

**Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee
April 2018 Public Meeting**

Increasing Employment Access for Youth and Adults on the Autism Spectrum

Office of Disability Employment Policy
U.S. Department of Labor

Scott Michael Robertson, PhD
Policy Advisor

April 19, 2018



ODEP Seeks to Increase Employment Access for Americans with Disabilities

Only non-regulatory federal agency that promotes policies and coordinates with employers and all levels of government to increase workplace success for people with disabilities

- **Mission:** Develop and influence policies that increase the number and quality of employment opportunities for people with disabilities
- **Vision:** A world in which people with disabilities have unlimited employment opportunities



ODEP's Current Priorities Include...

- Implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA)
- Employer Engagement
- Inclusive Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning
- Career Pathways for Youth and Adults
- Employment First
- Return to Work/Stay at Work
- TA to States on Employment Policy and Practices
- Accessible Workplace Technology and Transportation to Work, including Transportation Technology Innovation



Hiring People with Disabilities Bolsters Large, Medium, and Small Businesses

- 2018 systematic review (20 years of research)¹:
 - Improvements in profitability (profits, retention rate, reliability, company image, etc.)
 - Enhancements to competitive advantage (innovation, work ethic, productivity, customer loyalty, etc.)
 - Inclusive work cultures and awareness of diverse abilities to enhance workplaces
- Benefits of workplace accommodations to employers far outweigh the relatively low cost²



Neurodiversity Benefits Employers

2017 Australian study³ (survey) of 59 employers regarding their employees on the autism spectrum:

- Above average performance: attention to detail, work quality, and work ethic
- 56% of employers report positive adaptations in workplace culture
- 32% of employers report new creative and different skills brought to the workplace
- 24% report improvements in workplace morale
- No significant additional costs to employers



Job Seekers on the Autism Spectrum Have Untapped Skills and Talents

- Diverse focused interests foster specialized talents supporting employment opportunities⁴
- Strengths, skills, and talents enhance employers' performance, missions, and bottom lines^{3, 5-6}
- Supports can help tap skills and talents⁷⁻⁹



Key Facilitators Bolster Employment for People on the Autism Spectrum

- Disability trainings for staff, including focuses on autism⁷
- Trained coaches, mentors, team buddies, etc.⁸
- Enhanced hiring and onboarding processes⁹
- Technological aids⁸
- Individualized workplace trainings in multiple areas⁸
- Customized long-term supports for sensory/motor, social, communication, and executive functioning challenges⁸
- Workplace supports, including for transit to work and executive functioning for tasks to secure accommodations⁸



ODEP Provides Resources on Autism

- ODEP's webpage on autism (for employers, service providers, policymakers, individuals, and youth):
<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/Autism.htm>
- Job Accommodation Network (JAN):
 - <http://askjan.org> | 800-526-7234
 - assistance for employers, employees, job seekers, etc.
 - JAN's webpage on autism (accommodations, interviewing tips): <https://askjan.org/media/autism.htm>



DOL Supports Autism-Related Initiatives

- ODEP's Pathways to Careers Demonstration Grants
 - [Universal Pathways to Employment](#) (UPEP) project at Pellissippi Community College (Knoxville, TN)
 - [Onondaga Pathways to Careers](#) (OPC) project at Onondaga Community College (Syracuse, NY)
- Employment and Training Administration (ETA) grants for job development and training



ODEP's Pathways to Careers Grants Include Students on the Autism Spectrum

- Prioritize work-based learning, accommodation access, and persistence to degree completion
- Integrate Universal Design for Learning
- Support youth and young adults with disabilities who are aged up to 24
- Include a high % of students on the autism spectrum:
 - UPEP: 35% of participants identify on the autism spectrum
 - OPC: 19% of participants identify on the autism spectrum

ETA's Grants for Job Development Support Autism-Related Initiatives

- Tech Hire grant to Exceptional Family Center (5 yrs.)
 - Supports Next Step Job Training and Employment Partnership in 3 California counties
 - Plans to foster job development and training for an anticipated 450 people on the autism spectrum in healthcare, IT fields
- American Apprenticeship grant to AHIMA Foundation (5 yrs.)
 - Supports Managing the Talent Pipeline in Health Information Apprenticeship program
 - Incorporates a medical coding apprenticeship for people on the autism spectrum



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3. Scott, M., Jacob, A., Hendrie, D., Parsons, R., Girdler, S., Falkmer, T., & Falkmer, M. (2017). Employers' perception of the costs and the benefits of hiring individuals with autism spectrum disorder in open employment in Australia. *PloS one*, 12(5), e0177607.



