Current Trends in Autism Employment

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What we DON'T know

- No data on percent unemployed in U.S
  - Surveys from UK and Europe – 85% unemployed
  - NLTS data – 80% of transition aged unemployed
- No data on number of adults with ASD
  - CDC data: 8-year-old children
  - IDEA data: school-aged
- No data on percentages of "classic autism" vs. "high functioning" / Aspergers

Scott Standifer

- Disability Policy & Studies
  - Assistant Director
    - Region 7 TACE (Technical Assistance & Continuing Education) – Formerly RCEP 7
  - Supporting State Voc Rehab Agencies in MO, IA, NE, KS
- Primary Author, online Adult Autism & Employment: a guide for rehabilitation professionals

Organizer, Autism Works National Conference
- March 6 & 7, 2011, St. Louis, MO
- "Building Better Careers for Adults with Autism"
- Autism Works Facebook Page

National expansion of Walgreens autism employment
Improving Transition for clients with ASD
Panel of employers
Open job counseling session
The Great Wave

- Unpublished Data from Rehabilitation Services Administration
  - Nationally, people with autism applying for VR services increased 300% from 2003 to 2008
  - Increase due entirely to transition students
  - 2003 is ten years after the beginning of IDEA data

IDEA & RSA Data Comparison

- IDEA Data 1994 - 1999
  - IDEA data 1994 – 1999 – the curves are very similar

- RSA Data 2003 -2008
  - Comparing to the 15-year IDEA data, there is reason to think RSA numbers will continue to climb

Three “Camps” Involved in Autism Employment – Scott’s Impressions

- Autism Community
- Disability Employment Services Community
- Business Community
Three “Camps” Involved in Autism Employment – Scott’s Impressions

Autism Community
- Social workers, special ed folks, autism activists
  - Peter Gerhardt, Jed Baker, parent advocates
  - Adapting standard job development literature to autism
- Various small projects starting up
  - Expansions of child-focused projects to adult issues
  - Many college-based projects for people with Asperger’s attending college
- Usually little or no contact with VR community

Disability Employment Services Community
- Lots of experience in practical skills of job development and support
- Deep roots in disability community, person centered planning
- Little experience on specifics of autism
- Several CRPs adding autism services to offerings
  - A few VR-funded autism pilot projects

A few CRPS have been providing employment services for decades
- Autism Services Association, Wellesley, MA
- Jay Nolan Center, Los Angeles, CA
- Cove Center, Providence, RI
- TEACCH, Chapel Hill, NC

Business Community
- Working in collaboration with employment specialists
  - James Emmett, Deb Russell, Jennifer Rapella, Kathy West-Evans
- Using autism as “template disability”
  - Building “internal capacity” / corporate culture / toolkit
- Loose connections to VR
- Business-to-business peer-mentoring
Research

- National Institute on Disability & Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR)
  - 2009 - 2 five-year projects: VR Service Models for Individuals with ASD
    - Virginia Commonwealth University - ASD Career Links
    - SEDL (Southeast Development Laboratory), Austin, TX – VR Service Models Project

ASD Career Links

- 4 Core Elements
  - Project Search application to autism
  - Survey of college students with ASD in Virginia about service needs
  - Archival review of VR economic data on ASD clients
  - Use of smart phone apps for people with ASD

ASD Career Links

- Some results published in April, 2010 issue of Journal of Voc Rehab

- http://www.vcu-autism.org/

SEDL VR Service Models Project

- 4 Core Elements
  - Review of scientific literature on autism employment
  - Nominations from VR administrators for exemplary ASD VR service providers
  - Field test of "best practices" approaches with a Florida service provider
  - 5 Case studies from Florida provider
SEDL “Effective Program” Candidates

First four “Model” programs

- POW&R (Productive Opportunities for Work & Recreation)
  - Newark, DE,
  - a project of Autism Delaware
  - Started in 2007
  - Serving around 25 clients
  - Placing around 80%
  - No work groups
  - [http://www.delautism.org/POW&R/powr.html](http://www.delautism.org/POW&R/powr.html)

SEDL “Effective Program” Candidates

First four “Model” programs

- Job Path
  - New York City, DD service program
  - Very early advocate of supported employment approach, started in 1978
  - 2004 – Autism specific services
  - 41 individuals served in 2009
  - 1/3 placed, 1/3 supported in existing employment, 1/3 not placed
  - Minimal use of job coaching, lots of natural supports

SEDL “Effective Program” Candidates

First four “Model” programs

- TEACCH Supported Employment Program
  - UNC Chapel Hill
  - Employment program started in 1989
  - 31 individuals served in 2009
  - Placed all
  - 163 clients getting ongoing job coaching / supported employment

SEDL “Effective Program” Candidates

First four “Model” programs

- Wildwood Programs, Employment Services Division
  - Created in 1984 to serve cohort of children aging out of original services
  - 40 clients served in 2011, 30 placed in competitive employment
Research - NLTS

Paul Shattuck, Washington University

- National Longitudinal Transition Survey
- Article in Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine, Feb, 2011
  - Service use of young adults with ASD
    - Mental health, medical eval, speech therapy, case management
    - 40% used case management services
    - 39% used no services
- Upcoming Article in Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, Spring 2012, review of adult autism research

Research – Employer Supports

Alissa Parr

- Graduate Student, Industrial/Organizational Psychology, Pennsylvania State University
- Master's Thesis: Role of supervisor behavior in engagement of employees with ASD
  - Research complete but unpublished
  - Interviewed 52 working adults with ASD and 15 employers
  - Employees were mostly high functioning, only 60% had disclosed

