

WORKTOPIA EXCHANGE

Exchanging **knowledge**

Exchanging **learnings**

Exchanging **ideas**

THE PARENT EXPERIENCE

IMPROVING PARENT OUTLOOKS ON EMPLOYMENT FUTURES

WHAT WE KNOW

The journey towards employment typically begins when adolescents with autism transition to adulthood. This transition often brings about changes in the roles and responsibilities of the individual with autism, as well as their parents². Sinneave reviewed information collected during interviews and surveys with parents and staff to develop a better understanding of parents' perceptions related to the employment futures of their youth with autism, and to gain insights into what parents may need to support their son or daughter on their journey to employment.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Although parents know that securing employment is not necessarily a simple endeavour for individuals with autism, **76% agreed or strongly agreed that their outlook related to the employment future of their son/daughter had improved as a result of the EmploymentWorks¹ program.** Many of the parents commented that, "they felt more hopeful."

"It gave our daughter purpose and us hope that she may someday be meaningfully employed."



84% of parents indicated that their sense of well-being benefited as a result of their youth's participation in the program. This is particularly relevant and important given that parents of individuals with autism have higher reported levels of anxiety, depression and exhaustion than parents of youth with other disabilities or chronic illnesses. Parents also described feelings of personal happiness in relation to their youth's experiences in the program.

"It made me so happy to see her confidence soar."



"I was so relieved that he enjoyed the program. It was wonderful to see him so happy."

Hope for the Future - Positive Outlook - Improved Well-Being

Encouraging Independence

Transitioning to adulthood involves youth with autism developing increased independence from their parents and relating to their parents as adults.

During this phase of development, parents balance promoting independence in their son or daughter, while continuing to be supportive.

An over-reliance on parents can limit young adults from achieving their maximum potential.³

Staff delivering the program have a unique opportunity to see the youth with autism in a different context, and to recognize abilities that may not be as obvious to a parent.

"I work with the families and reinforce the need to step back."

- Staff Interview

Ongoing Responsibilities

Parental responsibility for young adults with autism often does not diminish as it would for parents of neurotypical adults.²

Parents who attended the EmploymentWorks sessions and employer events indicated they wanted additional resource/referral materials, information on next steps, and opportunities to talk with other parents.

This 'novel adult world' requires parents to learn about new issues such as estate planning and guardianship, and to familiarize themselves with different systems (e.g. social security, mental health), which can be very overwhelming.

"We all need the support of people who understand what it is like to live day-to-day with someone, whom we love more than life itself, but struggle with autism."

- Parent Group Participant

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Supports and Resources for Parents

The following information may be helpful to parents and families, recognizing that each family is unique and there is no 'one size fits all' support or resource.

- i** **Connecting Families:** Start a parent support group to share ideas/resources and information about employers who hire people with autism. Opportunities for families to share experiences with one another offer many benefits.²
- i** **Autism Speaks** adult resources cover a variety of topics including housing, employment, postsecondary education and transitioning into adulthood. <https://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/adults>
- i** **Transition programs** such as Launch Online: <https://launch.sinneavefoundation.org/login-2>
- i** **'21Tips for Promoting Independence in Adults with Disability'** <https://www.endeavour.com.au/media-news/blog/21-tips-promoting-independence-adults-with-disability>