

How to Find and Keep a Job: Advice for Adults with Autism

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Importance of Employment

Jobs can provide:

- Salary
- Benefits (health care, etc.)
 - Self-esteem
 - Independence
- Increased work and people skills
- Opportunity to make friends

Challenge: 60-80% of adults with ASD unemployed



Temple Grandin



“Different, not less”

Temple used her insights into sensory challenges and her visual thinking to become the leading expert on designing cattle-handling facilities.

Wrote 6 books about autism, and is a professor at Colorado State.

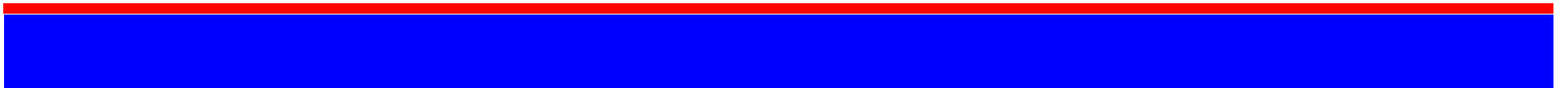
Focus on Strengths, Not Disability

“Some of the most successful people on the autism spectrum who have good jobs have developed expertise in a specialized skill that people value. If a person makes him-/herself very good at something, this can help make up for some difficulties with social skills.”

“It is likely that some brilliant scientists and musicians have a mild form of Asperger’s Syndrome (Ledgin, 2002). “

“The individuals who are most successful often have mentors either in high school, college, or at a place of employment. Mentors can help channel interests into careers.”

Tempe Grandin, Ph.D., adult with autism



Challenges and Successes of Higher-Functioning Adults with ASD

John – after high school, willing to work if offered a job, but discouraged from not being hired; eventually found a job at his father's company

Joe – graduated from ASU summa cum laude with degrees in information science and accounting; unemployed for 5 years before finding job, but finally found a good accounting job

Tom – graduated from ASU with MS in Education, but no school would accept him as student teacher (odd social affect), so unable to earn teaching certificate, so became a school aide

Karen – works as SLPA and habilitation provider for children with ASD

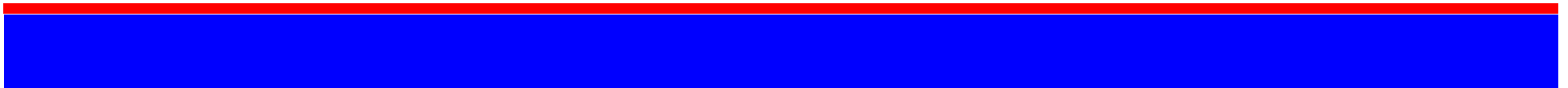
Mike – BS in engineering, did CAD for 7 years, but when laid off worked as janitor for 2 years before finding another CAD job, now there for 10 years

Examples of Adults with ASD with more challenges

Daniel – 1 year internship with Project Search; now does laundry at hotel

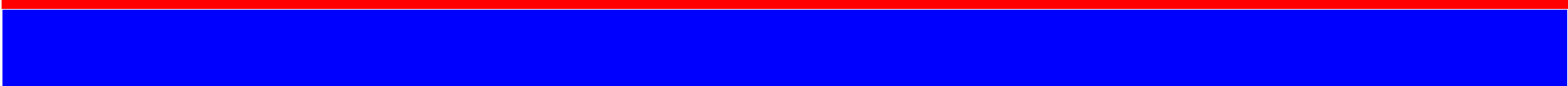
Mark – enjoys tearing paper into pieces at home; found ideal job shredding paper

Kim – autism and intellectual disability; functioning at 3rd grade level; 2.5 years in WorkBridge in high school; 1.5 years at Chandler/Gilbert ARC sheltered workshop doing assembly (very fast); now intern (via DDD) at Hacienda Healthcare doing housekeeping, laundry. Likes repetitive work



