




NEURODIVERGENT



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Critical Employment Issues Facing Neurodivergent Job Seekers and Employees

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Unemployment and Underemployment Are Critical Issues Facing Neurodivergent Job Seekers and Employees



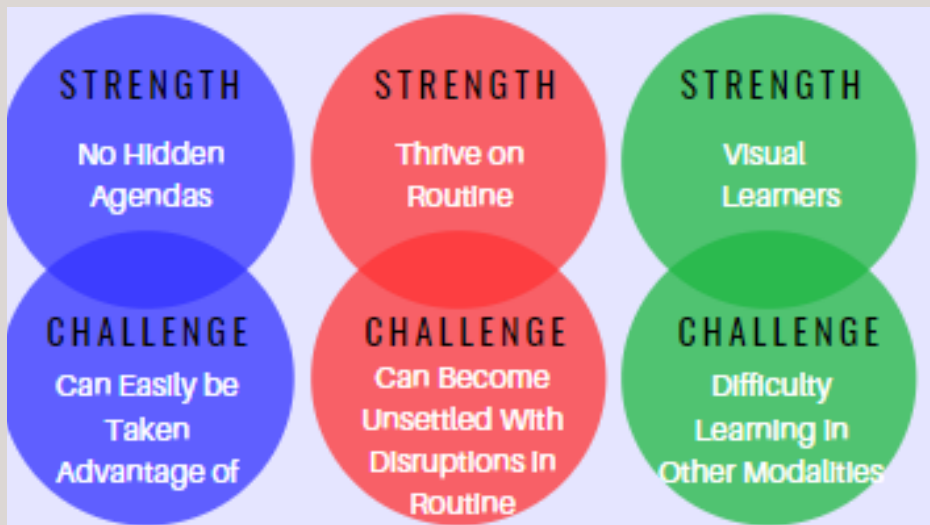
People with an ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) diagnosis face incredible roadblocks to finding substantial and meaningful employment. This article describes some of the challenges faced by people with an ASD diagnosis when it comes to finding and maintaining substantial employment, alarming ASD employment statistics, ASD employment support programs, and companies that have autism (neurodiversity) hiring and support programs.

Strengths and Challenges Faced By Neurodivergent Job Seekers and Employees

Many traits that are common for people with an ASD diagnosis can make them incredible at various jobs, however, these same traits can create a challenge in a work environment. Many of the challenges fall into 3 main categories: productivity, socialization, and distractions and sensory issues. Overcoming these challenges requires work on the part of the person with the ASD diagnosis as well as the employer.



Strengths and Challenges Faced By Neurodivergent Job Seekers and Employees



Alarming Statistics

- ◆ As of 2018, eighty-five percent of college graduates affected by autism were unemployed ((Market Watch, 2019)
- ◆ In 2019, only 19.3 percent of people with disabilities in the U.S. were participating in the labor force – working or seeking work. Thirty-two percent of those employees were part-time (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019)
- ◆ Of adults with autism that have a college education, 85 percent are unemployed.
- ◆ Over the next five years, 500,000 children on the autism spectrum in the United States, will transition to adulthood.^t



Where to Find Help and Support (Job Seekers and Employees)

Autism Speaks

Transition Roadmap to Meaningful Employment

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/roadmap/transition-roadmap-meaningful-employment>

This roadmap is just for you if:

- You're an autistic student planning for life after high school.
- You're a young adult with autism looking for more information about employment services.
- You're a parent, family member or caregiver of a child with autism.

This personalized, interactive tool provides a series of goals and resources up to age 22 to help you get ready for employment. Each goal in the roadmap includes key action steps, including how, when, and where to request supports and services to help you make informed choices about:

- Education and service options before, during, and after high school
- Tying employment goals to personal strengths and interests
- Building and transferring social and communication skills and self-advocacy to the workplace
- Employment options and services
- Transportation options and services
- Money management

Where to Find Help and Support (Job Seekers and Employees)

Autism Speaks Employment Tool Kit

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/tool-kit/employment-tool-kit>

The Employment Tool Kit is divided into the following sections:

- Introduction
- Self-Advocacy
- What Job is Right For You?
- Benefits and Funding
- Employment Models: What Option is Best For You?
- Your Job Search
- Transportation Options
- Resumes, Cover Letters, and Applications
- The Job Interview
- Accommodations and Disclosure
- Soft Skills: Understanding the Social Elements of Your Job
- Success Stories and Lessons Learned
- My Employment Rights
- Glossary of Terms
- Employment Resources
- Step-by-Step Guide to Your Employment Search

Where to Find Help and Support (Job Seekers and Employees)

State Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Where can I find what my state offers?