Research – Employer Supports

Alisha Parr

- Overall, supervisors rated the performance of their employees with autism as above average
  - 52% rated as "above expectations" or "excellent"
- What Employees Valued Most in Employer Behavior:
  - Support & encouragement to employees
  - Coaching employees on difficult tasks
  - Clearly explaining expectations, rules, & procedures

Employment Service Models

- A variety of models emerging
  - Most are established VR models
  - No real data on which are more “successful”
  - Most rely heavily on long-term job coaching
- Issue in VR funding
  - VR services are, by definition, goal oriented toward achieving employment
  - VR will not fund long-term job coaching
  - Locating funding for long-term job coaching CAN be a goal of VR service
  - Natural supports as alternative to long-term job coaching
**TEACCH Models**

**TEACCH Supported Employment Program**
- Uses 4 different employment models
  - Full Time Job Coach “One to One Model”
    - Full time job coach for each individual
  - Enclaves – “Shared group support Model”
    - 2-5 people, 1 full-time job coach
  - Mobile Work Team
    - Landscaping, cleaning, yard work
  - Individualized Employment
    - Job coach circulates among 12 or so individuals

**Farmstead Model**
- Farmstead model
  - Roots back to Sibyl Elgar, Somerset Court, 1974
  - In U.S., Bittersweet Farms,
    - Founded in 1978 in Whitehouse, OH
    - Farm-based residential and employment facility
    - Variety of activities
    - www.bittersweetfarms.org/
  - Some criticism about segregation or “rural sheltered workshop” aspect

**Corporate Development Model**
- James Emmett, APSE HR Connect
  - Often confused with Employer Development
    - Employer development - a network of local contacts interested in hiring people with disabilities
      - Job developer connects clients and businesses, provides job coaching & other supports
    - Corporate Development
      - Build self-sustaining natural supports into the work environment in advance
      - Job developer eventually eliminated
      - Connect to VR and CRPs to reach potential employees

**Corporate Development Model**
- Examples
  - Fruits of Employment – TIAA-CREF
    - Work crews in apple orchard, vineyard
  - Wallgreens
    - Regional distribution centers, extending to local stores
  - AMC Theaters FOCUS project
    - Autism Society project, spinoff of Sensory Screenings
    - Implemented nationally, summer 2011
Technology Model

- Cultivating information technology jobs for people on the spectrum
  - Largely focused on Asperger's/"high functioning"
  - Specialisterne Model
    - Software testing services
      - Aspintech in Chicago
      - Specialisterne Minnesota
    - nonPareil in Texas
      - Training on graphics and game design

Support Models – Job Club

- Hot Topics Groups, Kansas City
  - Kate Duffy, co-author, Developing Talents
  - 8-week educational group
  - Meet weekly at a restaurant/coffeehouse
  - Discuss
    - social, career-planning and job-readiness skills.
    - workplace topics or issues
  - Practice social and problem-solving skills.
  - learn about learning/thinking styles, job seeking strategies
  - http://www.developingtalents.com

Conferences

- Autism Works National Conference
  - Profile emerging best practices in autism employment supports
  - Connecting ASD community and disability employment community

- Autism Society of Minnesota
  - Autism and Employment Forum
    - Feb, 2011
    - Planned for October, 2012
  - Outreach to local corporations
    - 3M, Cargill, Best Buy
    - Temple Grandin Keynote
Conferences
- Rutgers University
  - Transportation Choices for Individuals with Autism
  - Center for Advanced Infrastructure & Transportation
  - Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center
  - April, 2011

CARF Accreditation
- Standards for adult autism services finished in 2007
  - Lifelong self-advocacy skills.
  - Lifelong supports and community resources.
  - Social contacts and support communities.
  - Research-based therapies.
  - Network with governmental, educational, and other community resources.
  - Train staff on the unique features and needs of autism.
  - Facilitate transitions from school to adulthood & work.
- http://www.carf.org/home/

CARF Accredited Providers
- Planning.
  - 14 organizations in the US
  - 29 locations
  - 9 states

VR Activities
- Statewide autism coordinators
- Interest in trainings
- Some pilot projects on autism employment
- Missouri VR
  - Autism Coordinator Karla Bunch, Joplin, MO
  - Stakeholders group revising VR model
  - Melanie McDonald-Student (MO VR), Chris Davison (Alternative Opportunities) Springfield, MO
  - Job development models for clients with ASD
Advocacy Groups

Many autism advocacy groups have added adult issues
- Employment an afterthought
- A few groups are focused entirely on adult issues, including employment
  - Asperger Syndrome Training and Employment Partnership (ASTEP)
  - Advancing Futures for Adults with Autism (AFAA)
  - Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation

Self advocacy groups beginning to get involved on employment
- Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)
  - Focus on activism and legislation
  - Internship collaborative with Freddie Mac for adults with autism
  - Recently published "Navigating College Handbook" – first person narratives about college
  - Reaching out to corporations

Advocacy Groups

Self advocacy groups beginning to get involved on employment
- Autistic Global Initiative
  - Spin-off or Autism Research Institute (ARI)
  - Adults with ASD eBulletin
    - Emphasis on independent living, including employment

Jobs 4 Autism

Jobs 4 Autism – social sharing group about work issues and experiences
- http://www.jobs4autism.com/
- Outgrowth of a student project at the University of Notre Dame