



**VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION SERVICE
MODELS FOR INDIVIDUALS
WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM
DISORDERS**

**GUIDE TO
EFFECTIVE
EMPLOYMENT
PROGRAMS**



From October 2008 through September 2013,
**SEDL'S VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
SERVICE MODELS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH
AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS PROJECT**

worked to improve employment outcomes for people with autism spectrum disorders by conducting research and disseminating information about effective strategies and services. The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at the University of Central Florida was SEDL's partner in this project. One activity of this project was identifying effective programs. This guide discusses the results of that study and outlines effective practices of vocational rehabilitation (VR) vendors.

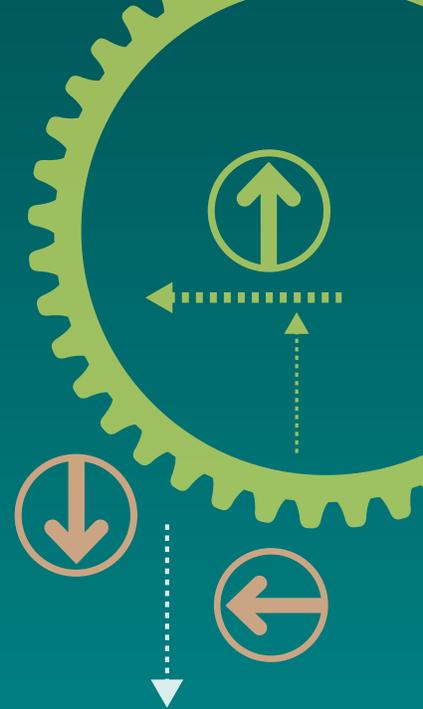


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Overview of the Guide

Purpose, Process, and Critical Factors

Project Background and Purpose

SEDL's Vocational Rehabilitation Service Models for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders project, funded by the National Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), launched in October 2008 and ended in September 2013. The mission of this project was to conduct high quality research and knowledge translation activities in order to improve employment services and outcomes for individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

One activity of this project was identifying effective programs. This study focused on effective practices implemented by VR service providers for people with ASD. Outcomes from this study included empirical assessments of practices perceived as effective by VR professionals, and identification and dissemination of those practices that were linked to successful outcomes (i.e., helping people with ASD find and maintain competitive employment).

This guide discusses the results of this study and outlines effective practices of VR vendors. Information found here can be used to identify effective programs or in quality improvement initiatives. The intended audience of this guide is people with ASD, their families, VR professionals, and employment specialists. This project ultimately hopes to contribute to the continuing improvement in employment programs for people with ASD.



This guide discusses the results of this study and outlines effective practices of VR vendors. Information found here can be used to identify effective programs or in quality improvement initiatives.

Process for Identifying Effective Programs

SEDL drew upon its experience in identifying, validating, and disseminating effective practice models in the VR and public education arenas. Effective practice identification is a methodology often used in the VR and education fields to identify strategies and practices that are associated with positive outcomes (Hanson, 1996). In emerging fields, or with emerging populations, this process often functions as a predecessor to more rigorous experimental research. Effective practice approaches have been used, for example, by the Center for Development and Disability at the University of New Mexico to identify strategies to reduce barriers to employment for people with significant disabilities. These practices have also been used by the Vocational Studies Center at the University of Wisconsin to address VR services for people with learning disabilities.

In order to identify effective practices, SEDL staff solicited nominations of programs supporting the employment of individuals with ASD. Annually, these letters of solicitation were sent to VR and ASD programs nationwide, such as state VR chiefs, Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Centers, members of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities, state autism societies, and ASD-focused organizations.

Project staff then contacted nominated organizations and asked them to complete a standardized information request form to provide in-depth information about their service delivery, service environment, and short- and long-term employment outcomes. Thirty-one programs completed the information request forms. Vendors who were unable to provide such data were not considered further but were offered technical assistance from SEDL project staff regarding methods and instruments used for outcome-oriented data collection.

Members of the project's national advisory panel, outside consultants, and project staff evaluated critical factors detailed in the service providers' descriptions. The national advisory panel had the final vote on whether to designate a program as effective. Ten programs were selected to be part of the effective program categorization. SEDL project staff worked with the programs' executive directors and staff to create online profiles and webcasts detailing important aspects of their programs and how they contributed to the successful employment rates for their clients with ASD. These web pages and webcasts can be found at <http://autism.sedl.org>.

Critical Factors

In reviewing each program, the national advisory board, outside consultants, and project staff analyzed the degree in which they fulfilled each of ten critical factors of a truly effective program. The ten critical factors and the questions commonly asked by reviewers are as follows:

1

Program Goals and Objectives: Are the program goals and objectives adequately reflected in the activities? Specifically, do the goals and objectives reflect services oriented to improve the quality of life for people with ASD and including potential employment outcomes?

2

Target Population: Are program services delivered to people with ASD? Is the target population identified and described in terms of general characteristics including age range, gender, severity of disability, ethnicity, education level, work experience, and other factors related to the individuals served by the program?

3

Documentation/Good Recordkeeping: Does the program have adequate records to report past services and outcomes with respect to people with ASD? Are records up-to-date, allowing reporting of:

- client demographics,
- client intake,
- client assessment/evaluation,
- client follow-up,
- program costs, and
- program outcomes?

4

Success Rate in Securing and Maintaining Employment: Does the program have objective data to document successes in facilitating employment outcomes for its clients with ASD? Is objective data provided to demonstrate the number and characteristics of individuals with ASD who were prepared, placed, and supported in employment placement? Is there documentation for how long the employment has been maintained? Are the types of employment, hours worked, income level, and other factors adequately described?

5

Cost Effectiveness: What is the cost per placement for each individual with ASD? Does the program have data to compare outcomes to the costs related to obtaining and sustaining successful employment outcomes?

6

Comprehensiveness: Does the program provide, directly or indirectly, all the necessary services to support individuals with ASD in obtaining and maintaining

employment outcomes? Do clients have access to a full range of services to support them at home, in the community, and at work so that they are able to secure and maintain employment?