<https://rsa.ed.gov/about/states>

By contacting your local vocational rehabilitation office, you will tap into a wealth of resources related to employment options for people with disabilities. Every state provides some forms of vocational rehabilitation training and support that can be helpful for neurodivergent job seekers and employees. Services provided vary by state but most offer skills training and job search assistance.

Vocational rehabilitation (VR), a state-supported division of services, assists individuals with disabilities who are pursuing meaningful careers. VR assists those individuals to secure gainful employment commensurate with their abilities and capabilities through local job searches and awareness of self-employment and telecommuting opportunities.

Some states have separate VR agencies serving individuals who are blind and visually impaired.

Where to Find Help and Support (Job Seekers and Employees)

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

<https://askjan.org/disabilities/Neurodiversity.cfm>

Jan (Job Accommodation Network) has great information for people with ASD diagnosis as well as employers related to employee (and prospective employee) rights and suggested accommodations for various difficulties/limitations faced by people on the autism spectrum. The website has a great list of accommodation ideas broken down by limitation or by work-related function. The accommodations listed may include products, services, and/or strategies.

Limitations that are addressed include:

- Attentiveness/Concentration
- Executive Functioning Deficits
- Managing Time
- Memory Loss
- Noise Sensitivity
- Organizing/Planning/Prioritizing
- Photosensitivity
- Respiratory Distress/Breathing Problems
- Stress Intolerance

Work-related functions that are addressed include:

- Air Quality/Irritants
- Communicate
- Light
- Noise
- Policies
- Stress

Where to Find Help and Support (Employers)

Employer Assistance and Resources Network on Disability Inclusion

<https://askearn.org/page/neurodiversity-in-the-workplace>

Business Benefits - People with neurocognitive disabilities have talents, perspectives, and skills that can be distinctly beneficial in many work environments.

Employee Benefits Management - Many organizations find that having neurodiverse employees improves overall employee morale and positively affects organizational culture.

Peer Training & Mentoring - It is important to ensure that at all levels, neurodiverse employees, just like all employees, feel comfortable disclosing if they have a disability—or choosing not to do so if they so wish. This means that all staff, especially direct managers, must also be properly trained, as managers will likely be the first people to anticipate problems and figure out ways to improve their employees' experiences and productivity.

Neurodiversity Hiring Initiatives & Partnerships - Many companies, from large corporations to small businesses, have developed successful neurodiversity hiring initiatives that are helping to improve their bottom lines and increase the employment rates of people with disabilities.

Neurodiversity @ Work Employer Roundtable - Hosted by Disability:IN, the Neurodiversity @ Work Employer Roundtable is a group of innovative leaders representing businesses that have spearheaded hiring initiatives focused on neurodiverse employees.

COMPANIES THAT HAVE AUTISM (NEURODIVERSITY) HIRING AND EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS PROGRAMS

AMC Theaters - FOCUS (Furthering Opportunities, Cultivating Untapped Strengths) is an employment outreach program that partners with local, state, and national support agencies to employ qualified people with disabilities at our theatres. (<https://www.amctheatres.com/corporate/diversity-inclusion>)

Aspiritech - Aspiritech hires autistic adults to help provide software testing and quality assurance services. The company's culture helps autistic adults successfully use their skills and build meaningful careers. As a nonprofit organization, Aspiritech can offer its employees competitive salaries as well as social programs and training. (<https://www.aspiritech.org/about-aspiritech>)

AutonomyWorks - AutonomyWorks has designed a groundbreaking, Multiple Paths to Employment model that allow us to effectively bring Associates onto our team. Learn more about our approach, current hiring needs, and how to apply. (<http://www.autonomy.works/about/careers/>)

BHP - BHP is a mining company, founded in 1885 and located in Melbourne, Australia. It offers a Neurodiversity Internship program, and it partners with the Autism Academy of Software Quality Assurance. Since the program started in 2018, says manager Larissa Mearns, the autistic individuals hired have come up with many innovations. (<https://www.bhp.com/news/articles/2021/04/autism-acceptance-alive-and-well-at-bhp>)

COMPANIES THAT HAVE AUTISM (NEURODIVERSITY) HIRING AND EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS PROGRAMS

Bitty & Beau's Coffee - Started by a family with four children, two of which have Down syndrome and one of which has autism, Bitty & Beau's Coffee wants to change the way that neurotypical people see those who think differently. The company was started in Wilmington, North Carolina, and it now includes 23 shops in 12 states.

