

**Welcome to Special Learning's**  
**Webcast Training Series**  
**July 26, 2012**



**Topic:** *Transition Survival 104: Vocational Topics and Job Coaching*

**Speaker:** *Ms. Michele LaMarche, M.S., BCBA*



Special Learning



# Professional Training Series



## **Transition Survival 104: Vocational Topics and Job Coaching**

*Presented by: Michele LaMarche, BCBA*





## Speaker Bio

**Michele LaMarche** is a BCBA and co-founder of Special Learning, Inc. She is also the founder and Executive Director of Step By Step Academy (SBSA), a highly-regarded center-based non profit Autism treatment facility in Columbus, Ohio. Since its formation almost ten years ago, SBSA has touched the lives of over one thousand students through rigorous application of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) treatments, resulting in exceptional outcomes.

**Michele**, with over fifteen years of professional experience in the field of ABA, uses her knowledge of behavioral treatment to produce ground breaking, effective, empirically validated curricula, a critical factor in successfully mainstreaming hundreds of students with ASD. With her credentials and work through Special Learning and SBSA, she has changed the lives of countless individuals and families affected by ASD.



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# Today's Objectives

Upon completion of ***Transition Survival 104: Vocational Topics and Job Coaching***, participants will:

1. Understand the challenges and barriers to employment that job seekers with autism face
2. Learn about Vocational Assessments commonly used in practice
3. Identify various techniques to promote successful on-the-job performance
4. Learn how job seekers with autism can be supported to obtain and keep meaningful and lucrative employment

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## The Scope of the Problem

- Studies show that approximately 50-75% of adults with an autism spectrum disorder are unemployed
- In a study by Hendricks (2010), she examined unemployment and underemployment of people with autism. Hendricks found that, despite the desire to work, many adults with autism remain unemployed or not working in jobs they like or that pay a living wage.





# Advantages of Employment

- Monetary benefits
- Less reliance on the state and federal government
- Health benefits
- Increased self-worth
- Increased productivity
- And, less isolation from others

meaningful employment = wages = self-sufficient  
= improved quality of life







## What We Know

- A percentage of people on the spectrum display challenging behaviors that represent a significant roadblock to successful employment.
- Increased challenges for those who have a co-morbid disorder
- It's not the lack of performing the job tasks that often get people fired, it's the lack of appropriate social behavior
- Because of the issues faced, many people require specialized support systems to assist in overcoming the difficulties individuals with ASD display in the workplace
- No support services, no job







# What We Know About the System

- Lack of training of employers and co-workers
- Stigma related to ritualistic behavior/stereotypes about autism
- Lack of opportunities
- Parent concerns about “letting go”
- Lack of knowledge where to look for employment





# What are the Barriers?

- Support Services
- Social Skill Challenges
- Communication and Language Difficulties
- Challenging Behavior
- Executive Functions
- Co-occurring disorders
- Lack of Pre-Planning and Placement
- Lack of Early Learning and Practice
- Employment Options & Issues





## Barrier: Support Services

- Inability to find vocational rehabilitation services to support the individual
- If services are available, they are not enough to support the specific and complex needs of an individual with Autism Spectrum Disorder
  - Costly
  - Intense support
  - Specialized training needed for support staff
    - Severity of symptoms
    - Co-occurring disorders
    - Intellectual disability
- No support services, no job
- Often, long term support needed
- Support practitioners not trained to handle problem behavior





# Barrier: Support Services

- Studies found persons with ASD...
  - Were likely to be denied services if their needs were too severe
  - Received more expensive services than individuals with other impairments
    - Lawer & Salzer (2009)
  - From a higher income, well educated family are more likely to receive supports
- In addition,
  - High functioning individuals with Autism and Asperger Syndrome are less likely to qualify for support services
  - Persons with ASD and cognitive challenges, or a co-occurring Intellectual Disability, are less likely to receive services because they present with *too many* challenges