7

Evaluation Criteria: By what methods, by whom, at what intervals, and for what purposes are program outcomes for people with ASD assessed? Are evaluation data collected and used to plan, develop, report, and refine program activities? Does the program consider the extent to which it met established program goals and addressed client needs?

8

Staffing Patterns: How is the program staffed? What are the job titles, responsibilities, and qualifications of staff members who are implementing the program for individuals with ASD? Are program staff sufficiently trained and adequate in number to manage and implement the program efficiently?

9

Transportability: Is there compelling evidence to support the expectation that the program could be implemented elsewhere with similar results for individuals with ASD? Has the program been adopted or adapted by others?

10

Innovation: Does the program embody a novel approach to serving and supporting clients with ASD in achieving employment outcomes? Is the program original or unique in how it addresses or solves the employment of clients with ASD? Does one or more major function of the program utilize new ideas or approaches?



Descriptions of Effective Programs

Program Details

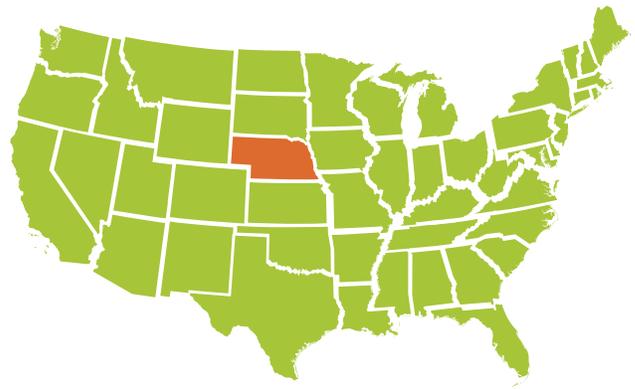
Autism Center of Nebraska Connections (ACN)

Organizational Profile

ACN is a certified developmental disabilities service provider under contract with the State of Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities. Nearly 130 individuals receive services. These individuals range in age from seven 7 to 60. Although ACN specializes in ASD, they also serve people with other developmental disabilities. ACN provides a variety of residential, vocational, pre-vocational, and educational services. ACN Connections is the employment services branch of ACN. ACN operates with the belief that every person, regardless of disability, is valuable, and deserves to be considered a valued member of their home community.

Program Design

ACN Connections offers employment services to individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities who seek competitive employment in the community. Clients are referred to ACN by the Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation agency. ACN Connections job developers meet with each client to begin the career planning



Program Effectiveness

41 clients were served from July 2011 to May 2012.

76% of the **41 clients** found competitive employment.

Wages of these clients ranged from **\$7.25 to \$10.85 per hour.**

ACN Connections staff provided over **1,000 hours of job support** to clients from July 2011 to May 2012.

Staffing

Job Title	Total Number	Percent Time	Key Tasks
Employment Specialist			Assists clients with applications, interviewing, social skills training
Job Development Specialist			Initiates contact and follows-up with businesses. Assists clients with job applications and interviews.
Job Coach			Provides job coaching for clients. Communicates with clients' employers and coworkers.

process. The job developers help the clients complete detailed individual profiles and preference inventories. This information is used to match clients to jobs that meet their needs and preferences. This process benefits both the employee and the participating employer by creating a positive match.

ACN Connections provides long-term support to clients and employers. ACN Connections staff maintain contact with clients through job coaching, emailing, texting, and meeting face-to-face to practice social skills or job-specific skills. ACN Connections also maintains contact with employers, responding immediately to their concerns and needs. ACN Connections is also available to employers and the clients' coworkers for additional education and/or training.

Costs of Program

In 2011, the annual operating budget for ACN as a whole was just under \$5,000,000. The annual

operating budget for ACN Connections was approximately \$100,000. The employment program at ACN Connections is funded by state VR payments, federal grants, fundraising, and foundation funding.

Requirements for Successful Replication

ACN staff believe that their program could be replicated by others. They point to the following elements that would be important for other programs to incorporate:

- Vocational plan focused on career planning
- Ongoing instruction and support for the client in the area of interpersonal relationships and social skills
- Long-term support provided to the client, the employer, and the client's coworkers

Autism Society of North Carolina (ASNC)

Organizational Profile

ASNC was chartered as a nonprofit organization in 1970. ASNC works collaboratively with other agencies to develop more community options for people with ASD. In 1986, ASNC began its Supported Employment Program. In 2007, ASNC became a vendor for the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation for Supported Employment. Providing support, information and referral services, and advocacy for people with ASD and their families are the driving forces of ASNC.

Program Design

The Supported Employment Program matches individuals with ASD to jobs that suit their abilities and interests. The goal of the program is to assist people with ASD in finding and maintaining competitive employment. Anyone with ASD in North Carolina is eligible to receive supported employment services if they choose. The job search begins soon after a client expresses interest in working. There are no requirements for completing extensive pre-employment assessments and training for intermediate work experiences (such as prevocational work units, transitional employment, or sheltered workshops). By matching a reliable source of workers to businesses across North Carolina, ASNC saves businesses time and money.

ASNC's job placement specialists also provide follow-up services to the clients with ASD and customized workplace consultation. Supported employment is integrated with treatment. Employment specialists coordinate support plans with a treatment team including case managers, therapists, and psychiatrists. Follow-along supports are continuous and can continue as long as clients want the assistance.



Program Effectiveness

The Supported Employment Program served **74 people with ASD** in 2011.

In 2011, the Supported Employment Program staff provided **13,423 hours of job coaching**.

87% of people served found competitive supported employment.

Wages of those employed ranged between **\$7.25 to \$10.00 per hour**, and one individual found a salaried position paying **\$29,500 per year**.