2015 Vocational Survey of 172 Adults with ASD in Arizona

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Arizona State University



Job Statistics

Current Job Situation

Student in high school	9%
Student in vocational program	3%
Student in college	4%
Center-based employment	4%
Group-based employment	5%
Regular employment with supports	9%
Regular employment without support	28%
Self-employed	1%
Unemployed, looking for work	27%
Unemployed, not looking for work, not a student	13%

Does not include about 35% of adults with ASD in day programs



Job Types

Entry Level Job	82%
Professional Level Job	18%

Typical Hourly Wage

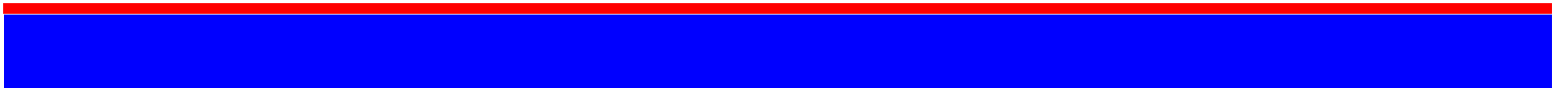
Average Hourly Wage	\$12.50/hour
Median Hourly Wage	\$9/hour
Percent under \$8/hour	19%

Hourly Wage Based on Type of Employment

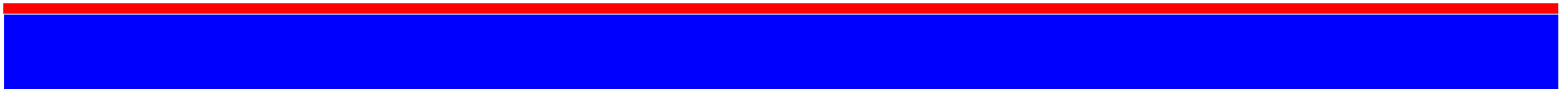
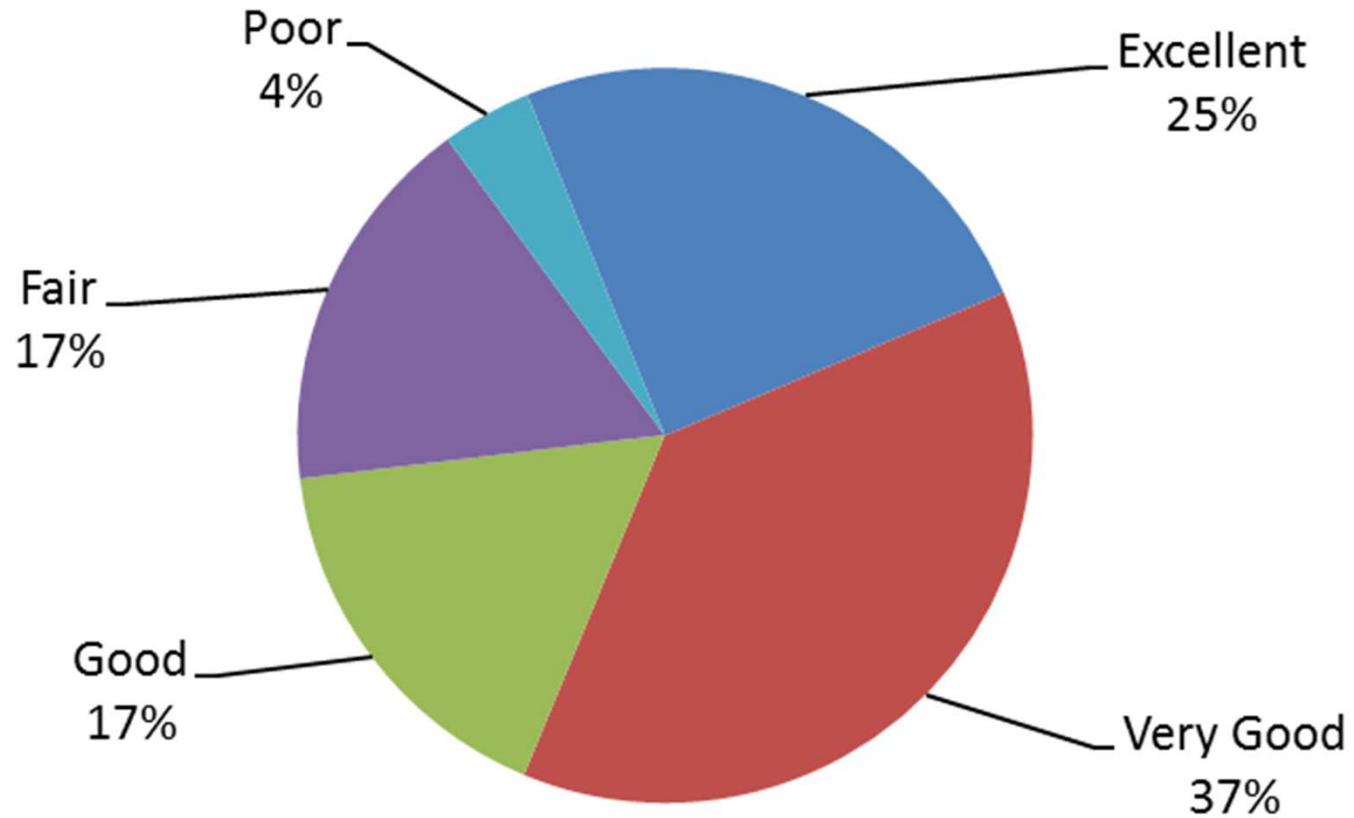
Center-based employment	\$3/ hour
Group-based employment	\$3/ hour
Regular employment with supports	\$9/ hour
Regular employment without supports	\$16/ hour

