

# Recovery Act-funded jobs program helps high school grads who have ASD

April 1 2011

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JobTIPS, a free, Web-based program unveiled today, aims to help youth with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or other disabilities develop and maintain skills needed for successful employment. Supported through the Recovery Act with a grant for just under \$1 million over two years from the National Institutes of Health, this resource targets a critical transition period as teenagers leave the school system, which is usually their primary source of ASD-related services throughout childhood.

"Finding and holding onto a job is difficult for everyone these days, but people who have ASD may be at particular disadvantages," noted Thomas R. Insel, M.D., director of the National Institute of Mental Health, part of NIH. "JobTIPS not only helps to put young adults with ASD on equal footing as their peers, but also ensures that employers see the skills and talents they have to offer."

Successful employment is key to greater independence for people with ASD. But symptoms of the disorder—social impairment, communication difficulties, and repetitive and stereotyped behaviors—often pose major barriers for finding and maintaining appropriate work.

In response to this issue, Dorothy Strickland, Ph.D., of Do2Learn.com, and colleagues developed the JobTIPS website (<http://www.do2learn.com/JobTIPS/index.html>). Similar to other career building websites, JobTIPS presents text, audio, and video related to seeking and applying for jobs, managing work responsibilities, and

interacting with co-workers. Keeping youth with ASD in mind, the site also provides detailed explanations of how to behave in specific situations, such as what to say and not say to a potential employer, and when and how to disclose their diagnosis. The researchers are also developing modules that will allow users to practice job skills, such as interviewing, accepting feedback from supervisors, and engaging in appropriate small talk.

The website also offers resources for educators, job coaches, clinicians, and transition coordinators who support individuals with ASD as they transition out of high school and into vocational education or other post-secondary activities. In addition to the website, JobTIPS is accessible from smart phones, tablet computers, and other remote devices.

Do2Learn.com provided technical expertise in creating JobTIPS, with guidance from two autism research centers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Emory University, Atlanta. The research centers will also help evaluate the effectiveness of JobTIPS in helping teens and [young adults](#) with ASD to learn new job-related skills and apply them in real world situations. Do2Learn.com, based in Raleigh, N.C., specializes in the development of learning resources for individuals with special needs and the professionals and caregivers who work with them.

Provided by National Institutes of Health

Citation: Recovery Act-funded jobs program helps high school grads who have ASD (2011, April 1) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-04-recovery-act-funded-jobs-high-school.html>

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