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4. Koenig, K. P., & Williams, L. H. (2017). Characterization and utilization of preferred interests: a survey of adults on the autism Spectrum. *Occupational Therapy in Mental Health, 33*(2), 129-140.

5. Annabi, H., Sundaresan, K., & Zolyomi, A. (2017, January). It's Not Just About Attention to Details: Redefining the Talents Autistic Software Developers Bring to Software Development. In *Proceedings of the 50th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*.

6. Pfeiffer, B., Braun, K., Kinnealey, M., Derstine Matczak, M., & Polatajko, H. (2017). Environmental factors impacting work satisfaction and performance for adults with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 47*(1), 1-12.



References (Cont.)

7. Hensel, W. F. (2017). People with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Workplace: An Expanding Legal Frontier. *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Review*, 52.

8. Harmuth, Silletta, Adams, Beck, & Barbic (2018). Barriers and Facilitators to Employment for Adults with Autism: A Scoping Review. *Annals of International Occupational Therapy*, 1, 31-40

9. Markel, K. & Elia, B. (2016). How Human Resource Management Can Best Support Employees with Autism: Future Directions for Research and Practice. *Journal of Business and Management*, 22, 71-85.



AUTISM AT WORK



Jose H. Velasco, VP Products and Innovation

Diversity  Inclusion

About Autism

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disorder that impairs the ability to communicate and interact.

Impact

1/42 Boys and 1/189 Girls according to CDC

Unemployment

85% of people diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders are unemployed even though 60% have average to above average cognitive abilities. Many people who are employed are under-employed or partially employed.

Opportunity

50,000 Unfulfilled STEM jobs in the Bay Area alone

Is Bias Getting in the Way ?

ADVICE

Failure to make eye contact can alienate hiring managers

Establishing eye contact builds essential rapport. But eye contact isn't the only must-have attribute.

Other interview killers are the failure to smile, bad posture, inappropriate clothing, too much fidgeting, a weak handshake, playing with hair or face, or arms crossed over the chest.

Why do we Hire People with Autism ?

Attract the Best Talent in Our Industry

Bring a Different Perspective to Our Creative Process

Tap into Underutilized Source of Talent

Capture Special Skills of People with ASD

Retention

Because we CAN

10 Countries

Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Czech Republic, India, Ireland, Germany, U.S.

Currently, 132 Employed

Full and Part Time Jobs, Internships, Contractors, Vocational School (in Some Countries)

A Total of 300 Opportunities

Present and Past Paid Opportunities + HS/College Training Opportunities

21 Roles

- Software Developer
- Information Developer/KM
- Software Tester
- Business Analyst
- IT Technical Support
- System Administrator
- Marketing Operations Associate
- Networking Specialist
- Procure-to-Pay Service Associate
- Development Associate Consultant
- HR Service Associate
- IT Project Management
- Customer Support Associate
- Graphic Designer
- Multimedia Specialist
- Employee Communications
- Data Analyst
- Associate Consultant
- Product Manager
- Finance Operations Associate
- Channel Sales Development

Roadmap

2013

2015

2016

2017

2019

2020

...

**LEARN VIA
PILOTS AT
LOCATIONS
WORLDWIDE**

**PROCESS
MAINSTREAMING
& SUSTAINABILITY**

**PROCESS
MATURITY
ONBOARDING
EQUIVALENCY**

Change Management

Mainstreaming Best Practices



Implementation

Our Partners

GLOBAL



Brazil

Germany

U.S.