Average Hours per Week

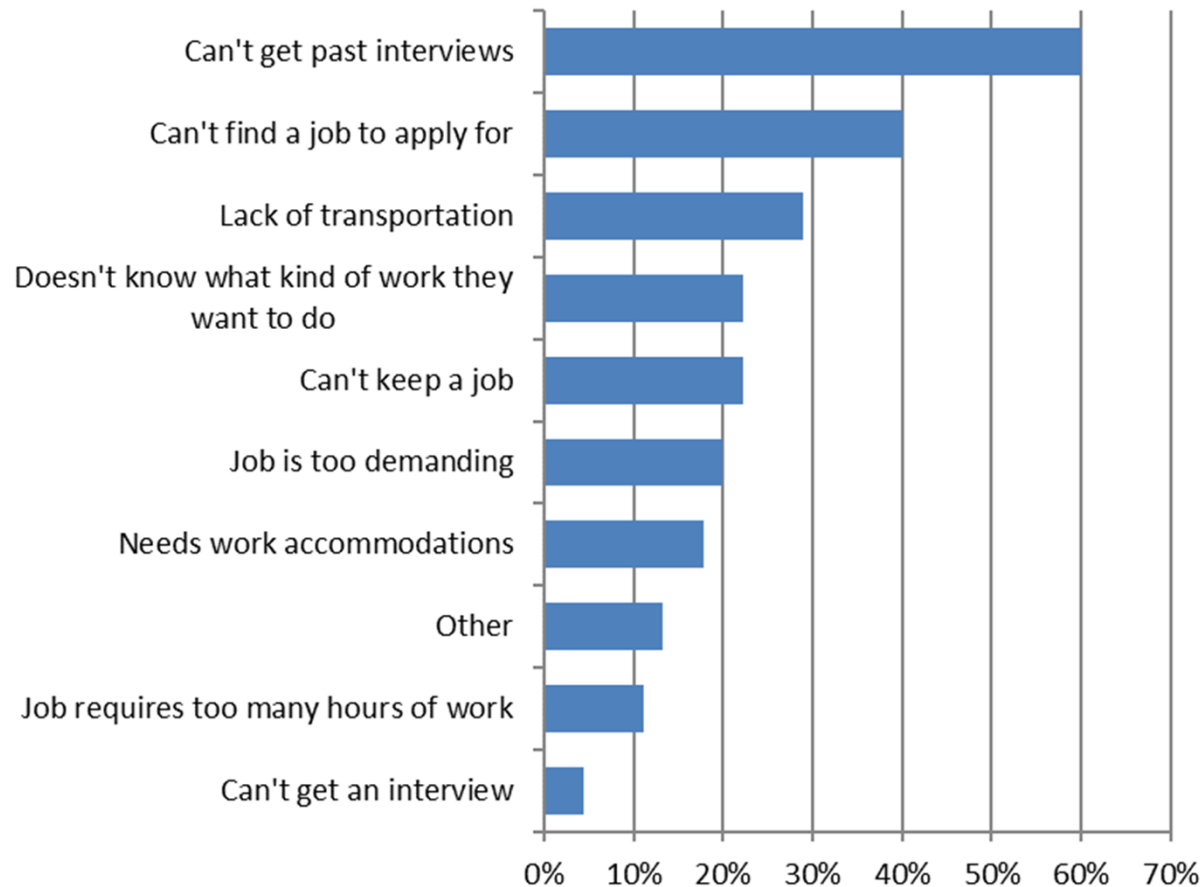
Typically worked	25 hours/week
Would like to work	33 hours/week



