

Employment Tips for People with an FASD

Many jobs are designed in ways that are challenging for people with an FASD.¹ Because of these barriers, around 1 in 3 (37%) people with an FASD struggle with employment.²

However, there are different strategies and supports that can help people with an FASD obtain, maintain and succeed in employment. "Supported employment" can be a particularly useful model for people with a confirmed or suspected FASD.³ This model helps people find and keep jobs that build off their personal strengths and interests, while also providing ongoing individualized support.^{4,5}

Additionally, there are different strategies that have helped many people with an FASD succeed in their jobs:

- Identify the individual's strengths and look for jobs that fit (i.e., likes to work with children/outdoors/with animals, likes to be people-facing or not, morning or evening person, etc.).
- Make the process person-centered. Use a tool like Essential Lifestyle Planning to support them in creating their own plans based on their interests, needs, etc.
- Maintain consistency in job schedule and check-ins from support (example: support check-in every Tuesday at 2:00, whether you need it or not it's always available)
- Request a job shadow/trial run opportunity to determine if a job is a good fit.
- Use technology to help with schedules and reminders (i.e., Galarm).
- Consider sensory issues and the work setting.
- Assess for soft skills/social skills/customer service skills and build on them before employment starts (example: explaining why coworkers say "shut-up" to each other in a joking way but it's not okay to say it to a customer).
- Plan or role-play for situations that will help with the job search or might come up in the job. For example, help them set up a voicemail, show them how to check and use their e-mail, practice interview questions and etiquette, etc.
- Create a "personal toolbox" for self-regulation during times of stress. Cater the toolbox to the individual and what skills/tools work best to navigate stressful situations.
- Identify barriers/challenges outside of the job that will impact employment (transportation, stable housing).
- Explain why things are done in a certain way; it's easier to follow certain rules or expectations when there is a concrete understanding of why we do them.
- Consider what is communicated to the supervisor about the needs of the individual and how accommodating they will be (breaks, sensory issues).
- Identify a mentor among the coworkers that can model appropriate social skills and work behaviors.

- Support during the on-boarding/orientation and discuss accommodations from the start.
- With FASD, the largest challenge is sometimes maintenance of employment; don't take away supports when the individual is doing well.
- That said, indicators of success aren't always long-term employment; sometimes success is a smooth transition to another job.
- Everyone in the individual's circle of support should understand FASD and the individual's unique challenges and strengths.

Sources:

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- 4.Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Building your program: Supported employment. https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/buildingyourprogram-se_0.pdf
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