Staffing

Job Title	Total Number	Percent Time	Key Tasks
Vocational Services Coordinator			Coordinates intakes and referrals
Vocational Services Instructor			Develops jobs for clients
Community Skills Instructor	64		Provides employment supports and conducts program satisfaction interviews

Costs of Program

The total annual operating budget of ASNC's employment program in fiscal year 2010 was \$700,335. State VR payments provided 15% of the funding for ASNC's services. The remaining 85% of funding was provided by Medicaid's Community Alternatives Program for Persons with Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities.

Requirements for Successful Replication

- Employees trained to use and understand clinical programming specific to ASD
- Development of strong relationships with local businesses

Groden Network of Programs: The Cove Center & The Groden Center

Organizational Profile

In 1976, the Groden Center for people with ASD and other developmental disabilities opened. Thirty years later, the Groden Center has become part of the Groden Network, expanding its services to people with ASD of all ages through four corporations in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. These corporations include the Cove Center, the Halycon Center, the Groden Center, and Kingston Hill Academy. Together, they serve more than 400 people annually.

Program Design

The Vocational Services Department of the Groden Network provides vocational training and employment services to people with ASD: the Groden Center Day Program serves people 14 to 21 years old, and the Cove Center serves people 21 and older. The students of the Groden Center receive vocational training as part of their overall educational program directed by their individual education programs.

The Cove Center houses “Enterprises,” which are designed to serve people across the autism spectrum, including people with severe autism. These Enterprises include the Groden Greenhouse, The Ladle, The Business Center, a large-scale recycling program at Wheaton College, and Squeegie Clean. The individuals involved in these programs earn wages based on industry standards. Some individuals working in these enterprises receive advanced training and move on to jobs in the same industry but with other companies.

Most clients are referred to the program when they request job-seeking services at the state vocational rehabilitation agency. During the “discovery” process, clients identify vocational interests and skills they would like to acquire, from basic skills such as following directions to more advanced skills such as website development.



Program Effectiveness

More than **80 people with ASD** were served by the Cove Center in fiscal year 2010. In fiscal year 2011, more than **100 people with ASD** were served.

Clients earn between **\$7.40** and **\$14.00 per hour** in the Enterprises or in competitive work settings.

The Cove Center provides approximately **10,500 hours of job coaching to people with ASD** every year.

Staffing

Job Title	Total Number	Percent Time	Key Tasks
Director and Association Director		100%	Directs all aspects of vocational services; liaise with other departments and community partners
		50%	
Supervisor		100%	Evaluates program operations
		50%	
Job Coach		100%	Provides job-coaching support to people with ASD
Direct Care Staff		50%	Provides job coaching to clients who are engaged in supported employment and center-based employment
		25%	

When a client enters the program, a vocational plan is created to detail the services that will help the client achieve his or her goals. This plan is revisited and updated on an annual basis. Vocational goals are clearly specified, and the plan of instruction reflects the client's learning style and previous successful learning experience. Most clients begin a trial period at a job; during this trial, the client's strengths are identified in relation to the company's needs, and a customized job is created. Clients who become employed typically receive ongoing support. This can range from short-term (a few weeks) to long-term (several months or years).

Costs of Program

The Cove Center receives 95% of its funding from the State Department of Human Services Office of

Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities Division (BHDDH). The Groden Center school program, which supports vocational services to those individuals under age 21, receives 95–100% of its funding from school districts throughout Rhode Island.

Requirements for Successful Replication

- Discovery process identifies clients' interests and passions
- Choice of different work experiences through the different "Enterprises" available in the community
- Instruction of soft skills such as communication skills, self-control, community mobility, social skills, self-advocacy, and budgeting

Job Path

Organizational Profile

In 1978, the Vera Institute of Justice partnered with the New York State agency that supports people with disabilities to create Job Path. What started as a pilot project for 10 individuals with developmental disabilities has now grown to a successful agency that has placed more than 2,000 people in jobs where they work, with or without support, alongside people without disabilities. Job Path spun off from the Vera Institute in 1999 and is now an independent nonprofit agency.

Program Design

A preliminary assessment, known as the “discovery process,” is conducted with each client. During this phase, staff members observe the client in his or her current environment (e.g., at home, in a temporary job placement, in the community) to determine the client’s strengths, interests, and needs. From this process, an individualized vocational profile is created.

A customized job that meets the client’s strengths and needs is created for the individual. Intensive job coaching is provided both before the client starts the job and while the client is on the job.

Long-term assistance is provided in the form of continued on-the-job support. Follow-up services are also available.

Life coaching that involves setting goals, developing action plans, and implementing plans is provided to people with ASD to help them reach their full potential. Community support is also provided to help individuals actively participate in their communities through social and recreational activities.



Program Effectiveness

41 individuals with ASD were served in fiscal year 2009

36% of the 41 clients found competitive employment

Placements were either in the clerical/sales or service industry with a pay range of **\$7.15–\$15.00/hour**

Staffing

Job Title	Total Number	Percent Time	Key Tasks
Director			Provides program oversight, staff supervision, and job development
Employment Specialist			Learns about people through the discovery process, develop jobs, job coaching
Long-Term Employment Counselor			Provides follow-up support to people with ASD on their jobs
Community Outreach Assistant			Assists with job development, on-the-job social skills training; Asperger's Syndrome specialization

Requirements for Successful Replication

- Staff with a thorough understanding of the abilities and challenges that people with ASD may bring with them
- Individualized programs to meet the unique needs of each client

POW&R (Productive Opportunities for Work and Recreation)

Organizational Profile

Autism Delaware began as a grassroots parent advocacy group in 1998 with the idea of providing much-needed support and services to the local autism community. Recognizing the need for adult services, the group conducted a best practice study for adults that was completed in 2005. Based on the findings, the board of directors of Autism Delaware secured funding for the development of a day treatment and vocational rehabilitation program. The program began with two individuals in August 2007. Today the program is known as Productive Opportunities for Work and Recreation (POW&R) and served 15 people when it was chosen as an Effective Program.