Job Satisfaction



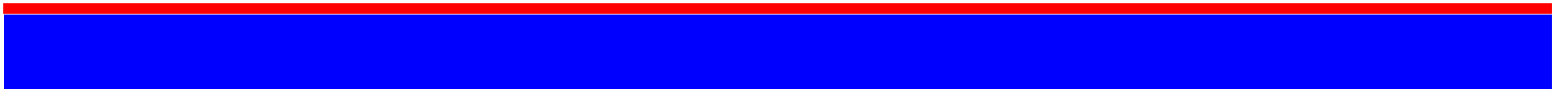
Barriers to Finding Employment



Respondents were able to select more than one option and percentages are out of number of respondents who answered the question

What Help is Most Needed to Find/Keep a Job

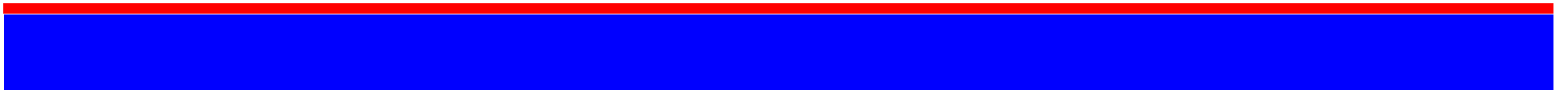
Job Coaching/ Job Training	43%
Teaching employers about how to work with individuals with ASD	24%
Teaching Interview Skills/ Application Skills	22%
Transportation	9%



Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) Services

- Center-Based Employment
- Group-Based Employment
- Transition to Employment
- Employment Support Aide
- Individual supported Employment

DDD and VR job services can be requested while in school, as part of IEP meeting

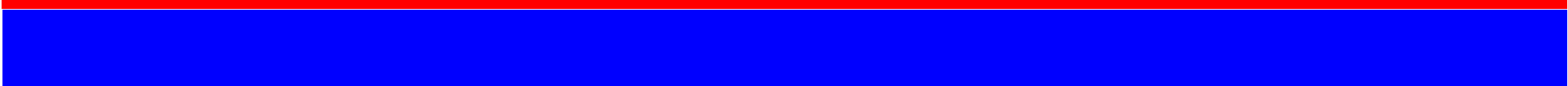


Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

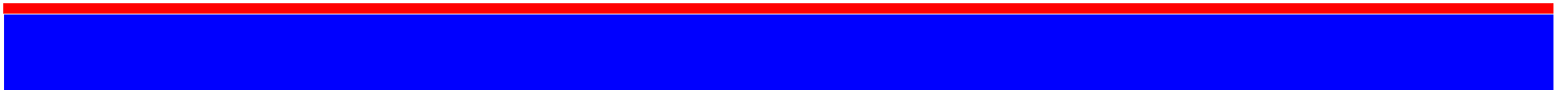
(if capable of competitive employment)