Argentina

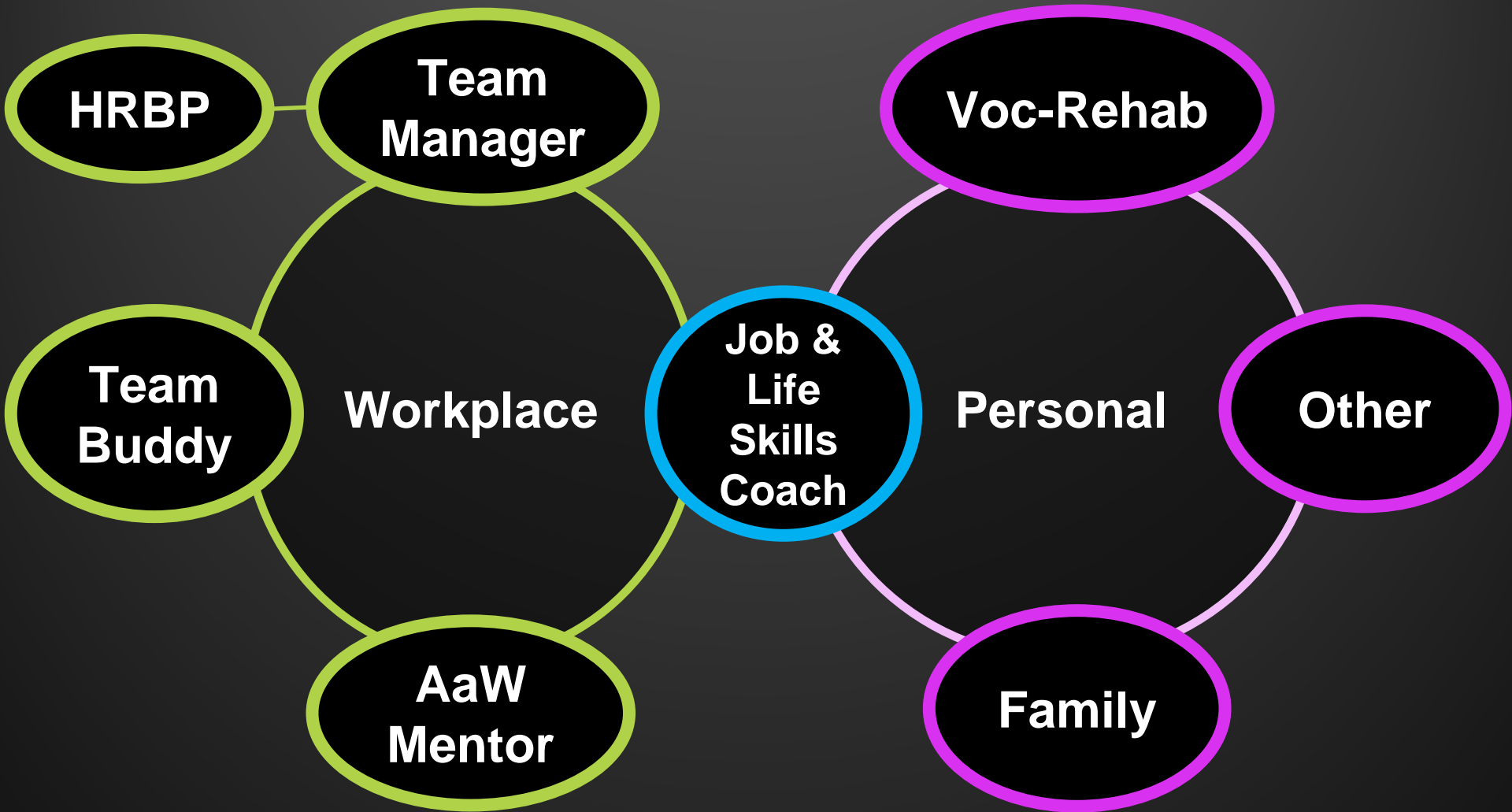
Czech Republic

India

High Level Process



Support Circles



Impact on Talent



Patrick



Janis



Mark



Thank you

Diversity+Inclusion

Yes She Can^{INC.}TM

DEVELOPING JOB SKILLS FOR YOUNG WOMEN WITH AUTISM.

NIH Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee

MARJORIE MADFIS, PRESIDENT

APRIL 19, 2018

Introduction

- Marjorie Madfis
- Parent of 22 year-old daughter with ASD
 - diagnosed at age 2.6
 - advocate for inclusion
- Professional background
 - Economic Development, public sector
 - MBA
 - 30 year career in corporate marketing
 - Founded Yes She Can nonprofit in November 2013

Characteristics of Successful Employees

- ✓ Motivated and ability to persevere
- ✓ Good social communication skills
- ✓ Problem solving skills
- ✓ Cognitive and emotional adaptability
- ✓ Flexibility
- ✓ Good emotional regulation

All these characteristics are core challenges for people with ASD

Are transitioning adults prepared?