Program Design

Participants in the program typically go through these steps:

- **Assessment:** Individuals receive an assessment upon entering the program, typically during their senior year of high school.
- **Job Coaching/Training:** Introduction to community sites, placement, and work adjustment, skill, and social skills training follows.
- **Follow-up:** Follow-up and long-term support services are provided as needed.
- **Social Skills:** The Circles of Support program helps individuals build social relationships by addressing social skills needs specific to their job sites, and by training peers in how to appropriately relate to their clients.
- **Additional Services:** Regular community activities provide recreation and socialization outside the work place.



Program Effectiveness

15 clients were served during fiscal year 2009.

80% of clients found employment in supported or competitive settings.

Placements were either in the clerical/sales or service industries with a pay range of **\$7.25–\$9.50/hr.**

POW&R provided a total of **5,382 hours of job coaching support**, including assessment, job preparation, work adjustment training, onsite training and follow-up during fiscal year 2009.

Staffing

Job Title	Total Number	Percent Time	Key Tasks
Director		100%	Coordinates overall program; Trains & mentors staff; Develops job sites
Community Outreach Specialist		100%	Carries primary VR caseload; Develops jobs; Provides training and follow-up
Community Support Specialist		100%	Provides direct support to individuals during the day at the job and volunteer sites
		50%	
Community Outreach Assistant		50%	Develops jobs; provides social skills training at job sites
Support from Autism Delaware	Executive Director		10-20% Develops and oversees program
	Office Manager		25% Provides billing and human resources support
	Bookkeeper		Hourly Bookkeeping

Costs of Program

The total annual operating budget of the POW&R program for fiscal year 2009 was \$344,000. For fiscal year 2010, the budget increased to \$401,800. The program is funded in part by the Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services. Additional funding is provided by Autism Delaware, the parent organization of POW&R. For clients who are part of the Early Start program, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation funds their participation in POW&R's programs. The same services are provided for other clients by POW&R without reimbursement from the state VR.

Requirements for Successful Replication

- Board members with vision and dedication
- Experienced director with knowledge of both ASD and VR services
- Ability to raise funds for startup costs
- Collaboration with other developmental disabilities groups and schools

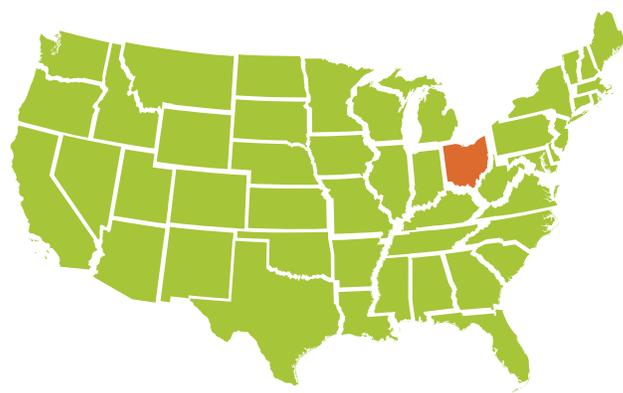
Project SEARCH

Organizational Profile

Project SEARCH was developed at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, a research environment that fosters visionary thinking and innovation. In 1996, Erin Riehle was Director of Cincinnati Children's Emergency Department. Riehle thought that, because the hospital served individuals with developmental disabilities, they should commit to hiring people in this group. She wondered if it would be possible to train people with developmental disabilities to fill some of the high-turnover, entry-level positions in her department, which involved complex and systematic tasks. Riehle presented her ideas to Susie Rutkowski, who was then the special education director at Great Oaks Career Campuses. Riehle and Rutkowski formed a partnership and launched Project SEARCH. Program replication is a key mission of Project SEARCH. The Project SEARCH model has been successfully implemented at 206 sites throughout the U.S. and abroad, and this number grows every year.

Program Design

The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program is a one-year internship program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including students with ASD. It is targeted for students whose goal is competitive employment. The program takes place entirely at the workplace so students learn relevant and marketable job skills that employers need. Students benefit from hands-on internships, where they receive training in specific job skills, and from classroom instruction, where they learn general employability skills. In addition, program participants receive customized job-search assistance.



Program Effectiveness*

As of November 2012, Project SEARCH Bon Secours/St. Mary's has had two graduating classes, and has resulted in employment for **100% of program graduates.**

As of November 2012, Project SEARCH Collaborates for Autism has had one graduating class, and has achieved competitive employment for **60% of program graduates.** Job development for that class is ongoing and the percentage is expected to increase.

* This project focused solely on the two Project SEARCH sites that serve only people with ASD—Project SEARCH at Bon Secours Richmond Health System/St. Mary's Hospital in Richmond, VA; and Project SEARCH Collaborates for Autism at New York Presbyterian Hospital in White Plains, NY.

The employment statistics above reflect only the ASD-specific sites listed here.

Staffing

Job Title	Total Number*	Percent Time	Key Tasks
Teacher/Instructor		100%	Coordinates internships, classroom activities, and individualized job search for each student
Job Coach		60-100%	Provides job skills training at internship sites
Business Liaison		5-10%	Coordinates host business involvement with Project SEARCH
Job Developer		5-10%	Oversees individualized job search for each student
VR Counselor		5-10%	Oversees VR role in Project SEARCH program

* Per site. Staffing varies site to site. This is a representation of a typical site.

Costs of Program

Project SEARCH is free to clients because it utilizes a combination of school-district and State VR funding to teach and provide job coaching to eligible participants. Income sources for Project SEARCH programs vary from site to site. Typically most of the funding comes from program partners, including education providers, state VR, developmental disability services, and host businesses.

Requirements for Successful Replication

- Reliance on strategic leveraging of resources that are already available in most communities

TEACCH Supported Employment Program

Organizational Profile

TEACCH's Supported Employment Program was created in 1989 in response to the increasing need to support the growing adult population of persons diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. It began as a one-year research project that met the needs of adults with ASD and now serves as a demonstration project for other agencies around the world.

