Promoting Successful Transition for Middle and High School Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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Purpose

This session will describe a comprehensive strategy for providing high quality transition services for students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) as they prepare for the transition to adulthood

Prevalence

❖USDOE -- 192,643 students served under the category of autism in public schools during the 2005-2006 school year

❖Fombonne (2003)-- estimated that between 55,602 and 121,324 adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 had an autism spectrum disorder

ASD in Adolescence (Seltzer, 2003)

❖Communication - Improves
❖Social Skills - Improves
❖Restricted repertoire of interests - Abates
❖Stereotypies - Abates

Autism is still a serious disorder!

❖That the disorder changes in its manifestation over the life course does not, therefore, indicate that affected individuals have any less of a need for services and supports as they move through adolescence into adulthood and midlife than they did in childhood. Rather, developmentally appropriate services are needed for adolescents and adults with ASD diagnoses." (p. 579, Seltzer, et al., 2003)

Home – What do we want?

- ❖ Self-sufficiency

- ❖ Community Living

- ❖ Range of Residential Options
  - ○ Living independently, family, foster family, partially supported living, fully supported living, and fully supported living with the incorporation of instructional and behavioral support

Home – What is the reality?

- ❖ Most individuals with ASD continue to live at home with their parents
  (research demonstrates between 40-80%)
- ❖ Many live in long-stay hospitals/ institutions
- ❖ Some live in the community through supported living
- ❖ Small percentage live alone
  (research demonstrates between 4-5%)

Work – What do we want?

- ❖ Postsecondary education

- ❖ Supported and competitive employment

- ❖ Equal pay/benefits

Work – What is the reality?

- ❖ Most are unemployed
  (research demonstrates between 25-33% of individuals with autistic disorder are employed; rates for individuals with AS are unknown)
- ❖ Most are underemployed
- ❖ Most make less money than their counterparts
- ❖ Most have difficulties with the social aspect of employment
- ❖ Many switch jobs frequently

Community – What do we want?

- ❖ Full participation in the myriad of community agencies, organizations, activities, etc. that make up the community

❖Full participation in recreation and leisure activities

❖Full social integration

Community – What is the reality?

❖Challenging behaviors, limited social skills and low independence outside of the home are major deterrents to community integration
❖Individuals with ASD primarily participate in isolated recreational activities
❖Low incidence of friendships and relationships
(research demonstrates between 16-30% of individuals with ASD have at least one friend; 47-50% report having no relationships)

Transition Services (IDEA 2004)

❖ Coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability
❖ Designed to be within a results-oriented process
❖ Focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of a child with a disability
❖ To facilitate the movement from school to post-school activities
❖ Is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account strengths, preferences, and interests
❖ Includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

IDEA 2004

❖Also includes a requirement that students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum;
❖That a Summary of Performance be developed for students who are about to end their education (either graduation or exit)
❖That a transition plan be based on student preferences and interests and that students be included in the meeting if a transition plan is being developed

Transition Planning Areas

How do we adequately prepare adolescents with ASD for the transition to adulthood?

STEPS for SUCCESS!

❖ Assessment
❖ Transition planning with a comprehensive educational team,

including the student!
- ❖ Curriculum selection
- ❖ Career development
- ❖ Natural environment instruction / community based instruction
- ❖ Evidence based practice

Assessment

❖Formal

❖Informal

Formal Assessment
❖Any standardized battery that yields targeted information

- ○ Includes traditional psychoeducational testing
- ○ Inability to translate results into useful planning information

Informal Assesments
❖Any non-standardized assessment
❖Typically are teacher-made, teacher administered
❖Result in information about how a student does in a particular context
❖Provide information that translates into useful planning information

Informal Assessment
❖Community based vocational assessments
❖Interviews and questionnaires
❖Observations
❖Ecological inventories
❖Situational assessments
❖Interest inventories

Transition planning

❖ Person centered planning

❖ Parent involvement

❖ Multi-disciplinary team
  ◦ Coordination with adult service agencies
  ◦ Coordination with related service personnel

MAPS: One type of PCP process

❖ What is Josh's history?
❖ Who is Josh?
❖ What are Josh's dreams?
❖ What are Josh's fears?

Meet Josh
Josh's History
Who is Josh?
Josh's Dreams
Josh's fears
Josh's Needs

❖ Structure
❖ A schedule
❖ Preparation for changes
❖ Help with ADL's
❖ Reminders to take baths
❖ Help with money
❖ An education
❖ A chance to work
❖ A PBS plan
❖ A different focus to his program
❖ Help from his community services
❖ Connections with the rehabilitative services
❖ Work experience
❖ More people from rehabilitative services on his team

Josh's Strengths

❖ Talks
❖ Ask for things he wants and some needs

- ❖ Has a loving family
- ❖ Is good at shooting baskets
- ❖ Reads
- ❖ Can do math
- ❖ Follows his schedule
- ❖ Good at computer and I-Pod
- ❖ Is never sick or out of school, attends regularly

Josh's Ideal Day (after High School)

- ❖ Wakes up slowly and listens to music before having to rush around and get ready
- ❖ Goes to work around 10:00am where he stays busy, does basically the same thing every day, and has a regular schedule
- ❖ Has time for a break about every 1.5 hours
- ❖ Goes to the YMCA to swim before coming home
- ❖ Reads the menu at home to prepare for dinner
- ❖ Listens to music before dinner
- ❖ Goes to bed around 11:00

Curriculum Selection

General Curriculum

Adapted General Curriculum

Functional Life Skills Curriculum
- ○ with reading and math skills
- ○ without reading and math skills

Curriculum Selection

Instruction in skills needed in the workplace and the community will likely need to be a part of the transition program for all adolescents with ASD regardless of level of ability.

When it is determined that the student will not earn an advanced, standard, or modified standard diploma, all instruction should be designed to teach functional skills.

Curriculum Selection

Cover all areas of need:

- ❖ Academics
- ❖ Home
- ❖ Work
- ❖ Community
- ❖ Personal relationships
- ❖ Communication
- ❖ Social Skills
- ❖ Behavior

This is not easy to do. ASD impacts all areas of development, so all must be included in a comprehensive educational plan.

Functional Life Skills Curriculum

- ❖ Identify the environments the student will live, work, and recreate in after graduation

- ❖ Analyze the skills needed in these settings

- ❖ Teach the student to function in those settings

What about Josh?

- ❖ Think about what you know about Josh and his dreams?
- ❖ He is in his first year of high school.
- ❖ What would you plan for his academic needs over the next 4 to 6 years?
- ❖ What curriculum does he appear to need?

Career Development

Career preparation is a life-long developmental process

Stage of Career Development

Career Awareness

Career Exploration

Career Preparation

Employment
Stages of Career Awareness
Stages of Career Awareness and School
What about Josh's Career Development?
❖Josh did not have the opportunity to learn about jobs.
❖What should we do about that now?
Natural Environment Teaching / Community Based Instruction

Instruction will need to take place in the environment where the student will use the skill
Evidence Based Practice
❖**Prompting**
❖**Task Analysis**
❖**Discrete Trial Instruction**
❖**Modeling**
❖**Video Modeling**
❖**Self-management**

Summary

Individuals with ASD spend much more of their lifetime outside of the educational system than they do in, therefore, efforts to maximize this critical period are pivotal to improving outcomes. The wide range of ability in those with ASD and the presence of deficits across multiple domains provide a complex set of issues for educators. Unless we make concerted efforts to improve these areas, adolescents with ASD will never receive a quality education and meaningful outcomes will never be realized.