



## Autism In The Workplace

### A Fact Sheet for youth, by youth!

#### Facts about Autism

As the years go on, it seems more and more people are being diagnosed with Autism. According to Autism Speaks, [www.autismspeaks.org/whatisit/index.php](http://www.autismspeaks.org/whatisit/index.php), "It is estimated today that 1 in every 110 children is diagnosed with autism, making it more common than childhood cancer, juvenile diabetes and pediatric AIDS combined. An estimated 1.5 million individuals in the U.S. and tens of millions worldwide are affected by autism. Government statistics suggest the prevalence rate of autism is increasing at a rate of 10% to 17% annually."

#### Facts about Employment for People with Disabilities

According to the US Department of Labor, [www.dol.gov/odep](http://www.dol.gov/odep), in July of 2010 the unemployment rate for people with disabilities was a shocking 16.4%. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is much higher than the national average because some people with disabilities have more limitations than their counterparts without disabilities. These people often can't properly represent themselves and therefore have a harder time obtaining employment.

#### Supports for Obtaining and Retaining a Job

Research tells us that it's not easy to find a job. However there are various programs to help people with disabilities. One such program is the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). DVR is an agency that helps people with disabilities find jobs. DVR may assist a person with a disability with locating a job in an alternative work environment, obtaining modified equipment, or paying for college, which will help them to prepare to work. DVR also provides financial assistance to help maintain services. It is important that referral to DVR is completed before the assistance is necessary because there may be a wait list for services.

For more information about DVR, please go to the website: [dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr](http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr)

#### Service Agencies specific to people with Autism

**Autism Speaks** [www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org) - Tends to be more about trying to find a cure for Autism.

**Autism Society** [www.autismsociety.org](http://www.autismsociety.org) - Tends to be more about working with people who have Autism.

Both of these organizations sponsor many events to raise awareness about Autism (conferences, walks, outings, etc.).

#### Other Agencies that work with individuals with Autism

**IRIS** [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/bdds/IRIS](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/bdds/IRIS)

**Family Care** [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/LTCare](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/LTCare)

These agencies work to assist people with Autism and other disabilities to obtain a job. Today, there are many businesses that employ people with disabilities, and laws that make it illegal to discriminate against people with disabilities when it comes to employment.

## Advice for Youth with Autism in the Workplace - Getting And Maintaining A Job

By law you don't have to disclose whether you have a disability; however, it's often best to disclose so employers know your strong and weak areas up front. Also, as mentioned above, companies cannot discriminate against you based on your disability.

- Be honest, trustworthy, and loyal.
- Try your best and keep focused while working.
- Keep your cup half full and keep uplifted that you have more ability than disability.
- Keep your cover letter and resume updated. Also have personal information and contact information of professional references on hand since many job applications ask for that. Former employers, teachers, and mentors all make good references.
- The resume is pretty easy especially if you get it checked by a professional. A resume helps to show what qualifications and experience you have and what level of education you have received.
- The cover letter gets more tricky because it is best to create a specific and individual cover letter for each application. A cover letter explains why you want the job and what special qualifications you might have.
- If you're unsure whether or not you are doing a resume, cover letter, or your reference sheet properly, have someone look it over. If you attend school or currently work, your school or workplace might have resources. Otherwise, for a fee, you can have them looked over by a professional.

### Networking

Now the big thing is getting your foot in the door. Many times employers will not read your cover letter or resume in its entirety. Whatever you consider the most important part of these documents should be at the middle of the piece of paper; in other words, at eye level. A big step a company will take to indicate that they are interested in you, is asking you to come in for an interview. Try to practice your interview skills beforehand so you are prepared. At the interview, show the employer that you're confident and mean business and you're ready to go to work. Be yourself and remember: it's okay to make a couple of small mistakes during an application or an interview process. Sometimes hiring is about who you know more than what you know, it's not always just about how qualified you are, it's about how many networks and good friends you have to sell yourself into the company.

Working can be challenging for people with disabilities. Jobs were never created to modify themselves for people. Employers have the same expectations for people with disabilities as they would people without disabilities. These employers are required to provide reasonable accommodations, but the best thing to do is only apply for jobs you know you're capable of doing.

#### A Final Message of Support

"We must work together as people with disabilities to prove to employers that we can do a job as well as or better than people without disabilities. I once sat in a conference session where one woman said that she enjoys hiring people with disabilities because sometimes they have certain amazing abilities that most people don't. There were things that they did that they were really good at or jobs they could only do.

At my movie theater job there is a man who is paralyzed. Because of this he can't sell tickets at the box office or clean movie theaters. So instead he rips tickets. Amazingly, he does very well ripping tickets with one hand. It's a skill that he's learned over the years. He also goes above and beyond his job description and actually tells you a bit about the movie before you see it. It's clear that he really enjoys his job." - Jeremiah

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