Program Design

Clients begin TEACCH's program with a community-based evaluation that allows supported employment professionals to identify the client's skill set and challenges he or she may face. The program helps the client form an employment goal based on the information from this evaluation.

Job development is the next step and includes learning job search skills, application completion, creating resumes and cover letters, contacting employers, and interviewing skills. On-the-job training is provided and includes social and communication skills.

If needed, long-term follow-up support is also available to the client and is tailored to meet the needs of the individual.

Additionally, clients receive social and community skills training through individual and group counseling and activities.



Program Effectiveness

31 new clients were served during fiscal year 2009. In addition, the program continued to provide ongoing support to clients who entered the program in previous years.

Each new client received, on average, **200 hours of job coaching support**, including assessment, job preparation, work adjustment training, onsite training and follow-up.

100% of new clients were placed in supported employment that lasted 90 days or longer. Placements were in a variety of industries including: professional/technical/managerial, clerical/sales, service, janitorial, and agricultural/fishery/forestry

Wages range from **\$7.15 to \$18.00/hr**

Staffing

Job Title	Total Number	Percent Time	Key Tasks
Director			Coordinates and directs program, provides consultation, education and training (staff and other agencies), advocacy
Vocational Coordinator			Scheduling, consultation to staff and other agencies. Advocates for people with ASD
			
VR Job Coach			Assesses clients, job development, and intensive training to clients
Long Term Support Job Coach			Provides long-term support, programming design and implementation
Billing Staff			Billing paperwork
			

Costs of Program

The program has an annual operating budget of \$800,000. The program is funded in part by the state VR department, the state Department of Health and Human Services, federal grants, and client fees.

Requirements for Successful Replication

- Staff with a thorough understanding of the abilities and challenges that people with ASD may have.
- Individualized programs to meet the unique needs of each client.

Triumph Services, Inc.

Organizational Profile

Triumph Services, Inc. was founded on August 1, 2007 to offer services with a holistic approach to adults with developmental disabilities. The program supports clients who have the goal to live independently. Seventy-six percent of the clients Triumph supports have a diagnosis of ASD.

Program Design

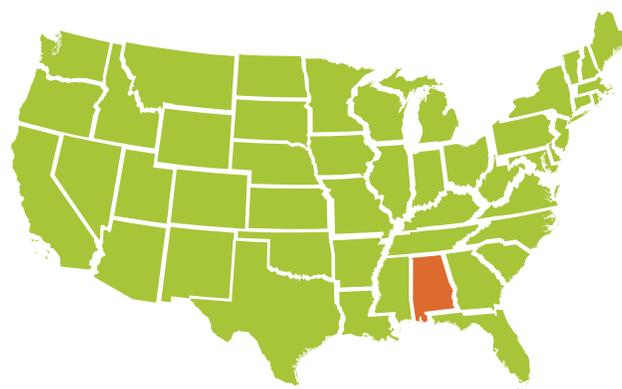
Below are the typical steps for a person involved in the employment program.

Triumph begins the employment process by exploring each individual's life and gaining information from all identified support persons, such as parents, teachers, job coaches, and, if needed, therapists in what's known as the "discovery process".

The job development phase consists of identifying potential employers, setting up meetings and interviews, assisting with completing job applications, preparing for and practicing interviews, and preparing a resume. Program staff also provide assistance during interviews, employee orientation, drug-testing, or any necessary pre-employment tasks.

Once a client accepts a job offer, job coaches provide assistance to the client to learn the job tasks and duties, praise and constructive feedback, educating employers about ASD, completing necessary paperwork, and assisting client with managing the work schedule and developing relationships with peers.

The final step in the program design is case closure and long-term support. The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, Triumph's largest referral source for employment services, closes a client's case after 90 days of competitive paid work. However, Triumph continues to provide long-term support indefinitely. Ongoing support includes supporting the individual with biweekly phone calls to the employer/employee and quarterly in-person employer feedback meetings with the job coach, employer, and employee.



Program Effectiveness

66 clients with ASD were served in Triumph's employment program in 2011.

64% of clients with ASD secured competitive employment in 2011.

Clients receive wages of **\$7.50–\$19.23 per hour**.

Triumph staff provided **924 hours of job support** to clients with ASD in 2011.

Triumph's employment program has an overall **job retention rate of 92.3%**.

Staffing

Job Title	Total Number	Percent Time	Key Tasks
Executive Director		 15%	Promotes the organization in the community
Director of Clinical Services		 25%	Coordinates employment
Employment Coordinator		 90%	Carries a caseload of participants; supervises the employment staff
Life Coach/Coordinator		 45%	Supervises life coaching staff; explores job possibilities with participants and team
Life Coach		 30%	Provides support for participants in all areas of daily functioning such as hygiene, medication management, time management and healthy eating that in turn encourage successful employment
Therapist		 50%	Processes issues that arise in therapy concerning employment
Office Administrator		 10%	Provides general administrative support

Costs of Program

Fifty-four percent of Triumph's employment program is funded by the Alabama Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, 6% by client fees, and 40% by federal grants and contracts.

- Team trained to address all of a person's emotional needs, independent living skills, social skills, and employment needs
- Process involves getting to know each person prior to finding a job match
- Support continues indefinitely for the life of the job

Requirements for Successful Replication

- Holistic model of services involves life coaches, therapists, and other important individuals in job development

Virginia Commonwealth University: Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (VCU-RRTC)

Organization Profile

VCU is a public research university with an enrollment of over 32,000 students. It is the largest university in Virginia. VCU is among the top 60 colleges and universities in the U.S. for funded research. VCU-RRTC is housed with the VCU School of Education and linked with the Schools of Medicine and Allied Health, the School of Business and the VCU Center for Rehabilitation Science and Engineering (CERSE), which is a large interdisciplinary research group. VCU-RRTC, therefore, has an abundance of research, business, educational, and VR resources. The VCU-RRTC has been in existence since 1983 under the direction of Dr. Paul Wehman.