	Special Ed.	Workplace
Support	Teacher and TA	Peers
Goal	Right answer No melt down	Solutions to problems
Organization	Structured, Predictable	Flexible, Fluid, Hidden rules
Approach	Independent	Collaboration, Discretion
Communication	Selective, Dependent	Necessary, Initiate
Intensity	50-minute class, breaks	until it is done

Change the model: Teach from a business perspective

- Tasks with a reason - why
- Process – how to get things done
- Problem-solving – no clear rule
- Dealing with uncertainty
- Collaborative decision-making
- Understanding shifting priorities
- Responsibility and commitment
- It's not about you- it's about the customer or the manager





Program & Curriculum
Skilled staff
Operating business



Product supply:
Donated
American Girl dolls
and accessories



Employment
Independence
Advocacy



Market demand:
Customers for
dolls at lower
prices; collectors

Program target participants

- Women with ASD and related social, language and learning disabilities
 - ultimate goal of employment
 - supportive, independent, part-time or full-time
- High school
 - Last year
- High School grads
 - Not engaged
- College students
 - No work experience



Key Differentiators

- Immersive learning design, with professional staff
 - Social workers, psychologists, business executives
- Communication skills practiced in safe, integrated setting
 - “The Hidden Curriculum” directly taught
 - Self- Advocacy
- Direction and feedback from manager
- Individualized goals
- Assessment process



What we are teaching: business

Merchandising

- Assess, research, price, inventory

Sales

- Communicate, selling, transactions

Marketing

- Customer database
- Social media, web e-commerce

Administration

- Quick Books
- Store maintenance



What we are teaching: how to work



- Information-gathering
- Recommendations with rationale
- Negotiating
- Decision-making
- Collaborating with peers
- Answering to management
- Problem-solving for business needs

What we are teaching: how to interact

- Perspective-taking
 - business objectives
 - manager expectations
- Interacting with customers
- Sensitivity to others
- Appropriate conversation
- Collaborating with co-worker
- Participation in team meetings



What we are teaching: emotional regulation



- Accountable for own actions
- Cooperative and courteous
- Motivation
- Execute “non-preferred” tasks
- Sustain attention and pace
- Accept critical feedback
- Strategies to deal with frustration