[\(https://www.bittyandbeauscoffee.com/employment/\)](https://www.bittyandbeauscoffee.com/employment/)

Chevron - Chevron is an energy industry company that has begun a neurodiversity hiring program. They work with PathPoint, a service that helps those with disabilities and mental health diagnoses to get employment. This is one of the top companies that hire autistic adults.

[\(https://www.chevron.com/stories/hiring-neurodiverse-employees-refuels-service-stations\)](https://www.chevron.com/stories/hiring-neurodiverse-employees-refuels-service-stations)

Computer Aid, Inc. - An IT service management company, Computer Aid, Inc. has recognized the need for companies that support autism. Autism2Work, an autism employment agency, helps them in their attempt to provide employment for those with autism and other learning differences.

[\(https://www.cai.io/neurodiverse-solutions/overview/\)](https://www.cai.io/neurodiverse-solutions/overview/)

CVS Caremark - CVS values the diverse perspectives of those with disabilities. It partners with several disability hiring and coaching organizations, such as Ken's Krew, Michigan Commission for the Blind, Goodwill Industries, Workability1, California State Department of Rehabilitation, and El Valor. [\(https://www.cvshealth.com/news-and-insights/articles/creating-opportunities-for-people-of-all-abilities\)](https://www.cvshealth.com/news-and-insights/articles/creating-opportunities-for-people-of-all-abilities)

COMPANIES THAT HAVE AUTISM (NEURODIVERSITY) HIRING AND EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS PROGRAMS

Daivergent - Daivergent provides data labeling and annotation services through its talent pool of data specialists on the autism spectrum. We source talent from universities and agencies throughout the United States, and our teams provide high-quality data sets in a responsive manner. (<https://daivergent.com/>)

Dell - Dell's Autism Hiring Program "is an opportunity to rethink the traditional interview process." Candidates are prescreened to gauge their interest and experience. Those who are qualified are invited to participate in a two-week skills assessment that provides a clear picture of the value the applicant can offer. (<https://jobs.dell.com/neurodiversity>)

DXC Technology - DXC is an information technology company that offers jobs for autistic adults. The DXC Dandelion Program is designed to provide the best possible work environment for those with autism. Also, the Dandelion Program wants to train these employees and give them valuable skills that they will keep the rest of their lives. (<https://dxc.com/au/en/cp/social-impact-practice/dxc-dandelion-program>)

Ernst & Young - Ernst & Young is a professional services network that provides services around the world. It has its primary location in London, England. EY US launched its first neurodiversity hiring program in Boston, and it seeks to continue its growth by including the unique perspectives of those with autism. (https://www.ey.com/en_us/diversity-inclusiveness/how-neurodiversity-is-driving-innovation-from-unexpected-places)

COMPANIES THAT HAVE AUTISM (NEURODIVERSITY) HIRING AND EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS PROGRAMS

Extraordinary Ventures - Extraordinary Ventures offers jobs for autistic adults. According to its website, it employs a wide range of individuals, including those on the autism spectrum. It offers several services, including EV Laundry, EV Gifts, EV Pets, and EV Office Solutions; this is one of the top autism-friendly employers on our list. (<https://www.extraordinaryventures.org/>)

Ford Motor Company - Ford, a well-known automobile production company, offers a greater chance at employment for those on the spectrum with its FordWorks program. Partnering with Upbound at Work for hiring and training, they are committed to employing those with autism. (<https://corporate.ford.com/careers/inclusive-hiring/fordworks.html>)

Freddie Mac - Freddie Mac believes typically autistic traits to be an asset in their industry. Therefore, the company actually reaches out to people on the Autism Spectrum. Freddie Mac works closely with the Autistic Self Advocacy Network to create an Autism Internship Program. The program recruits, trains, and hires qualified individuals who may have trouble finding or keeping work. (<https://careers.freddiemac.com/us/en/blogarticle/making-work-possible-through-accessibility-and-inclusivity>)

GameStop – GameStop has partnered with Autism Speaks, a website that raises awareness for autism, to raise money. Now, however, they have begun a NXT Gen Coders Program to help young people with autism develop their skills and eventually be employed. (<https://news.gamestop.com/news-releases/news-release-details/gamestop-and-autism-speaksr-launch-nxt-gen-coders-program-aimed>)

COMPANIES THAT HAVE AUTISM (NEURODIVERSITY) HIRING AND EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS PROGRAMS

Giant Foods - Giant Food, a supermarket company, has recognized the need for companies that hire autistic adults and stepped up to do so. Its autism hiring program is called Bridges from School to Work, and it helps young people with autism seek employment.