Program Design

For an individual with ASD to receive services from VCU-RRTC, he or she must first become a client of the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (VA DRS). The VA DRS counselor then allocates funds for the client to receive job support services from VCU.

Once an individual becomes a VCU client, the first step is for the employment specialist to complete a jobseeker profile and assessment based on a variety of interviews and observations of the client in the community. When a profile is complete, the client launches a job search and practices interviewing with an employment specialist. When the client begins a job, the employment specialist works with the client on the actual job tasks. The employment specialist also works with a supervisor to make any necessary modifications. The employment specialist helps identify natural supports available to the client and provides positive behavioral support. When the client is stable in the workplace, the employment specialist and the client work together to gradually reduce the employment specialist's direct intensive instruction and employment support services. The



Program Effectiveness*

82% of the participants of the VCU-RRTC study found employment.

On average, participants worked **22.53** hours per week.

The average hourly pay was **\$8.86**.

* A study conducted by VCU-RRTC charted the progress of 33 clients with ASD in the supported employment program from October 1, 2009 to August 31, 2011. These select findings show the effectiveness of VCU-RRTC.

Staffing

Job Title	Total Number	Percent Time	Key Tasks
Director of Employment Services		100%	Oversees program operations
Employment Specialist		100%	Performs situational assessment, job development, job site training; provides long-term support
		50%	

withdrawal of services is done gradually as the client demonstrates independence.

VCU-RRTC continues to provide long-term support even after the client's case is successfully "closed" for employment services by VA DRS. Long-term support often includes training employers and coworkers (especially when there are changes in the staffing), providing training on new job tasks, and assessing satisfaction of both the individual and the employer.

Costs of Program

The budget varies yearly based on the number of referrals received from the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services. However, approximately 95% of VCU-RRTC's budget comes from VR payments and 5% is comprised of federal grants and contracts.

Requirements for Successful Replication

- Service program design grounded in evidence-based practices of supported employment
- Dedicated staff with knowledge of ASD and access to a cadre of national experts to provide onsite technical assistance

Wildwood Programs: Learning for Life

Organizational Profile

Wildwood Programs was created in 1967 when a group of parents found that their children were not served well by existing programs. The Wildwood Employment Services department was created in 1984 to serve the original group of children as they approached adulthood and began to need employment-related support. Wildwood's Employment Services staff work collaboratively with families and businesses to empower and enable individuals with disabilities to increase their level of independence and integration as members of their local workforce.

Program Design

The mission of Wildwood Employment Services is to provide businesses with competent employees and to give individuals with ASD an opportunity to thrive in the workplace. Wildwood Programs serves a diverse group of people with ASD in terms of age, gender, educational background, and race/ethnicity. Most clients go through the following steps:

- **Diagnostic Vocational Evaluations:** Evaluations help VR counselors formulate a plan of action, making recommendations regarding vocational options.
- **Situational Assessments:** Clients are placed in "fixed-term" unpaid placement in the community.
- **Job Development:** Employment specialists assist individuals in searching for community employment.
- **Onsite and Off-site Training Support:** Employment specialists supplement the company's existing protocols in order to offer an individual the greatest opportunity for success in that position.
- **Follow-along:** The services that Wildwood Programs provide are long-term.
- **Benefits advisement affects:** Regular discussions of how the client's employment affects the benefits they receive is included in the development of appropriate



Program Effectiveness

Forty people with ASD were served in 2011 by Wildwood Employment Services.

75% of these clients were placed in competitive or supported competitive employment

Pay ranged from **\$7.25/hour** to **\$14.07/hour**.

From April 2010 to February 2011, clients received a cumulative total of **1,810 hours of job coaching** in competitive and supported competitive job placements.

Staffing

Job Title	Total Number	Percent Time*	Key Tasks
Director of Employment Services		 2%	Oversees program including research & development, fiscal oversight, staff recruitment and coaching, and liaises to State partners
Associate Director of Employment Services		 5%	Assists Director; fiscal management; supervision
Senior Employment Specialist		 8%	Conducts quality assurance and monitoring; direct service, mostly intakes
Employment Specialist		 15%	Provides direct service: job development and job coaching
VR Counselor		 11%	Provides direct service, including vocational evaluations

*Wildwood Programs serves people with an array of disabilities. The chart above shows the percent of time that the Employment Services department staff spends serving people with ASD.

goals for employment. Whenever feasible, individuals are encouraged to pursue and maintain employment that increases their level of financial independence and self-sufficiency.

- **Transition to work:** Wildwood Programs collaborates with special education programs in local school districts to help students with ASD make a successful transition into adulthood. This transition includes gaining ability to work productively in their communities.

Costs of the Program

The operating budget of the Wildwood Employment Services program is approximately \$1.2 million. Funding is provided by State VR payments, federal grants, OPWDD/Medicaid, and school districts.

Requirements for Successful Replication

- Organizational commitment to supporting integrated employment outcomes
- Outcome measures are assessed both for clients with ASD and the businesses that employ them
- Practices that impede the employment of people with ASD are challenged
- Dedication to providing services that are based on researched practices



“My job at ASNC gives me a purpose in life and has made my life very rewarding. . .My life has changed in a very great way.”

—ADAM, OFFICE ASSISTANT, ASNC



Success Stories

Successful Participants of Programs

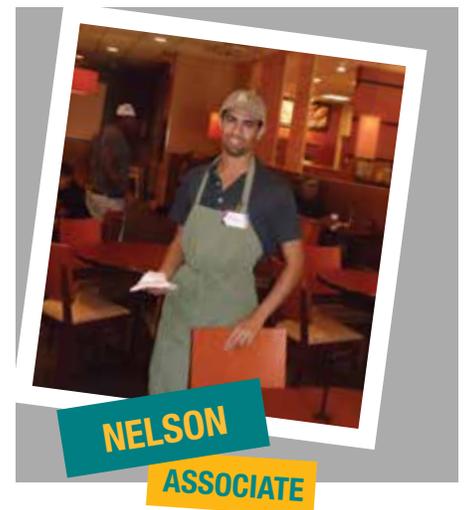
Nelson

Project SEARCH

Nelson is a 22-year-old young man with autism. He did not speak until he was almost 5 years old. He had difficulty understanding social rules, taking social cues, and making friends. When Nelson learned to speak, his voice and actions were robotic and awkward. Nelson quickly became frustrated when he could not make himself understood and would often run out of the classroom. He was not confident in his own abilities and he relied on teacher support to complete assigned work. Nelson did not maintain friendships with his classmates outside of school.

