



**TAP**<sup>TM</sup> | *Breaking Barriers in the Workplace*

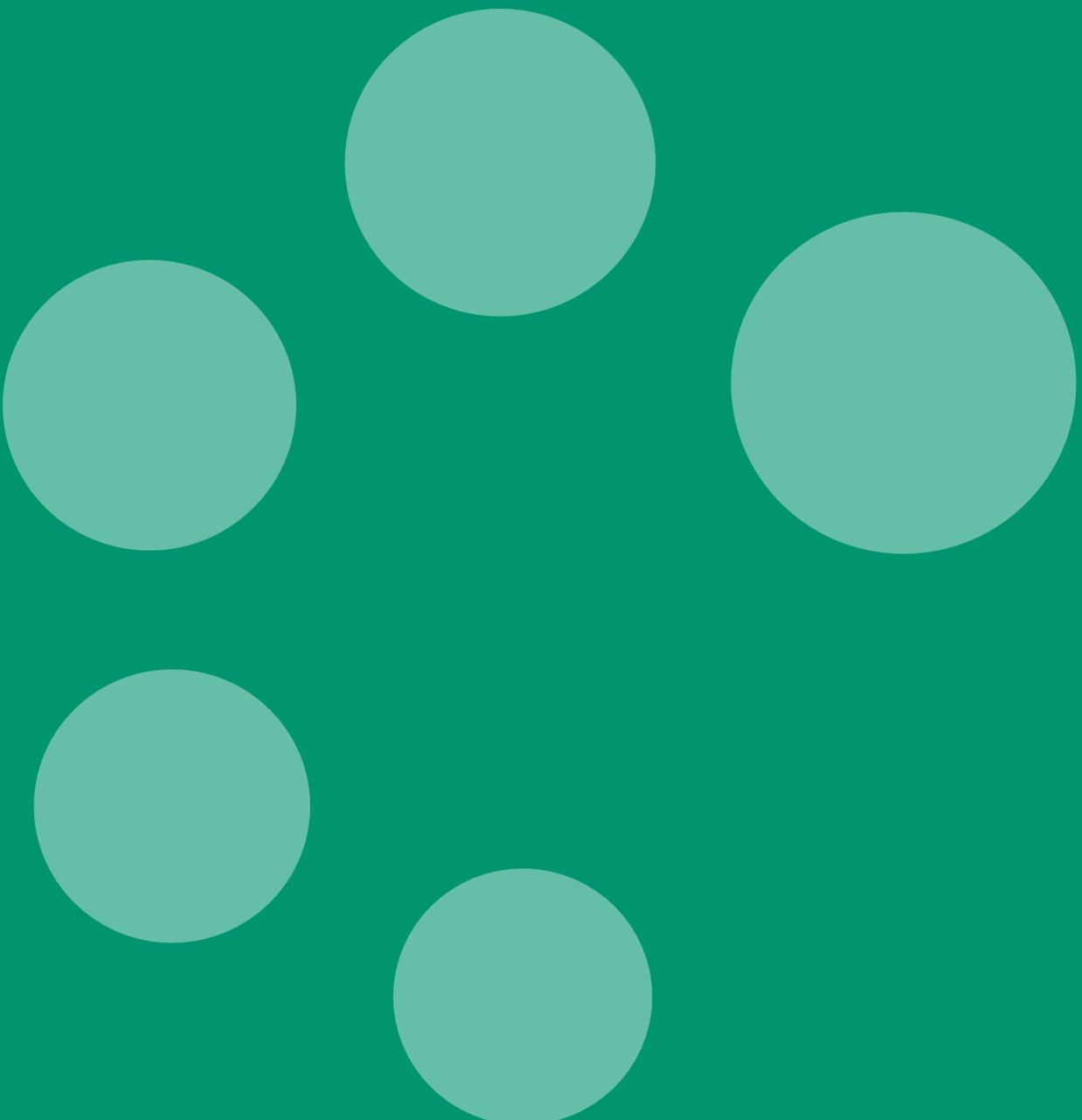
**TRANSFORMATIVE AUTISM PROGRAM**

Training Manual for California Employers

Fall 2020

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## INTRODUCTION

Adults with autism often have a long and difficult time finding and retaining employment. Employers face many challenges today, including the difficulty in finding reliable and skilled workers.

### **Employees with autism have a lot to offer**

Research shows there can be benefits to hiring employees with autism. While people on the spectrum exhibit a range of abilities and personalities, in general they share traits and tendencies that are positives for most workplaces:

- Honesty, sobriety, loyalty, reliability
- Attention to detail, strong recall, and an affinity for repetitive tasks
- Ability to detect patterns and retain large amounts of information
- Tendency to follow rules
- Innovative thinking
- Very direct communication style

But many employers may be overwhelmed by the idea of hiring people with autism. And many of those who are interested in doing so probably don't know how to attract them or set them up for long-term success.