Team meeting

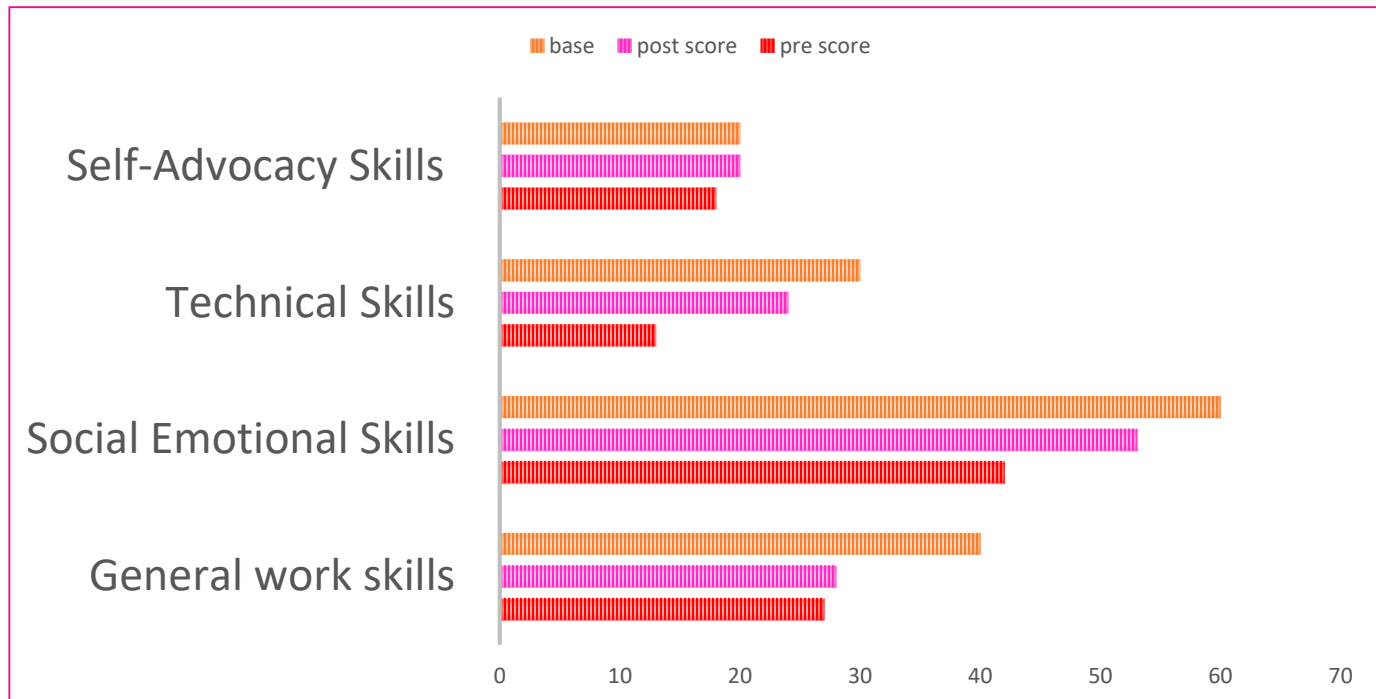


Case study: Maki

- Graduated 4-year college 2015; with support
- Lives at home, Independent travel, bi-lingual
- VR: 1 year to find job; placed in job at job developer's agency
- Working now 15 hours per week, paid by VR

After enrolled in
program for 18
months,
6 hr/week

Change over last
4 months

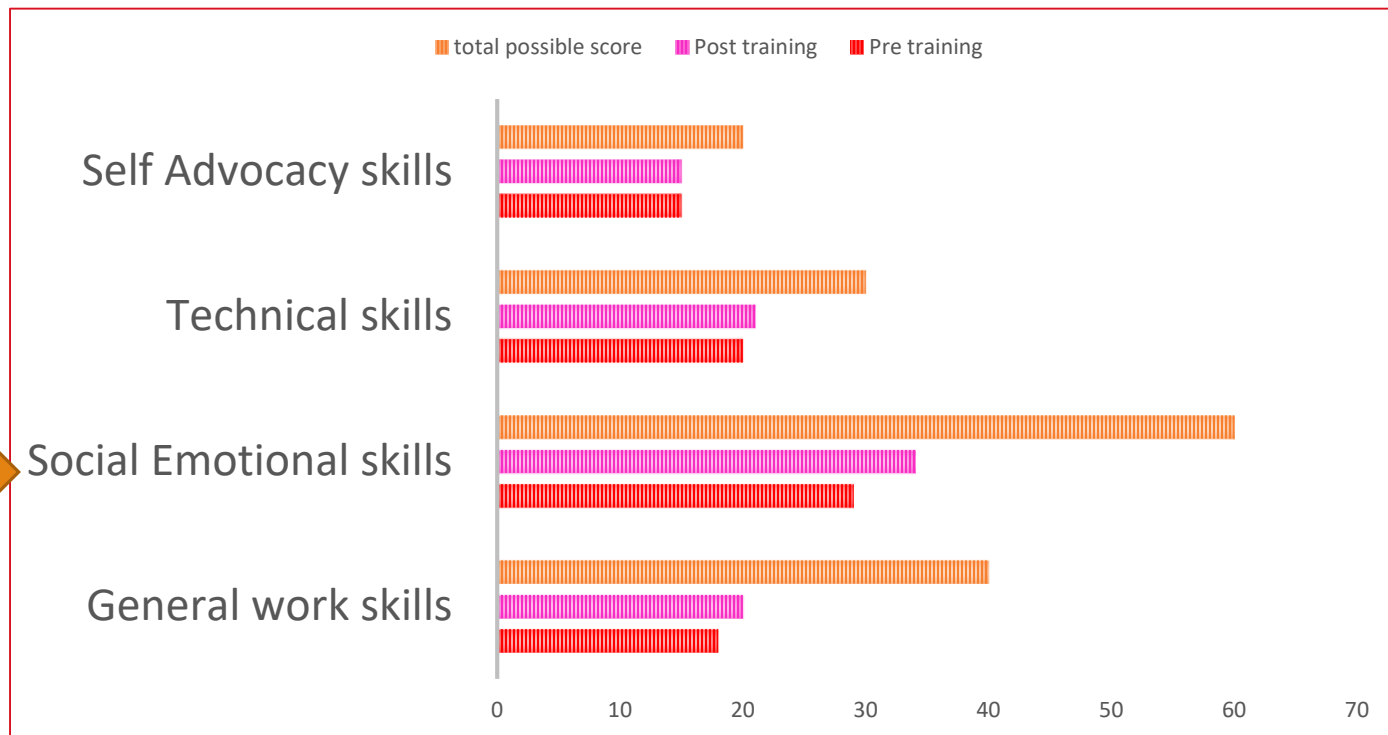
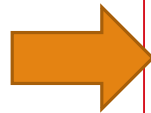