- Work Adjustment Training (working at a training site prior to employment)
- Work Exploration (career search with job coach)
- Psychological Evaluations
- Vocational Evaluations
- Functional Capacity Evaluations
- Assistive Technology
- Supportive Education (tuition assistance)

Challenge: Survey found VR services helpful, but only 10% found jobs directly via VR



Recommendations to Find and Keep a Job

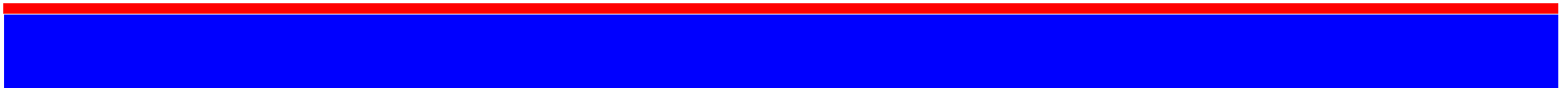


Career Exploration and Job Search

Explore many possible careers.

Most jobs are found by social networking, but adults with ASD have a very limited social network – make sure you use everyone in your network.

Also use DDD and VR services to build job skills and help find employment!



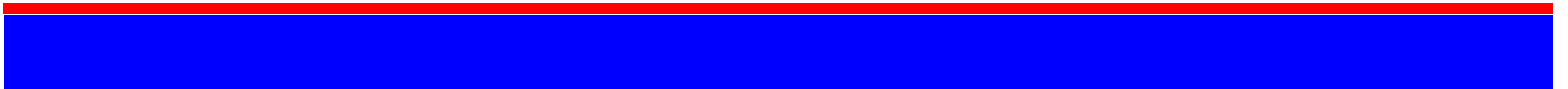
Focus on your strengths

Soft Skills:

- Showing up on time, ready to work
- Low absenteeism
- Commitment to work hard and learn job skills
- Polite, professional

Job Skills:

Any special skills or interest areas

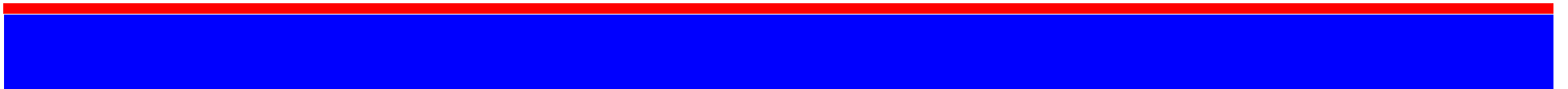


Pre-Interviews & Job Shadowing

Ask job coaches for help with finding a job, and to do a pre-interview with employers to explain ASD and your strengths and disability.

Request job shadowing prior to starting employment, to ensure that job is a good match for your interest and ability, and to identify potential problems including sensory problems.

Consider a trial work period (usually unpaid)



Mock Interviews

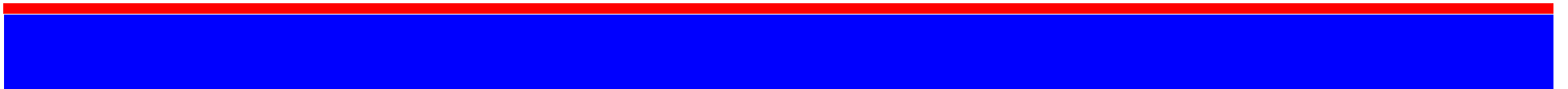
Practice a short summary of your skills, experience, and strengths.

Practice answering basic questions, such as:

- What is your work experience?
- What are your skills?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- Do you need any accommodations?
- What hours can you work?
- How many hours can you work?
- Do you have reliable transportation?