(<https://giantfood.com/pages/careers>)

Goodwill - Goodwill, known for thrift stores, is a nonprofit that works with people who have autism and other disabilities to help them gain employment. Those with autism may find a job at a Goodwill store, or they may ask Goodwill for help and then work with a case manager who will help them develop their skills in preparation for employment.

(<https://www.goodwill.org/blog/career-and-financial-advice/finding-a-good-job-fit-if-you-have-aspergers-syndrome-or-autism/>)

Google Cloud - Google, a well-known technology company, recently launched Google Cloud's Autism Hiring Program. Google Cloud works with the Stanford Neurodiversity Program, which acts as a consultant for those wanting to hire people with autism. Google Cloud plans to train 500 managers as part of their autism hiring program. These individuals will focus on helping those with autism navigate the process of searching for employment.

(<https://cloud.google.com/blog/topics/inside-google-cloud/google-cloud-launches-a-career-program-for-people-with-autism>)

Home Depot - Home Depot, a home improvement company, collaborates with Ken's Krew. Although Home Depot employees with autism have the same duties as their neurotypical counterparts, Ken's Krew offers one-on-one training programs to help them adjust to parts of the job they might find difficult.

(<https://corporate.homedepot.com/newsroom/ken%E2%80%99s-krew>)

COMPANIES THAT HAVE AUTISM (NEURODIVERSITY) HIRING AND EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS PROGRAMS

HP - HP Inc. offers prospective employees with autism the HP Spectrum Success Program. Once a year, HP teams up with two other organizations, Vocational Rehabilitation and PROVAIL. It opens up a hiring event specifically for recruiting, hiring, and training to retain qualified candidates with autism. (<https://www.hp.com/us-en/hp-information/about-hp/diversity/spectrum-success.html>)

Ingram Micro - Ingram Micro is an information technology company that is based in California but provides services for people all over the world. Ingram Micro partners with the eStewards ADVANCE+ program to employ people with autism at their IT Asset Disposition Processing Center, which offers technology recycling services. (<https://www.insideindianabusiness.com/articles/ingram-micro-joins-program-to-provide-jobs-to-autistic-workers>)

IBM - The IBM Ignite Autism Spectrum Disorder Program employs adults with autism and leverages their talents to provide value to IBM clients. The program offers support through onboarding and adapting to their new roles, including providing headphones that can minimize auditory overload. (<https://www.ibm.com/blogs/industries/neurodiverse-workers-ibm-ignite/>)

JPMorgan Chase - In 2015, Chase launched its Autism at Work program. This initiative has already proven extremely successful. The company will have hired around 300 employees with autism by the end of 2020. Prospective hires who go through the program experience an adapted interview process. Current employees on the Autism Spectrum have access to job mentors and a dedicated office of disability inclusion. (<https://www.jpmorganchase.com/news-stories/jmahoney-autism-at-work-program>)

COMPANIES THAT HAVE AUTISM (NEURODIVERSITY) HIRING AND EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS PROGRAMS

Lowe's - Lowe's has won countless awards for its inclusive culture and non-discriminatory hiring practices. The company seeks "talented individuals from all backgrounds who bring a can-do attitude and a love of helping others to work every day." (<https://www.americantraininginc.com/equal-treatment-key-to-lowes-success/>)

Microsoft – Microsoft built the Microsoft Neurodiversity Hiring Program on the belief that traditional recruiting does not allow individuals who are Neurodiverse to demonstrate their strengths and qualifications. Through this program, applicants engage in an extended interview process that focuses on workability, team projects, and skill assessment. (<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/diversity/inside-microsoft/cross-disability/neurodiversityhiring>)

OfficeMax - OfficeMax, an office supplies company, partnered with Aspire CareerLink, which is a work training facility, as well as with the Turning Pointe Autism Foundation, which is another work training facility for those with autism. (<https://www.marketscreener.com/quote/stock/OFFICEMAX-INC-11781/news/OfficeMax-Inc-OfficeMax-Joins-Forces-with-Aspire-Kessler-Foundation-to-Expand-Employment-Programs-17175790/>)

PepsiCo - PepsiCo partners with Ability Beyond Disability, an autism employment agency, to hire those who may have trouble finding employment because they are considered disabled in some way. Those with autism often fall into this category and may want to consider being employed at PepsiCo, which is known mainly for its beverage but also sells snacks and other food. (<https://abilitybeyond.org/ability-beyond-disability-partners-with-pepsico/>)

COMPANIES THAT HAVE AUTISM (NEURODIVERSITY) HIRING AND EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS PROGRAMS

Safeway - Safeway, a grocery store chain, employs over 10,000 adults with disabilities. This includes adults with autism. Safeway has locations all across North America under different brand names.