## Barriers: Social Skills

- Limited recognition and understanding of social cues
- Appropriate use of humor
- Unaware or lack of understanding of social rules
- Unable to self-advocate
- Not aware of, or challenges in understanding others perspective and impact of own behavior





## Barriers: Communication & Language

- Unable to ask for help
- Difficulty understanding or following directions
- No or little reciprocal conversation skills
- Difficulty understanding complex directions and language
- Inability to ask for further explanation, simplification, or directives to be repeated
- Not able to identify when and communicate need for breaks (self-advocacy)





## Barriers: Communication & Language

- Difficulty identifying and communicating supports needed to be more successful
- Difficulty communicating with co-workers







# Barriers: Challenging Behavior

## *A thought about challenging behaviors:*

- 1) Challenging behaviors are maladaptive ways of responding to inadequacies in the environment
- 2) Challenging behaviors occur due to a lack of socially-adaptive skills for controlling one's environment





# Barriers: Challenging Behavior

- Disruptive and Interruptive behavior
  - Stereotypies
  - Ritualistic behavior
  - Repetitive behavior
  - Inattention
  - Non-response and withdrawal
- Dangerous behavior
  - Self-injurious behavior (SIB)
  - Aggression toward others
  - Property destruction
- Protests
  - Vocal
  - Physical tantrums





# Barriers: Challenging Behavior

- Sensory Issues: seeking and avoiding
- Lack of motivation
- Difficulty self-regulating emotional responses
- Limited access to reinforcement
- Low tolerance to change
- Poor environment similarities
- Challenges with structuring independent work
- Difficulty with managing change
- Difficulties with waiting and/or delayed reinforcement





# Barriers: Executive Functions

- Websites and articles often define executive functions differently but the overall premise should still be same...
- Executive function is an umbrella term
  - Complex cognitive processes and sub-processes to achieve a particular goal
  - Control center – “executive control”
- Additional definitions:
  - Executive function refers to a set of mental skills that are coordinated in the brain’s frontal lobe that work together to help a person achieve goals. <http://www.webmd.com/add-adhd/executive-function>
  - The cognitive process that regulates an individual’s ability to organize thoughts and activities, prioritize tasks, manage time efficiently, and make decisions. (The American Heritage® Medical Dictionary Copyright© 2007) <http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/executive+function>





# Barriers: Executive Functions

- Executive functions are complex and not easily defined
  - “Funahashi summarized executive function as ‘a product of the co-ordinated operation of various processes to accomplish a particular goal in a flexible manner’ (Elliot, R. 2003, p. 50).
- Common to define them by skill examples
- Research using Functional Neuroimaging, PET and fMRI, demonstrates, to some degree, executive functions may recover, or be taught
- There are 8 commonly identified executive functions
- Many articles break them down further





# Barriers: Executive Functions

- Specific executive functions that may present as barriers in employment:
  - Solve novel problems
  - Modify our behavior in light of new information
  - Generate strategies or sequence complex actions
  - Keep track of time and meet deadlines
  - Manage more than one task at a time
  - Ask for help or seek more information when needed
  - Engage in group dynamics





## Barriers: Co-occurring Diagnosis

- Intellectual Disability
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Seizure disorder
- Tics
- Impulse Control disorder
- Organic disorders
  - Fragile X Syndrome







## Barriers: Lack of Pre-Planning & Placement

- There is typically a great deal of time needed to complete and implement all components of the transition plan
- Studies show:
  - That the first few years following school as a new adult are the most crucial predictors to future success
  - A poor transition leads to poor outcomes
- Planning should begin by age 12
- Vocational placements:
  - Research local options
  - Learn about the employer
  - Meet with employees and supervisors; develop a relationship
  - Complete site visit
  - Identify job skills needed specific to site
  - Identify financial and service resources needed

