

Successful Employment of Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication

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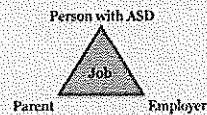
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Introduction

- 50-75% of individuals with ASD are unemployed (1,2)
- 30% of individuals with ASD have complex communication needs and require AAC (3)
- Successful employment outcomes have been observed for individuals who use AAC (4)

What is known about individuals with ASD who use AAC and are successfully employed?

- Qualitative research design
- Perspectives of person with ASD, parent, and employer
- Semi structured interviews
- Thematic analysis



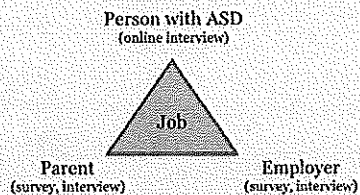
Participants

- 7 male participants
- Ages 20 to 26
- Communication
 - Speech
 - No speech
 - Limited speech
 - AAC
 - Picture-based communication book
 - Proloquo2Go
 - TouchChat
 - TapToTalk

Job Descriptions

- **Work activities (3 to 8 hours per day)**
 - Bookstore (Laurence)
 - Reshelf books, wait on customers, clean
 - Butcher shop (Thomas)
 - Slice and package meats/snacks, wait on customers, clean
 - Cleaning company (David)
 - Clear cleaning area, clean corners/stairs, run buffer
 - Dry cleaners (Chris)
 - Tag/sort clothing, enter into computer, wait on customers
 - Gift shop (Vince)
 - Grocery store (Jason, William)
 - Bag groceries, run register, stock shelves

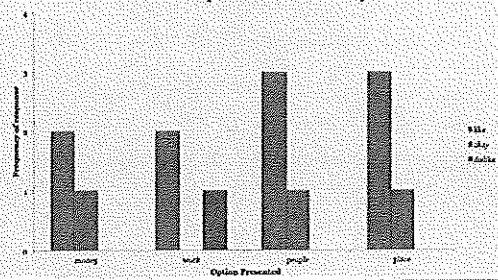
Data Gathering

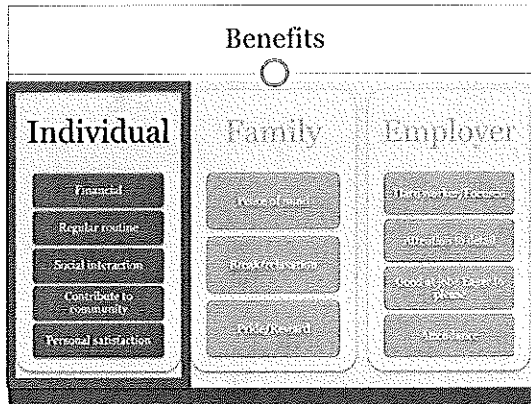
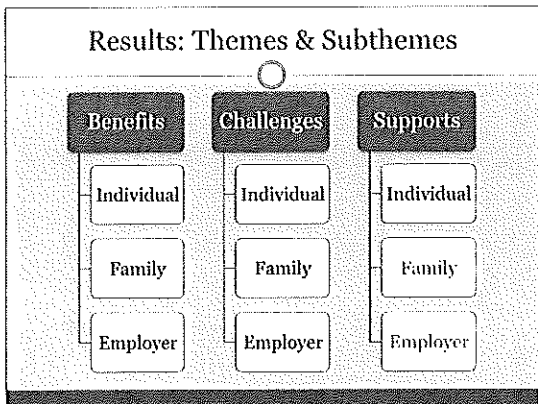


Talking Mats

Individual with ASD

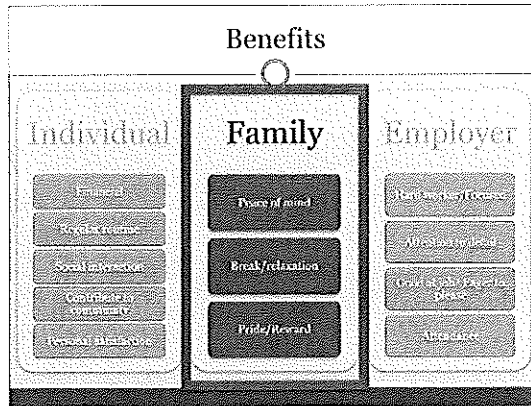
Interview Responses Across Participants





Benefits to Individual

“He gets a paycheck and has something to do during the day and he has made a lot of friends that he never had before. He has learned life skills here.” (Parent L)



