protection: <https://www.coronavirus.gov/>
- Administration for Community Living's website on COVID-19 and staying safe: <https://acl.gov/COVID-19>
- USA.gov website on the federal response to COVID-19 to protect Americans: <https://www.usa.gov/coronavirus>
- Disaster Distress Helpline from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: 1-800-985-5990



DOL's National Online Dialogue on Family and Medical Leave

- National Online Dialogue on Providing Expanded Family and Medical Leave to Employees Affected by COVID-19
- Participation from March 25 through early April
- Website for the National Online Dialogue:
<https://ffcra.ideascale.com/>
- Registration to participate and share ideas and thoughts:
<https://ffcra.ideascale.com/a/register>



Discuss the Mission of the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)

ODEP is the only non-regulatory federal agency that promotes policies and coordinates with employers and all levels of government to increase workplace success for people with disabilities.

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/>



ODEP's Initiatives Include...

- Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

www.AskJAN.org



- Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology (PEAT) and FutureWorks

www.PEATWorks.org



- EARN: technical assistance for employers

www.AskEARN.org



- Apprenticeship Inclusion Models (AIM) initiative

www.spra.com/aim





U.S. Dept. of Labor supports yearlong commemoration of 30 years of ADA

ADA 30

Americans with Disabilities Act | July 26, 2020

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ADA.htm>

Goals of the ADA Include Ensuring for People with Disabilities...

- Economic Self-sufficiency
- Equality of Opportunity
- Full Participation
- Independent Living

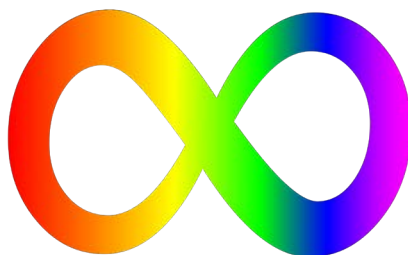


Signing of the ADA into law on July 26, 1990

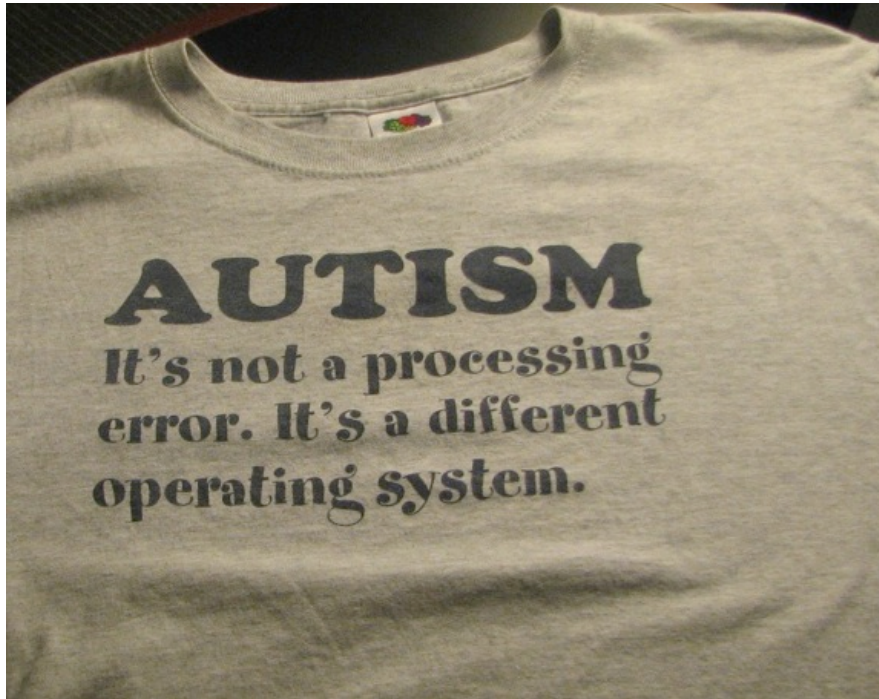


Define Autism

- Neurological developmental disability with an estimated prevalence of 1-2% (U.S., worldwide)
- Atypical learning, thinking, and information processing
- Challenges and strengths in communication, interpersonal interaction, executive functioning, and sensory/motor activities
- Federal Autism CARES Act of 2019:
 - Research, programs, and resources to support people on the autism spectrum and families
 - Expanded emphasis on supporting people on the autism spectrum across the life course from childhood to adult life



Autism Means Atypical Processing of the World...