***Be Prepared –***

***There are already a significant number of challenges one may face as part of the transition.***





## Barriers: Lack of Early Learning & Practice

- Consider strengths and deficits
- Assess for interests
- Assess specific job task skills needed
- The 3 P's:
  - Pre-teach
  - Practice
  - Perform
- Simulate – *pre-teach*
- Consider the number of trials needed for mastery - *practice*
- Achieve generalization and fluency - *perform*





# Vocational Assessments

- Often difficult to utilize
  - Abstract
  - Involve drawings
  - Require reading
  - Need writing skills
- Vocational questionnaires are often answered by loved ones
- Questions asked typically include:
  - Learning ability
  - Language ability
  - Behavioral functioning
  - Ability to perform daily living skills





# Vocational Assessments

- Better assessment options
  - Hands on approach
  - Assess strengths
  - Assess employable skills
  - Discovery
- Theories about possible, effective assessment modalities
  - Video identification
  - Motivation and abilities assessment while testing employment tasks
    - In contrived situation
    - In the true environment; on the job site
  - Virtual reality





# What to Assess

- Interests and strengths
- Specific work skills
- Learning style
- Communication skills
- Sensory issues
- Need for structure and predictability
- Physical and social environment of a potential workplace





# Common Vocational Assessment Tools

- IDEAS (Interest, Determination, Exploration, and Assessment System)
  - a pencil and paper test to determine career interest
  - requires a 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level
- Career Assessment Inventory
  - a paper and pencil/computer test to determine occupational interests
  - requires a 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level
- CDM (Career Decision Making)
  - a paper and pencil/computer test to assist with career planning
  - requires a 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level
- PIC-S (Picture Interest Career Survey)
  - picture assessment of interest
  - no reading skills required

Website where these tools can be found: [www.psychcorp.pearsonassessments.com](http://www.psychcorp.pearsonassessments.com)





# Top Skills Needed for Employment

1. Asking for help
2. Asking for a break
3. Telling someone you don't understand a direction or task
4. How to utilize natural supports like
  - clocks
  - calendars
  - visual schedules
  - phones
  - timers







# Ways to Prepare & Support

- Employment readiness and intervention types
  - Social and vocational support groups
  - Vocational support programs
  - Social and vocational skills training
  - Job site training and simulation training
  - Job Club
  - Travel Training
  - Employer and co-worker training





# Social & Vocational Support Groups

- Age 18-22 years
- Minimal cognitive difficulties
- 1 hour per week
- 8-12 week sessions; monthly reunions
- Specific curriculum, skill development common to all
- Relationship development between participants
- Results indicate:
  - Able to take others perspective more often
  - Found support, encouragement and ideas from other members when dealing with a challenge
  - Stated they now had friendships
  - Kept in touch via phone and email after group ended





## Vocational Support Program: The Aspirations Model

- In 2007, Hillier, et. al. studied the impact on a 2-year vocational support program to:
  - Assess impact on employment rates and income and
  - Examine factors associated with employment among individuals with ASD:
    - Job satisfaction
    - Social integration in the workplace
    - Evaluations of employees on job performance
- Mean age 22 years
- Mean full-scale IQ: 111





# The Aspirations Model

- Pre-placement services
  - Parent interview
    - Communication skills
    - Daily living
    - Social skills
    - Cognitive ability
    - Behavior
  - Individual interview
    - Background and past experiences
    - interests
  - Training on how to secure employment
    - 1 hour/wk
    - Taught how to
      - Search for a job
      - Write a resume
      - Interview





# The Aspirations Model

- Post-placement services
  - Potential employment identified
  - Site visit and assessment
    - Work environment
    - Co-workers
    - Support systems
    - Potential job tasks
  - Formal placement established
  - Program coordinator attended work with the employee to
    - Ensure success
    - Provide additional training whenever necessary
    - Support ranged from 4 to 20 hours a week
  - Information on ASD was provided to co-workers
  - Follow up and additional supports if needed