In 2011, New York Collaborates for Autism (NYCA) started a Project SEARCH high school transition program based on the Project SEARCH model pioneered by Cincinnati Children's Medical Center. NYCA currently partners with NY Presbyterian Hospital as the host employer, Southern Westchester BOCES as the educational partner, Westchester Arc as the vocational rehabilitation partner, and NY Presbyterian's Center for Autism and the Developing Brain as consultants providing autism expertise. A curriculum especially for adults with autism has been designed for this program, which is called Project SEARCH Collaborates for Autism (PSCA).

Nelson entered PSCA in his last year of high school eligibility. He was socially awkward and lacked confidence. Upon



Meet some of the people with Autism Spectrum Disorders that have been helped by the effective employment programs.

entering the program, Nelson wanted a job working with animals, but he knew that he did not want to clean up after them.

PSCA taught Nelson such social rules as how to arrange lunch with a coworker, make a phone call, and communicate in a work setting. In order to practice these skills, Nelson was matched with two mentors, workers at NY Presbyterian, who provided him with regular social opportunities. Nelson also was taught how to develop friendships with his fellow interns and learned how to share social stories in a work setting.

As part of PSCA, Nelson worked in three ten-week internships in various departments of NY Presbyterian Hospital: the pharmacy, food services, and building services. By the time Nelson graduated, although he still liked animals, he had learned through the career exploration that he really enjoyed working in a kitchen. He liked the camaraderie of working as part of a team, he enjoyed making sandwiches, and he had developed confidence in his social interactions. Nelson focused his job search on a job that would involve these skills. Today Nelson is working at Panera Bread in his home community. He has enjoyed a great deal of positive feedback through customer compliments and manager reviews. Nelson is adjusting to adult life in the community, is confident, and continues to maintain friendships with interns he met during his time in PSCA.

Ellen Triumph Services

Ellen and her mother approached Triumph in 2009 seeking support to assist Ellen in becoming more independent. Ellen was a 23-year-old woman with ASD and Tourette's Syndrome. She lived with her mother and grandmother and rarely left her home due to her difficulty in social situations. During this initial visit at Triumph, Ellen was immobilized by fear. This fear made it difficult for Ellen to climb the steps in the

office—even though she does not have mobility challenges—and to sit on the sofa; she wanted to sit in her mother's lap.

Ellen's mom reported that Ellen spent most of her time coloring and completing word search activities. Ellen's only work history was through her high school vocational program, which had included one-on-one job coaching. Ellen aspired to work in the medical field, in an office setting, or with children. It was obvious from the first meeting that Ellen was a bright young woman with a great deal of potential.

Triumph began life coaching services to help Ellen become more independent in the home and to address social skills. Ellen also began seeing a therapist through Triumph. The therapist addressed Ellen's anxiety and helped her learn to express her feelings. After three months of life coaching and therapy, Triumph's employment team secured a position for Ellen in the animal nutrition center at the Birmingham Zoo. Though working with animals was not an initial goal of Ellen's, she was excited about the opportunity. Ellen excelled at her job. Her confidence grew, which decreased her tics when she was at work and eventually in all settings. Ellen continued in this position for seven months. However, the zoo had a strict policy that prohibited Ellen from working without a job coach. One of Ellen's biggest goals was to find a position where she could work independently.



The Alabama Justice Ministries partnered with Triumph's job coach to create a clerical position for Ellen. Ellen is now working independently.



Triumph’s employment team began searching for a new position where Ellen could learn to work without a job coach’s constant supervision. The Alabama Justice Ministries partnered with Triumph’s job coach to create a clerical position for her. With intense job coaching and the development of a social story Ellen was able to learn her job tasks, understand what to do during breaks, and improve her

social skills in the work environment. Ellen is now working independently.

Ellen continues to see her life coach on a weekly basis and checks in with her therapist as needed. Triumph also checks on Ellen at work on a monthly basis.

Wayne The Groden Network

Wayne is a 30-year-old man diagnosed with autism. For years, he resisted being identified as a participant in “a program” although he often participated in Groden’s day-program. He struggled with issues of anger and self-control, becoming severely aggressive if he was asked by staff to be part of a group, classroom, or training program. Incidents of severe aggression exceeded 20 per year.

Wayne’s job coaches eventually encouraged him to apply for a position in in Groden Network’s newly developed Greenhouse Enterprise. Although Wayne did not have any experience in horticulture or greenhouse work, but his job coaches thought that a change of scenery from the



day-program setting to the community would help Wayne’s motivation, self-esteem, and self-control.

Wayne got a job as a greenhouse laborer and has worked there successfully since the greenhouse opened over 12 years ago. He identifies himself as a greenhouse “staff” (even attending staff meetings), gives tours to visitors at the greenhouse, and has even spoken at the Rhode Island State House to a group that was learning about autism and employment. The turn-around in Wayne’s mood, behavior, employment productivity, and quality of life is nothing short of remarkable.

Glenn Wildwood Programs

Glenn has a diagnosis of ASD and is a client of Wildwood’s Employment Services department. Glenn was nearing graduation from school and was participating in vocational trials with different

businesses. He was especially successful as a dishwasher in a family-owned restaurant. He was doing so well that the restaurant offered him a paid part-time position while he was still in school. Glenn really liked the restaurant staff, and they liked him. He became very comfortable working at the restaurant.