[\(https://blog.easterseals.com/safeway-earns-easter-seals%E2%80%99-all-time-top-corporate-partner-designation/\)](https://blog.easterseals.com/safeway-earns-easter-seals%E2%80%99-all-time-top-corporate-partner-designation/)

Salesforce - Salesforce is a software company. Their Autism@Work program provides employment for people with autism. There are several factors to their dedication to hiring those with autism. One of these is the fact that the competition between corporations for talented employees can be very fierce, and Salesforce is beginning to think outside the box and find employees who think differently, such as those with autism.

[\(https://www.salesforce.com/news/stories/innovation-meets-inclusion-with-salesforces-autismwork-program/\)](https://www.salesforce.com/news/stories/innovation-meets-inclusion-with-salesforces-autismwork-program/)

SAP - The website of SAP, a company that describes itself as a leader in business applications, states that this company does not ask people to change what makes them unique in order to be employed. The company's Autism at Work program was started in 2013.

[\(https://www.sap.com/about/careers/your-career/autism-at-work-program.html\)](https://www.sap.com/about/careers/your-career/autism-at-work-program.html)

Specialisterne USA - Specialisterne, founded in Denmark, now has locations in 12 countries, including the United States. Specialisterne means "The Specialists" in Danish, and this company is dedicated to using the unique skills of those on the spectrum to find solutions when it comes to hiring people with autism. Their philosophy is that those with autism have a great amount of potential, but it is imperative that potential employers understand that they must have an environment that allows them to reach that potential. [\(https://www.us.specialisterne.com/\)](https://www.us.specialisterne.com/)

COMPANIES THAT HAVE AUTISM (NEURODIVERSITY) HIRING AND EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS PROGRAMS

Spectrum Design - Spectrum Designs is a nonprofit organization that seeks to hire young adults with autism. They produce t-shirts and related merchandise. They are partnered with Nicholas Center, which provides training and other services to employees that have autism.

(<https://www.spectrumdesigns.org/>)

Ultranauts - Ultranauts is a company that provides software testing services, and it is one of the top companies that support autism. 75% of its staff are on the autism spectrum, and the company maintains a 50% annual revenue growth. According to the company's website, Ultranauts has launched the first fully online workplace for neurodiverse teams of employees. (<https://ultranauts.co/company/>)

Walgreens - The pharmacy store chain Walgreens is the second largest of its kind in the United States. The website describes the founder of Walgreens, Charles R. Walgreen, as someone who was deeply committed to hiring those with disabilities. The commitment continues to this day with training programs such as the Transitional Work Group Program and the Retail Employees with Disabilities Initiative.

(https://www.walgreens.com/topic/sr/sr_disability-inclusion.jsp)

Walmart - Walmart, a highly successful retail company, values respecting everyone, regardless of ability or disability. Their website stresses how important diversity and inclusion are to a business, and it states that Walmart believes these principles to be very important, which is why Walmart is creating jobs for autistic adults.

(<https://careers.walmart.com/diversity-inclusion>)

COMPANIES THAT HAVE AUTISM (NEURODIVERSITY) HIRING AND EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS PROGRAMS

Willis Towers Watson - Willis Towers Watson is one of a growing number of organizations that have become part of the Autism @ Work Employer Roundtable. As such, the company has implemented hiring initiatives with the goal of reducing the current 80% unemployment rate among those with autism. (<https://www.wtwco.com/en-US/About-Us/inclusion-and-diversity>)

Zenith Optimedia - Zenith is committed to hiring “brilliant specialists” — that is, straight-talking people who prefer to keep things simple and are always positive. Zenith recognizes that individuals of all abilities can fit this description. It has implemented more inclusive hiring practices which include phone or Skype interviews and project-based interviews as opposed to verbal interviews. It has also developed a variety of other accommodations. (<https://www.zenithmedia.com/our-people/our-culture/>)

As you may have noticed, many of the companies on the list above are technology and/or engineering companies. That being said, many of these companies have expanded their programs beyond only technical jobs so even if you are not a math or technology whiz, be sure to connect with one or more of these companies to see if they might be the right fit for you, your working-age child, or your client.

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