# Aspirations' Results

- Employment levels:
  - Increase of 78%
- Income levels:
  - Mean pre-intervention - \$1.60/hour
  - Mean post-intervention - \$7.10/hour
  - Increase of 443.75%
- Hours worked:
  - Mean of 17.11 hours per week





# Aspirations' Results

- Job retention:
  - 7 of the 9 employees worked, on average, 12.5 months
  - For 6 of the employees, it was their first paid job
- Length of time to placement
  - On average, length of time to placement was 4.5 months
- Job placement
  - Entry-level positions
    - Ex. food service, retail, clerical work







# Implications from Aspirations' Results

- It is clear that there should be a greater emphasis on vocational skills before high school graduation in order to prepare individuals for vocational success.
  - Benefits:
    - Enhance awareness and understanding of employment
    - Increase social integration and understanding of the impact of their behaviors on others
    - Greater opportunity to build social support networks





# Social & Vocational Skills Training

*Did you know?*

Persons with severe disabilities represent less than 10%  
of workers in supported employment

- Should occur in high school and beyond
- Target specific social skills needed for employment
- Target specific vocational skills needed for employment
  - Interest assessment
  - Site assessment
  - Skills assessment





# Job Site Training & Simulation Training

- Lattimore, et. al (2006) demonstrated job-site training and simulation training programs provide as much, if not more, support to persons with ASD for teaching job skills versus vocational support programs.
- **Job-site training:**
  - training provided by a job coach to his employee (diagnosed with ASD)
  - At the work site
  - 1x daily for a designated amount of time
  - focus of fading prompts until mastery criteria is reached
- **Job-site simulation training:**
  - Includes Job-site training AND
  - Simulation training at an adult education site





# Job Site Training & Simulation Training

- Studies show combination of both:
  - Enhances quality of work
  - Led participants to demonstrate a higher acquisition skill rate
  - Provides those with ASD a greater opportunity to develop necessary skills for employment

**Training in the natural environment paired  
with simulation training is more effective.**





# Other Supports

## ➤ Job Club

- Group is run by the individuals themselves
- 1x a week
- Individuals can offer tips, support, etc. to each other

## ➤ Travel Training

- Classes teach how to access and utilize public transportation
  - Rules
  - Public transportation etiquette
  - Appropriate behavior





# Employer Supports

- Outside staff support
  - Job coach
  - Service & program coordinators
- Education of the person
- Education of the diagnosis
- Social skill training with co-workers
- Communication training with supervisor
- Environmental supports –
  - Assess and create
- Prescheduled follow-ups and training





## The Importance of Job Placement

- Migliore, Timmons, Butterworth, & Lugas (2012) examined predictors of successful transition of youth:
  - into employment,
  - the amount of money earned, and
  - the number of hours worked per week.
- Additionally, the study examines the factors in relation to the demographics and vocational services that enhance the performance of youth with autism.



A vibrant rainbow arches across a light blue sky filled with soft, white clouds. The scene is bright and optimistic.

## The Importance of Job Placement

- Results indicated:
  - Providing formal job placement is the best predictor in finding employment
  - Highest rates of pay were correlated with college, post secondary education.







# Intervention and Employment Strategies & Choices

- Competitive employment
- Customized employment
- Supported employment with job coaching
- Microenterprise
- Sheltered workshops
- Specific employment readiness interventions
  - Social and Vocational support group
  - Vocational Support groups
  - Job site training and simulated training





# Competitive Employment

## Benefits:

- Seen as more “mainstream”
- More job choices
- Ability to interact with co-workers

## Challenges:

- requires understanding of social rules and behavior
- Sometimes difficult to get supports needed





# Competitive Employment

- In 2005, Schaller and Yang looked at competitive employment for people with autism.
- 2 Findings:
  - Determine what supports people with autism need on the job so that the supports can be put into place and can be used in the areas where the employee needs them.
    - ex: communication devices or visual reminders
  - Find a balance with regards to amount of support provided...not too little or too much.