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Employment Represents a Social Determinant of Health and Wellbeing

- Association between attaining employment and:
 - Higher quality of physical health and wellbeing¹
 - Improved mental health and wellbeing²
- Connection between independent living and activities of daily living to employment opportunities
- Access to healthcare services through employment: health insurance, employee assistance programs



Employment Fosters Health and Wellbeing for People on the Autism Spectrum

- Employment as a facilitator for greater quality of life^{3,4,5}
- Training for vocational skills and employability skills (soft skills) as a facilitator of improved mental health^{6,7}



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Expand Employment and Careers for Youth and Adults on the Autism Spectrum

- Emphasize strengths and talents of people on the autism spectrum to drive employment and career development
- Align gainful employment opportunities with focused interests and vocational interests and preferences
- Mitigate challenges and barriers through:
 - Accessible technology and assistive technology
 - Enhanced work-centered supports and resources
 - Adaptations to the workplace environment (social, physical)
- Foster access to employment-related supports, such as transportation, housing, and healthcare



Supports for Workers on the Autism Spectrum Enhance Performance...

- Workplace and educator trainings on autism (managers, instructors, team members, etc.)
- Sensory adjustments for workplace and classroom settings
- Mentoring, coaching, and team buddies
- Peer supports, including peer mentoring
- Technological assistance, including for communication
- Customized supports, such as for executive functioning



ODEP's Pathways to Careers Grants Include Students on the Autism Spectrum

- Long-term demonstration grants at community colleges
 - Tennessee (Pellissippi State Community College)
 - New York State (Onondaga Community College)
- Significant representation of autism among current students' identified disabilities:
 - Pellissippi: ~70% of participating students who identify on the autism spectrum
 - Onondaga: ~19% of participating students who identify on the autism spectrum
- Additional supports needed for work-centered focuses, including job interviewing and career development



ETA Funded Autism-Focused Grants for Job Development

- Managing the Talent Pipeline in Health Information program
 - American Apprenticeship program (~\$5M/5 yrs.)
 - Autism-focused track for medical coding
- Next Step Job Training and Employment Partnership
 - Tech Hire program (\$4M/5 yrs.)
 - Goal of 450 participants on the autism spectrum in healthcare and IT fields (in the grant proposal)
 - Bootcamps for workforce communication, independent living skills, and employability skills



Resources

Highlight ODEP Resources on Autism

- ODEP's Topic Resources Webpage on Autism and Employment:

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/Autism.htm>

- JAN's Informational Resources on Autism:

- Accommodation and Compliance Series on Autism:

<https://AskJAN.org/disabilities/Autism-Spectrum.cfm>

- Interviewing Tips for Job Seekers on the Autism Spectrum:

<https://AskJAN.org/publications/consultants-corner/vol10iss01.cfm>



Highlight ODEP Resources for Youth and Transition to Employment:

- ODEP's Topic Resources Webpage on Youth:

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/Youth/>

- 411 on Disability Disclosure:

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/publications/the-411-on-disability-disclosure-a-workbook-for-youth-with-disabilities/>

- Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success (curriculum developed in 2012):

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/softskills.pdf>



Highlight Other ODEP Resources (Cont.)

- Apprenticeship.gov: DOL's website on resources for apprenticeships and finding apprenticeships

<https://www.apprenticeship.gov>

- ODEP's Topic Resource Webpage on Apprenticeship:

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/Apprenticeship.htm>



Seek Additional Resources and Information on Employment and Autism

Contact ODEP:

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Contact Dr. Scott Michael Robertson:

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Outline References (1)

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3. Moss, P., Mandy, W., & Howlin, P. (2017). Child and adult factors related to quality of life in adults with autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 47, 1830–1837.
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