Benefits to Family

○

“The biggest benefits are peace of mind for me and something to do for him. I know he’s being productive and happy, and I can have a little break.” (Parent D)

Benefits

○

Individual	Family	Employer
Financial	Peace of mind	Hard worker/focused
Quality routine	Family structure	Attention to detail
Social interaction	Employer/worker	Good at job/ Eager to please
Controlled Environment	Time/Resource	Attendance
Personal care system		

Benefits for Employer

○

“He’s really good at upselling...I’ve never had an employee do that before even when I told them it was part of their job... It’s all programmed into his iPad so when they order a certain meat he presses the button that asks if they want something we’ve recommended pairing.” (Employer T)

Challenges

○

Individual	Family	Employer
Communication	Fear of child losing job	Lack of training
Rules & Routines	Concern about supports	Customer
Gain & Maintain Employment		

Challenges for Family

- "It's so hard for workplaces to accommodate David's needs. He needs so many breaks and things explained so many times so specifically. David has a lot of outbursts – he yells, cries, bangs his head. He doesn't understand how to be around people, doesn't make conversation. How can someone hire someone like that?" (Parent D)

Challenges

Individual	Family	Employer
Communication	Fear of child losing job	Lack of training
Rules & Routines	Concern about supports	Customers
Gain & Maintain Employment		

Challenges for Employer

- "It would be nice if schools or human resources would provide guidelines on working with people who can't speak. It was a lot of trial and error." (Employer J)
- "I just figure it's the customer's problem when they don't get him. They have to be exposed to this kind of thing. If they don't want to be waited on him and deal with him, they're free to go somewhere else. They don't need to do business here if they're going to be like that." (Employer C)

Supports for Individual

Communication	Rules & Routines	Gain & Maintain Employment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decommunication app on mobile device • Use of scripts and programmed phrases • Strategy for gaining attention • Assistance from others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory assistance from others • Visual supports & routines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to job openings • OTR/Community programs • Transportation • Family support

Supports: Communication

“Well he has to talk to the customers so he has phrases in his iPad...So they're in the order he needs them for that page... If he touches just one button it says what he needs to say, like asking the customers how they are today and what day they need their clothes back and if the shirts are boxed or bagged.” (Employer C)

Supports for Individual

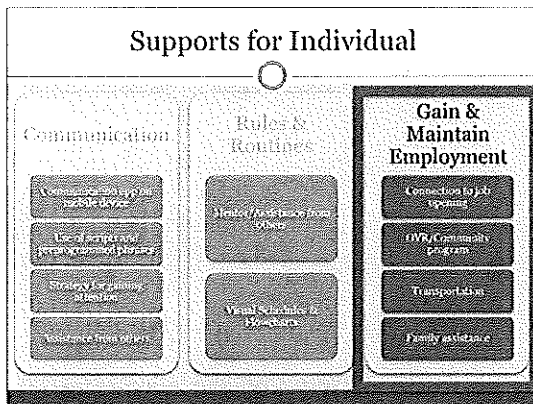
The screenshot shows a software interface with three columns of buttons. The central column, titled 'Rules & Routines', is highlighted with a thick black border. It contains two buttons: 'Monitor/Assistances from others' and 'Visual Schedules & Timelines'. The left column, titled 'Communication', contains four buttons: 'Communication phrases and labels', 'Text supported by photographs & pictures', 'Scripts for getting assistance', and 'Assistance from others'. The right column, titled 'Gain & Maintain Employment', contains four buttons: 'Connect to job supports', 'On/Off computer software', 'Transportation', and 'Family and home'.

Supports: Rules & Routines

“The flow chart was a work in progress the first several weeks. Without it he just stands there not knowing what to do or ignoring customers.” (Employer T)

Supports: Rules & Routines

“Our computer system actually is picture based which is why he was able to progress from bagging to running the register. He can match the produce most of the time.” (Employer W)



Supports: Gain & Maintain Employment

- Previous research:
 - Develop skills that are valued in the workplace
 - Find jobs that are a good match
 - Secure supports to maintain job (5)

Recommendations

- **“Keep pushing and looking for local resources.** There are lots of them out there and lots of people to help you.” (Parent L)
- **“Keep at it!** It’s helpful if you or someone you know own a business. Teach your kids to work hard and everything will fall into place.” (Parent T)
- **“I would recommend putting in the time early on to develop a system for communication that is effective and efficient.”** (Parent C)
- **“It will be the hardest thing you do, but a great legacy for your child.”** (Parent V)

Acknowledgements

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References

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Questions