# Customized Employment

## Benefits:

- Job is created or modified to suit the individual rather than expecting the individual to conform to the job
- Opens up many possibilities
- Individuals can use their interests and strengths

## Challenges:

- Some companies may not be open to this option
- Individuals' interests may not match needed job within a company





# Things to Know About Customized Employment

- This is where vocational services are moving in the future
- Sometimes, this type of employment allows individuals who may be considered “unemployable” in the past to obtain a job
- Long assessment process to get it right the first time
  - Discovery
- Vocational rehabilitation services will sometimes assist with equipment purchases and supports for this service





# Supported Employment with Job Coaching

- What does this mean?
  - Individuals are given on the job support
  - No or minimal modifications in job duties
- Results
  - This has been shown to dramatically increase long-term success.
- Benefits
  - Individual receives on the job assistance in the moment
  - Allows people to work in job settings that may not have been inaccessible in the past.
  - The “coaching” role can sometimes be turned over to the supervisor or co-workers on some level



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## In Evidence-Based Supported Employment...

- The goal is competitive employment
- Wages should be equivalent to those doing the same work who do not have a mental illness
- Pace is determined by client, not professionals
- A client meets with an employment specialist to discuss preferences, skills, experiences. Then the specialist meets with the client's treatment team to coordinate employment with mental health treatment.
- Support continues for as long as the client feels necessary



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## Components of Supported Employment

- 15 critical components are included in evidence-based supported employment:
  - Caseload size
  - Vocational services staff
  - Vocational generalists
  - Integration of rehabilitation with mental health treatment
  - Vocational unit
  - Zero exclusion criteria
  - Ongoing, work-based vocational assessment







## Components of Supported Employment

- Rapid search for competitive jobs
- Individualized job search
- Diversity of jobs
- Permanence of jobs
- Jobs as transitions
- Follow-along supports
- Community-based services
- Assertive engagement and outreach





# Supported Employment Success Strategies

- Job placement
  - Ensure the right fit
  - Assess the individuals' skills
  - Assess the individual's interests, strengths, and challenges
- Work tasks
  - Clearly defined
  - Allow the individual to use whatever tools helps him or her be successful
    - visual schedule
    - programmed reminders
- Job support
  - More at first, fade gradually





# Supported Employment Success Strategies

- Supervisors and co-worker support
  - Should be on board with support and plan
  - Understand their co-worker with autism
  - Can lead to great natural supports
  - Sometimes having a particular go-to co-worker helps – mentor/model
- Appropriate and thorough on-the-job training
  - Include what accommodations may help best
- Long term support
  - Understood this may be needed
  - Combination of natural and external supports works best





# Tips for the Job Coach

- Help the person you are supporting look for natural supports
- Look for ways the person can be independent
- Practice the skills over and over (high repetition is very important)
- Job portfolio
- Recognize the person's strengths!
- Identify and provide reinforcers
  - Transition to natural reinforcement if possible





# A Job Coach's Challenges

- The goal of the job coach is to fade out eventually
- Many people with autism need ongoing support
- Many job coaches are not trained to handle problem behavior
  - Aggression toward others or self
  - Avoidance
  - Escape
- Sometimes having a job coach is stigmatizing





## Individual Placement & Support (IPS)

- Most common type of supported employment
- Clients, families and providers prefer the supported employment programs – social validity
- Rates of competitive employment have been shown to be higher for clients assigned to IPS than for clients in a traditional psychiatric rehabilitation program
- During supported employment, research has shown that clients do not experience negative consequences as a result; however, it has been shown that they experience improved self-esteem and a reduction of symptoms





# IPS

- Most clients begin with part-time employment
- Most clients are satisfied when jobs are consistent with preferences
- Typically, clients work several different jobs before finding one that fits all their needs





