

Researcher identifies autism employment resources, tips for people with autism spectrum disorders

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Statistics show that the number of people diagnosed with autism has increased steadily over the past 30 years resulting in a surge in the number of adults with autism graduating from high school. However, preliminary employment studies indicate that this population may earn less and be employed at a lower rate compared to other people with disabilities. Now, an autism expert at the University of Missouri is identifying employment resources that are available for people with autism and steps employers can take to improve the workplace and hiring process for this population.

"Despite the increase in diagnoses of autism in children, we know very little about autism in adults," said Scott Standifer, clinical associate professor in the School of Health Professions. "Often, [people](#) don't consider how children with autism will grow up and function outside of school. It is important to find ways for this population to be successful in the [work environment](#)."

Recently, Standifer released the "Fact Sheet on Autism [Employment](#)," which includes information and statistics about the adult autism community, organizations addressing autism employment and resources on workplace accommodations for autism.

Although people with autism often have trouble finding employment, Standifer said there are a number of resources that are available. He

provides the following recommendations and tips to assist [job seekers](#) and employers:

- Use state vocational rehabilitation counselors: One resource that has seen a recent increase in use is state vocational rehabilitation programs. Vocational rehabilitation counselors work with adults with disabilities, including autism, to find career-oriented, competitive paying jobs in their local communities. However, Standifer believes that many in the autism community are unaware of state vocational rehabilitation services.
- Find jobs with consistent routine: People with autism are more likely to succeed in roles featuring lots of consistent routine, consistent social interactions and well-defined tasks.
- Create accessible work environments: Employers can make small adaptations to the workplace that can make a huge difference for people with autism and improve employment opportunities. For example, people with autism often understand written instructions better than verbal instructions, so employers can provide typed directions, rather than just saying them.

"Making workplaces better for adults with autism often does not require major changes," Standifer said. "Usually, what makes a workplace better for people with disabilities makes the workplace better for everyone."

Standifer is working on a "job supports toolkit" to help identify how people with autism could fulfill various roles in the workplace. He has organized the annual Autism Works National Conference to bring together advocates and innovators in employment of adults with [autism](#). Standifer said he foresees the development of an index of options and techniques that vocational rehabilitation professionals and their clients can use to brainstorm more effectively about each person's individual needs.

More information: To view the fact sheet, visit dps.missouri.edu/Autism/AutismFactSheet2011.pdf

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