Worksite Peer Mentors

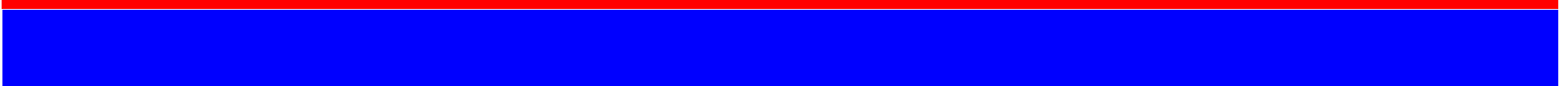
Ask the employer to assign a worksite peer mentor to learn about ASD and to spend 5-10% of their time to assist you with both work skills and social skills.



Increase Communication with Parents/ Caregivers

For some people, request that supervisors or worksite peer mentors communicate with parents/caregivers on a frequent basis, such as 1x/week.

It is highly recommended that, if parents/caregivers are involved in your life that they also are informed of problems at work so that they can help deal with those problems before they escalate.



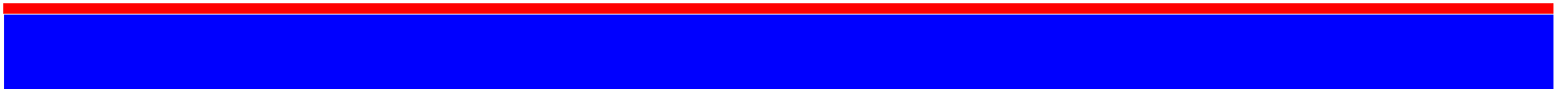
Gain Work Experience

Young adults with ASD often have less work experience than others, due to stress of regular course load preventing them from seeking part-time work.

Students should do part-time or summer work, to ensure that they have work experience by the time they graduate.

This might require taking a lighter course load to allow time for work, but will likely be important to help with job placement after graduation.

Start with volunteer work if necessary.



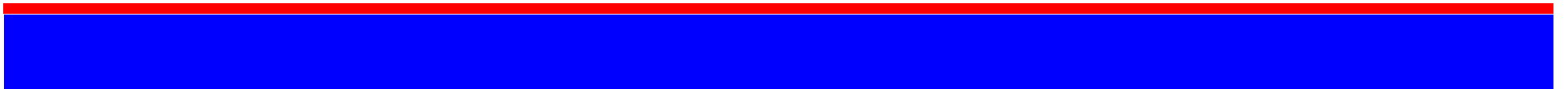
Individual Accommodations

Many adults with ASD may need individual accommodations, including possibly:

- Limited hours
- Increased time to learn tasks
- Occasional extra break time if stressed
- Explanation of social norms (hygiene, conversation)
- Evaluation of sensory challenges
- Visual cues/instructions
- Assistance with transportation
- Longer oversight period by job coaches
- Worksite Peer Mentor
- Medical issues – seizures, special diet

Common Advantages of Hiring Adults with ASD

- Strong work ethic
- Low absenteeism, on-time
- Trustworthy
- Willing to do highly-repetitive tasks
- Attention to detail
- Different perspective/way of thinking
- Loyal to company → low turn-over



Conclusion

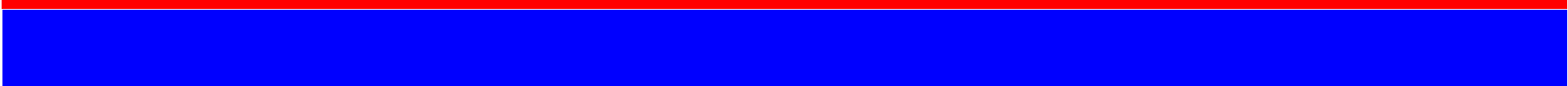
Almost everyone with ASD can find work!

Some may need to start with DDD or VR assistance, or volunteer.

Some may need internship programs (Hacienda Healthcare, SARRC, etc.).

Many will need accommodations.

Good luck – we hope you can find a job that you enjoy which matches your interests and abilities!



For more info, go to:

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