# Review of Best Practice of Supported Employment

- Evidence-based supported employment includes the following 6 principles:
  - The client determines eligibility
  - Supported employment is integrated with mental health treatment
  - Competitive employment is the goal
  - Searching for a job begins rapidly
  - Jobs fit the individual
  - Follow-along supports are not time-limited







# Microenterprise

- What is it?
  - Individuals own their own business, and as much as they are able, participate in the running, marketing, and daily operations of the business.
- Ex. [Man with autism, Down syndrome runs successful kettle corn business](#)
  - From [U.S. News & World Report](#):  
Joe Steffy is the owner of his own microenterprise--[Poppin' Joe's Kettle Korn](#). He's a 23-year-old small-business man with a goal of \$100,000 in sales by 2012. Joe also has autism and Down syndrome and is nonverbal.





# Microenterprise

## Benefits:

- Individuals own capital
- Prestigious in the community
- Allows a person to pursue own interests

## Challenges

- Person's interest may not be marketable
  - Possibility of failure
  - Heavy workload involved
- Microenterprise should not be seen as a catch all for those who have been unable to obtain employment through other means, but it is a viable option for some people who have the drive to start a business and take that chance.
- Just look at Poppin' Joe!





# A Study on Microenterprises

- Microenterprise options for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities: An outcome evaluation (Conroy, Ferris, & Irvine, 2010).
- Results:
  - Being involved in microenterprise seemed to improve the quality of life for a significant portion of their sample
  - Support workers reported that their own quality of working life was improved as well
  - The authors also found that microenterprise could be an alternative to day support programs or sheltered workshops for some
- Funds for start up costs for small businesses can often be accessed through vocational rehabilitation or Medicaid.





# Sheltered Workshop

- This option may not be the best choice for many individuals.
- They are sometimes a comforting alternative for some families
  - Increased level of supervision
  - Safe
- Challenge:
  - Moving away from utilizing them due to the unavailability of work
  - Inability for people to make a livable wage





# Critical Strategies for Employment Success

- Maintain a consistent schedule
- Maintain a consistent set of job responsibilities
- Reduce the amount of unstructured time
- Directly communicate with the employee
- Provide reminders and reassurance
- Use organizers to structure the job tasks
- Help to reduce the social demands of the job
- Modifications for the employee with autism caused modifications for other employees' jobs – be prepared and model support





# Train Supervisors to be Successful

- A primary technique used by supervisors includes being direct in communicating and giving specific reminders
- Also, they use specific techniques to verify that communications were correctly understood, such as having the employee repeat the instructions
- Instructions are given about how to read a particular social cue or how to follow a particular social rule
- Reminders are also given to the employee with ASD, such as:
  - to speak slowly
  - to pay attention to the job
  - to take only allowed time for a break





## Additional Recommendations for Supervisors

- Employers should provide employees with autism job try-out opportunities
- Be direct and precise when communicating with employees
- Look at each job and each potential employee differently
- Treat employees with autism the same as one would treat an employee without autism and hold them accountable
- Focus on the end result of the job rather than forcing a specific way of completing it
- Be willing and able to commit to getting the appropriate supports and job structure in place for employees
- Make sure consultation and back-up assistance from a disability support organization are available to the employer





# Collaborate with Supports

- Have some sort of connection with an employment support service
- Roles of support services:
  - “Checked in” on employee occasionally
  - Available in case a problem arose
  - Liaison for non-work issues that may affect job performance







## Study Findings: Hagner and Cooney (2005)

- Supervisors believed that altering one's attitude was key to successful employment of individuals with autism
- Additional support provided to employees was viewed as “no big deal” and that it was something they “do for everyone”
- Supervisors must be able to expand upon the strengths of the employee in order to ensure success
- In order to the employer to successfully employ an individual with autism, backup support from a community rehabilitation service provider is necessary
- Employers developed specific strategies for supervising employees, and according to employers, the strategies were not burdensome





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