After he had worked there for several years, the management changed. Glenn has always thrived when things are predictable, but experienced increasing anxiety with confusion and change.

Under the new management, Glenn’s work shifts and hours varied wildly. Paychecks

were not always available on time; sometimes Glenn’s paycheck would bounce. Glenn’s job became one problem after another,

“Glenn is a great example of a person who, when committed, can achieve almost anything.”

—MIKE, GENERAL MANAGER, PANERA BREAD

and the new management was not supportive. The situation began to have a substantial negative impact on Glenn. Glenn did not want to leave the restaurant, however, because he was so familiar with the environment. He also did not want to leave his friends on staff. This became a very perplexing problem for Glenn.

With the support of his aunt, help from his residential manager, a family friend, and intensive on-the-job training from Wildwood Employment Services, Glenn was able to secure a job at Panera Bread. It was difficult for Glenn to leave his first job, but all the support he received allowed him to make the transition with very few difficulties. Mike, the general manager at Panera, has worked exceptionally well with Glenn, providing clear directions, compliments when due, and corrective instruction as needed.

Mike states, “Glenn is a great example of a person who, when committed, can achieve almost anything.” Glenn now works the same hours Tuesday through Thursday, every week. He receives regular paychecks, which are a predictable amount on a predictable day. This allows Glenn to plan and save for trips; he loves to travel. Glenn recently commented, “I really enjoy working at Panera Bread. It is a much better environment and everyone is friendly, always treating me with respect.” The sense of achievement is clear in the way Glenn does his job. He takes pride in the positive feedback he receives. This has had a positive and meaningful impact on Glenn’s life.

Adam Autism Society of North Carolina

Adam is a 33-year-old man from Fayetteville, North Carolina. Adam is considered high-functioning on the autism spectrum and has been working at ASNC as an office assistant since January 2001. Adam also receives services through the Supported Employment Program at ASNC.

Adam’s main responsibilities at ASNC include opening and closing personnel files, photocopying, shredding confidential paperwork, calculating task analysis, loading the printer and copier with new paper, and taking minutes at the monthly staff meeting. Adam is very professional and comes to work every day wearing a three-piece suit.

Mary Lanier is a Vocational Specialist at ASNC. She interviewed Adam about his experience with ASNC’s supported employment services and about being an employee at ASNC.

How has your life changed since you became employed with ASNC?

Better. I like the money. The job I have with ASNC makes me feel like I am needed. My job at ASNC gives me a purpose in life and has made my life very rewarding. Before I started working here I volunteered at a clinic and helped my dad on his tobacco farm in the summers. My life has changed in a very great way—I like getting paid and making money. Before I began working, I spent too much time at home. Recently I received a pay raise at work, and I really like that.



“I’ve gotten better at my job since she [job coach] has been with me, and I’ve made a lot of progress with [adapting to] change.”

—ADAM

What do you like most about your job?

I like calculating the tasks analysis each month—I love numbers, and I also like being around people.

What do you like least about your job?

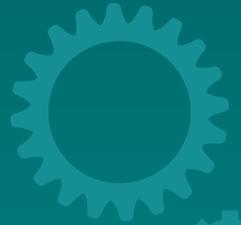
I don’t like to fall behind at work—I fall behind when I have to take a day off and when we have a holiday. I also get frustrated when the shredder and copier are broken. When people give me too much work to do, it makes me nervous and frustrated. I like structure in order to do my job well.

Adam, would you like to make any comments about your job coach?

She is a wonderful woman and a great encourager. Ms. Ida means a lot to me, she has been working with me for 5 years. I’ve gotten better at my job since she has been with me, and I’ve made a lot of progress with [adapting to] change.

What do you see yourself doing in 5 years?

Becoming the boss of the company—you never know, one could never know. I would also like to get my driver’s license. I would also like to meet someone special and get married one day and live on my own. I would also like to continue listening to music; my favorite groups are the Beatles, ZZ Topp, Elton John (my hero), Stevie Wonder, and Barry Manilow.”



Wayne got a job as a greenhouse laborer
12 years ago at Groden Network's
Greenhouse Enterprise and has worked
there successfully ever since.



Acknowledgements

National Advisory Panel

SUSAN FOLEY, PHD is the Research Director of the Institute for Community Inclusion and Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Vocational Rehabilitation (VR-RRTC). Susan received her doctorate from the Florence Heller School for Advanced Social Policy at Brandeis University in May 1999 and a bachelor's degree in psychology from Bates College in 1985. Her research activities include quality of life outcomes for people with cognitive disabilities, state systems and employment outcomes for people with disabilities, and the career development of women with disabilities.

ANNA HUNDLEY is the Executive Director of the Autism Treatment Centers of Texas, President of the National Association of Providers for Adults with Autism (NARPA), Vice Chair of the Texas Council on Autism, and Services Task Force Member for Autism Society of America. Anna has worked in the field of autism for over 25 years.

ALICE HUNNICUTT is the Director of the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Founding Board President of the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network. Alice has worked for many years at the New Jersey Statewide Parent Advocacy Network in the area of transition. Alice is the parent of five young adults, and she is very proud of the advocacy skills they developed in their transition years.

FRANK MCCAMANT is the Presiding Officer of the Texas Council on Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders. Frank is the owner of McCamant Consulting and has worked in the energy and resource management industry for more than 30 years. In his community work, Frank has been equally committed, having served on local boards and a gubernatorial appointment to a statewide council.

BILL PALMER was the Director of the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation until his retirement in 2011. Bill previously served the state of Washington for six years as director of the Department of Services for the Blind. He also has a strong foundation in Human Resource Management.

DON UCHIDA is the Executive Director of the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation. Don has served citizens with disabilities in Utah for nearly 40 years in the Office of Rehabilitation and its divisions. He is committed to improving the lives of people with disabilities, not only in Utah but also within the nation; he serves on various boards and committees serving people with disabilities. He is also the father of a child with multiple disabilities, including autism, and strives to provide her an environment of independence.





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