Case study: Isabelle

- Completed high school, no diploma; work experience program
- Lives at home, para-transit
- Attends college / transition program 20 hr/week with mentors

Coaching 2
hr/week; involved
from beginning

Change over last
4 months:



Assessment outcomes

- At work: all had improvements in
 - Flexibility
 - Stamina
 - Appropriate social engagement
 - Ability to accept critical feedback
- At home: parents observed
 - Increased independence
 - Engaged in decision-making, offering suggestions
 - Taking more responsibility
 - Greater self-confidence



Findings

- Intellect or academic attainment does not predict success
- Learn tasks quickly, particularly computer and digital
- Limiting factor: Lack of perspective
 - Leads to inflexible
 - Leads to anxiety
- No one likes being autistic
 - “*Why was I cursed with autism*”
- Isolated, no other options
 - Girl AGain is the highlight of their week
 - Depression



*Izzie, go
help the
customer*



*Not now.
I'm busy.*

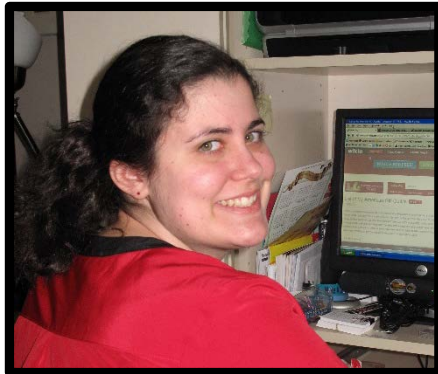
Observations

- VR provider agencies don't "get" autism
- OPWDD – rejects 80% for “employment training program”
 - Cake needs to be baked before going into the oven
- Job developers should work with smaller businesses
 - Flexibility: No HR or legal department
 - Identify opportunities to help company be more efficient
- Businesses need training
 - Afraid of behaviors, burdens
- Technology to support more independence at work
 - Develop solutions
 - Business buy-in and use

Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10EM6g8C7Oc>

Thank you



**Women with autism.
We work. With you.**

Organization

Incorporated in New York, November, 2013

IRS tax exempt designation 501c3 EIN 46-4224215

Executive Director: Marjorie Madfis, MBA

Yes She Can Inc. office

35 Hubbard Drive

White Plains, NY 10605

- 914-428-1258
- YesSheCanInc.org
- info@YesSheCanInc.org

[Donate](#)

