

Positive (+) Results:

Access to a job

Engage in a job

Retain a job

Advance/Adapt in a job

INDIVIDUAL WITH ASD

Primary Job Readiness

Employment Readiness

Individual level of pre-employment/employment skills and core life skills

Occupational Focus

Interests, strengths, importance of work in a person's life

Foundational Skills

ASD Presentation

Social Communication, repetitive behaviors/interests and sensory sensitivities

Well Being

Self-management, self-esteem, mental health, quality of life

Policy / Government
ECOSYSTEM

- Assist with:
 - Navigation
 - Transportation
 - Coordination
 - Encouragement
 - Envisioning possibility

Supports / Facilitators

FAMILY

Obstacles / Barriers

- Insufficient / misguided support
- Advocacy skills
- Financial

- Identify/link to available resources.
- Assist with:
 - Navigation
 - Liaison
 - Coordination
 - Connection
 - Mentorship

Supports / Facilitators

AGENCIES

Obstacles / Barriers

- No services / insufficient access
- Waitlists
- Eligibility criteria
- Funding

- Housing security
- Medical / Mental Health
- Income security
- Transportation
- Educational support
- Food security
- Leisure opportunities

Supports / Facilitators

COMMUNITY

Obstacles / Barriers

- Lack of or insufficient resources
- Awareness / knowledge / understanding of ASD

- Values individuals with ASD
- Supportive HR policy
- Capacity in the workplace
- Accommodations
- Associated supports within workplace
- Job coaching / mentorship

Supports / Facilitators

WORKPLACE

Obstacles / Barriers

- Indifference or negative attitudes about ASD
- Myths and stereotypes
- Lack of supportive HR policy
- Traditional hiring practices
- Lack of accommodations
- Lack of supports

Negative (-) Results:

Limited access to a job

Trouble engaging in a job

Difficulty retaining a job

Challenge advancing/adapting in a job

The Employment Ecosystem

Why is the Employment Ecosystem Important?

- Successful employment is often a result of the interaction of multi-layered, intersecting systems, resources and individuals. The extent of employment opportunity and potential are often inextricably linked to both internal resources and the broader system of family, agencies, community, workplace and policy. Collectively these stakeholders and systems play an integrative role that can either positively or negatively influence access to and retention of employment. Actions taken to enhance and support different areas of the ecosystem can have a positive impact on employment outcomes. To read more, see the [published paper](#) by Nicholas and colleagues (2017).

Key Elements of the Employment Ecosystem

- **The Individual with ASD:** The employment profiles of individuals with ASD are unique and consist of a range of foundational traits. Motivation, social abilities, cognition, behaviours, sensory sensitivities, health, happiness and job readiness skills are all unique traits that influence employment readiness.
- **Family:** Family members and friends can play a central role in the employment experience for individuals with ASD. Advocacy, providing transportation and navigating services likely represent only a few ways that families or significant others support a youth or adult with ASD.
- **Agencies:** Employment support services may be pivotal to job access and sustainability for individuals with ASD, yet the availability of appropriate and accessible services is often limited. Ideally, these services offer assessment of job fit, training, placement, job coaching, customized employment and employer capacity building.
- **Community:** Community-level needs for individuals with ASD include quality housing, transportation, health and mental health services, income sufficiency, food security and leisure opportunities. The availability of community services to address these needs is critical; if absent, such gaps negatively influence employment.
- **Workplace:** Employers, co-workers and the work environment are workplace factors that are critical in the employment experience. Awareness and openness of employers and co-workers to individual diversity as well as an array of organizational supports cumulatively may increase job access and retention.
- **Policy/Government/Societal Values:** Individuals living in the community are surrounded by a broader systemic infrastructure including social, economic and health policies that variably support engagement in employment and community life. One's context matters, as illustrated by emerging data suggesting that individuals and families with lower income and education levels are at greater risk for poorer employment outcomes.