



Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services

# **Charting the Job Search Process for Individuals with Autism**

Employment First: Expanding Job Opportunities  
and Pathways to Work Conference

June 11, 2019

# Today's Topics

- Getting Started
- Job Search and Matching Considerations
- Resume Writing and Job Applications
- Framing Expectations
- Interviewing
- Disclosure & Accommodations
- Starting and Maintaining a Job
- Executive Functioning & Tools
- Stress and Anxiety in the Workplace
- Dealing with Rejection
- Accepting a less preferred job



# Getting Started:

## *What to think about and what to ask*

- Strengths, Desires, Goals
- What are the non-negotiables
- How will a new job impact my life. What are my expectations?
- Write it down

# Job Search & Matching Considerations

- What kind of job, industry, and environment is ideal? What is acceptable if not ideal?
- Conduct individualized searches rather than gravitating toward typically available options such as retail.

# Job Search & Matching Considerations

- What are the appropriate settings and might there be potential accommodations? Consider: number of people at employer, whether employer site is open to the public, loud noises, bright lights, etc.
- Have an understanding of where an individual might thrive. Some might do better with predictable, defined duties and few distractions. Others might enjoy fast-paced environments and multiple job functions.

# Resume Writing & Job Applications

- Many companies post applications online that can be printed via print option or by taking a screen shot. Printing applications to fill out by hand can provide practice for when applications need to be completed at employer sites.
- Free resume and cover letter templates are available on the Microsoft Office.com website:  
<https://templates.office.com/en-us/Resumes-and-Cover-Letters>

# Framing Expectations

- Celebrate the success of being chosen for an interview.
- Employers see many applications and resumes to fill one job. More than 20 people could apply for the same job.
- Employers might interview 5-10 people for one open job.

# Framing Expectations

- What's realistic?
- Understanding the individual's skill set and growth potential



# Framing Expectations

*Corporate culture*

*It's not just about the skills...*

- Helping employers see the benefits of hiring our individual's
- Cost/Benefit Analysis

# Interviewing

- Role play
- Practice mock phone or Skype interviews
- Interview questions: Practice novel, expected, and nuanced questions with family/friends/coach.
- Practice small talk
- Review calming techniques and coping skills

# Interviewing

- Research and preparation
- Interviewer: “Do you have any questions for us?”
  - **Be prepared with a go-to question.**
- Do a dry run of transportation and travel time prior to the interview.



# Disclosure & The ADA

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990. Title I focuses on Employment
- Helps people with disabilities access the same employment opportunities and benefits available to people without disabilities.
- Requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants or employees.
- Defines disability

Source: <https://adata.org/factsheet/ADA-overview>

# Disclosure

- Disclosure is a personal decision
- What to say
- Who to talk to



# Disclosure

- When to disclose
  - Before or after the interview...
  - After receiving a job offer...
  - Anytime during employment...
- Accommodation needs

# Disclosure & Accommodations

- When disclosing, express what you might need to help you be most successful at the job. “For time-management, a written schedule with the allotted time for each task would be helpful.” or “Please help me prioritize my daily tasks.”
- Make your supervisor aware of your learning style. “When being taught new skills, I learn best from modeling, pictures, and written emails instead of speaking face-to face”
- “Please provide me with a map/layout of the office”

# Starting & Maintaining a Job

- What are the social expectations of the job?
- Individuals can set expectations with coworkers without disclosing. It may be helpful to let co-workers know if you like to eat lunch by yourself but that you would also be interested in socializing after work.
- Figure out a place to go for refuge in or around the building for quiet place when anxiety builds.
- Transfer employment supports to natural supports in the workplace.
- Maintaining a job coach for occasional check-ins can be helpful.



# Executive Functioning & Tools for Success

Problem Solving, Organization, Attending, Working Memory

- Task Analysis (TA)
- Checklists
- Organizers
- Instruction sheets
- Notebooks

# Stress & Anxiety in the Workplace

Let a supervisor know what's helpful, such as:

- Clear Directions
- Clear Feedback
- Email instead of face-to-face conversation (if possible)

Sensory sensitivities in the workplace can increase anxiety

- Ask for a work station in a desired location
- If disclosing, let a supervisor know how they can help



# Dealing with rejection

- The job search process for any job seeker is a numbers game.
- Interviews that don't result in jobs...
- Interviewing provides valuable experience

# Accepting a less preferred job

## *Questions to ask...*

- Is an individual being set up for disappointment if they accept a job they don't want or don't feel comfortable with?
- If an individual goes to a job they don't like or they find difficult to tolerate, is there a greater likeliness of being fired?
- To a build a resume and gain experience, does it make sense to accept a less desirable job while looking for a better fit?

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# Resources

EmploymentFirstMA Webinar Archives: Words of Wisdom: Achieving Successful Jobs for Individual's with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) (March 23, 2016)

<http://connectpro97884399.adobeconnect.com/p808d5mnflg/>

WEBINAR: Making a Good Match - Introduction to Employment for People with Autism (February 24, 2015)

<http://connectpro97884399.adobeconnect.com/p95pb2erxca/>

WEBINAR: Making the Best Impression: Using Visual Resumes for Success (June 29, 2017)

<http://connectpro97884399.adobeconnect.com/psat7180r2r6/>

# Resources - page 2

EmploymentFirstMA Resource Library Home

[https://employmentfirstma.org/pages/resource\\_lib.html](https://employmentfirstma.org/pages/resource_lib.html)

Institute for Community Inclusion: Supporting Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Quality Employment Practices:

[https://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article\\_id=266&type=topic&id=3](https://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=266&type=topic&id=3)

An Overview of the Americans With Disabilities Act

<https://adata.org/factsheet/ADA-overview>