Girl AGain boutique

4 Martine Avenue

White Plains, NY 10606

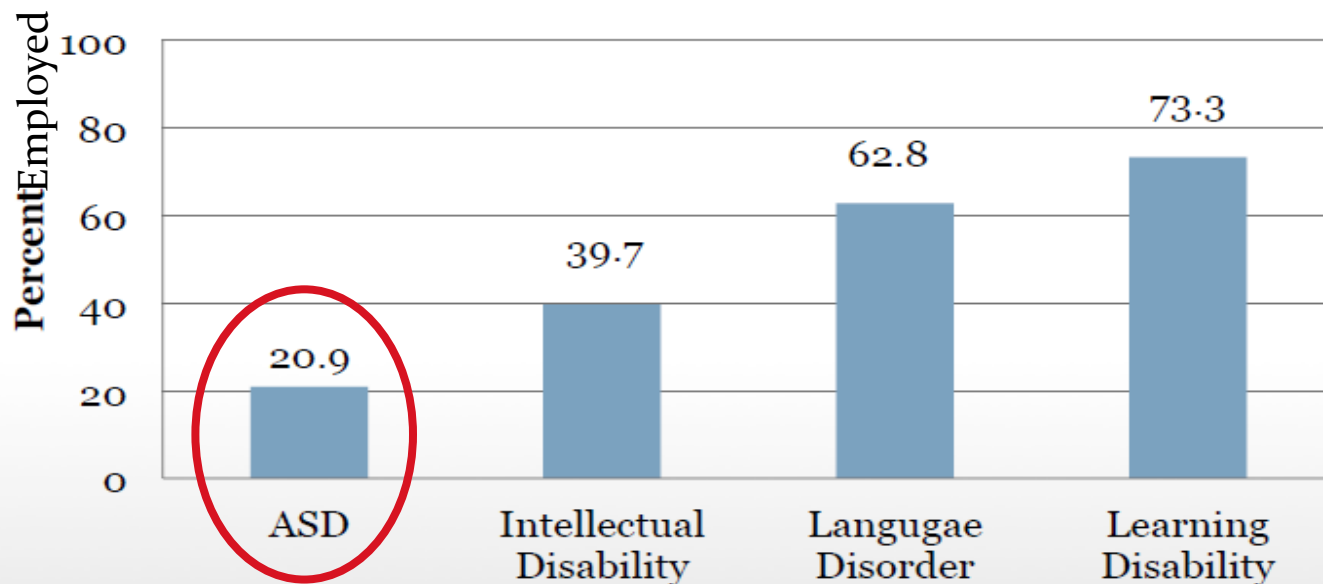
- 914-358-1460
- GirlAGain.com

[Donate dolls](#)

Back up

As a result of specific challenges for individuals with ASD, employment outcomes are poor

Full-Time Employment (21-25 Year Olds)



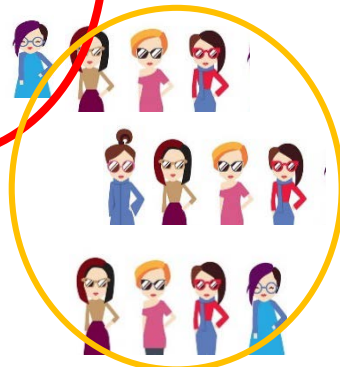
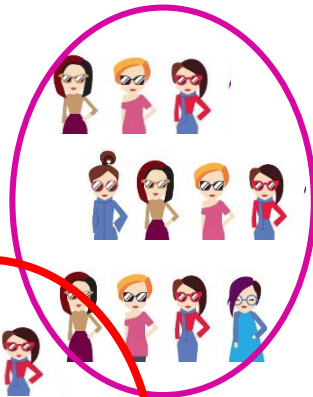
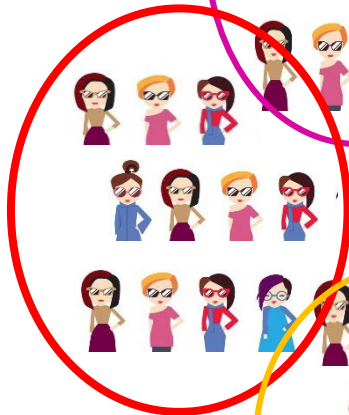
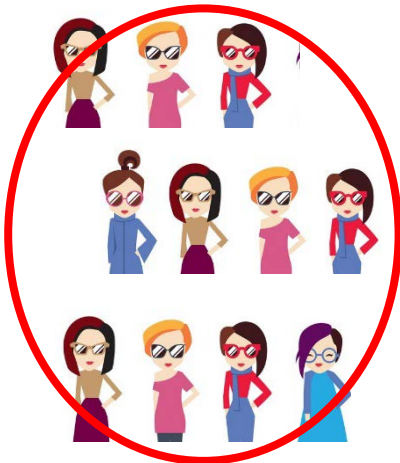
(NLTS2 Study; Roux et al., 2013)

Who is focused on employment?

Autism Employment Models

- **Agency managed**
 - Employment
 - SAARC: Beneficial Beans
 - Ability Beyond: Roses for Autism
- **Family created**
 - For profit or non-profit
 - Goal: Long-term employment
 - Extraordinary Ventures (NP)
 - Rising Tide Car Wash (P)
 - Spectrum Designs (NP)
 - Autonomy Works (B corp.)
- **Training for competitive placement**
 - Yes She Can Inc. (Girl AGain)
- **Competitive differentiation**
 - Ultra Testing
 - SAP
- **Supported employment at conventional business sites**
 - VR agency placements
 - DD agency placements
- **Business with design to employ people with DD**
 - Walgreens

Yes She Can Impact



Vision
of
need



Program
creation
and test
(Girl AGain
Hartsdale)



Program
expansion
(Girl AGain
White Plains)
• Training
• Social
• Placement



Yes She Can program
implementation in
multiple locations,
businesses; placement

2013 ->

2014 ->

2015 - 2019 ->

2020

Meaningful Employment for Adults with Developmental Disabilities



Lori Ireland, M.B.A.

Co-Founder and Board Member
Extraordinary Ventures

Paige Morrow

Managing Director
Extraordinary Ventures