### **TAP connects employers with adults who have autism**

The Transformative Autism Program (TAP) was developed to help California employers successfully hire and work with people with autism—and to help them become the valuable employees they have the potential to be.

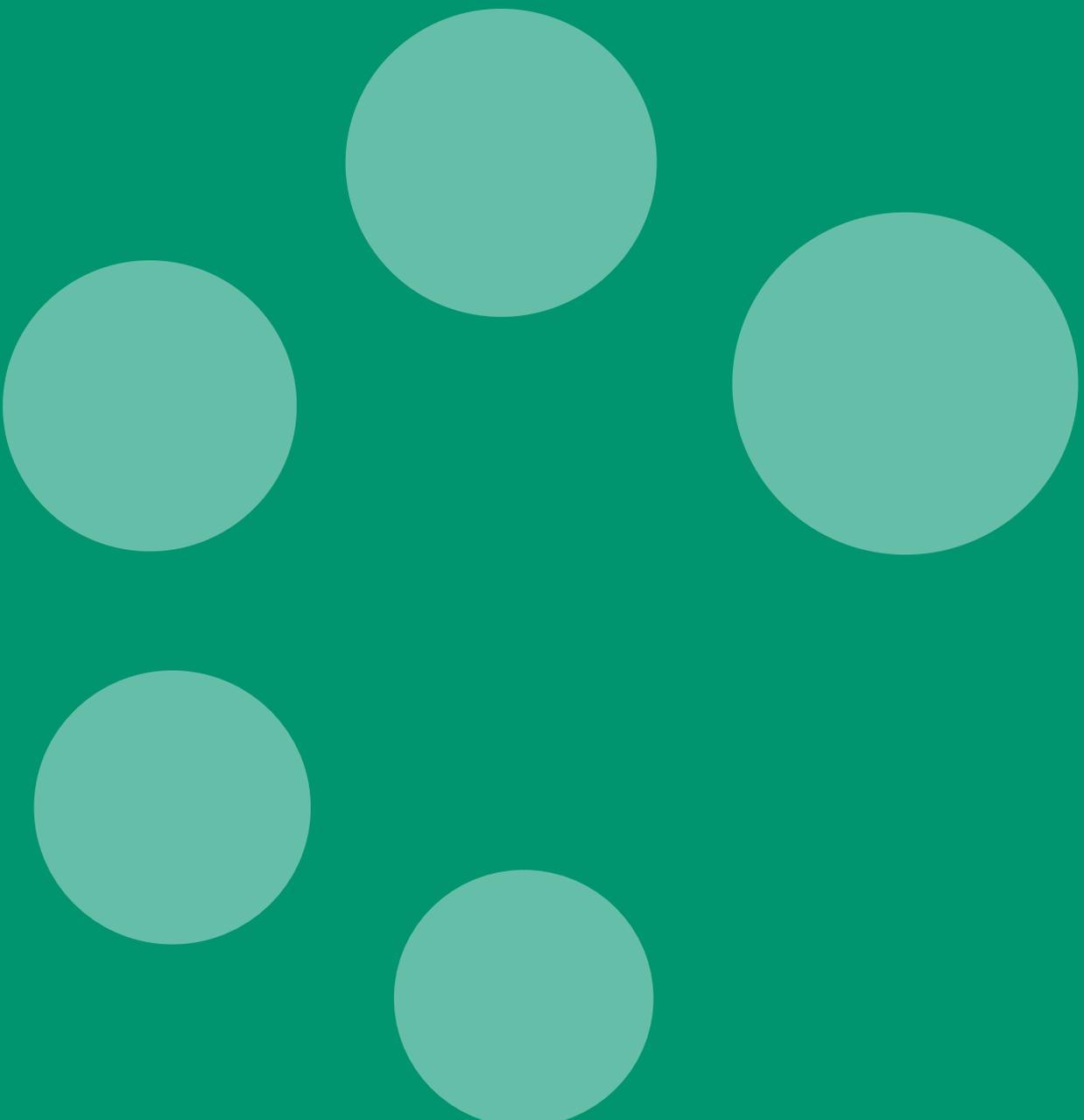
### **It's easier than you think**

Hiring and retaining workers with autism requires planning, flexibility, modifications to the workplace and culture, and setting reasonable expectations. But more than anything else, it takes compassion and willingness. If you are open to the idea of hiring people with autism, then this manual is for you.

Our step-by-step approach to hiring adults with autism is designed to walk you through this process. Our hope is that all companies, large and small, will open their doors to the innovations, talents, and contributions of workers with autism. It's easier than you think and it's good business.

*"If everyone knew how simple it is to have workers with autism, everyone would do it."*

**Rebecca Beam**, President of United States Operations, auticon





## TRAINING PHASES

In this Training Manual, we set out a 5-phase process for implementing an inclusive employment program for adults with autism:

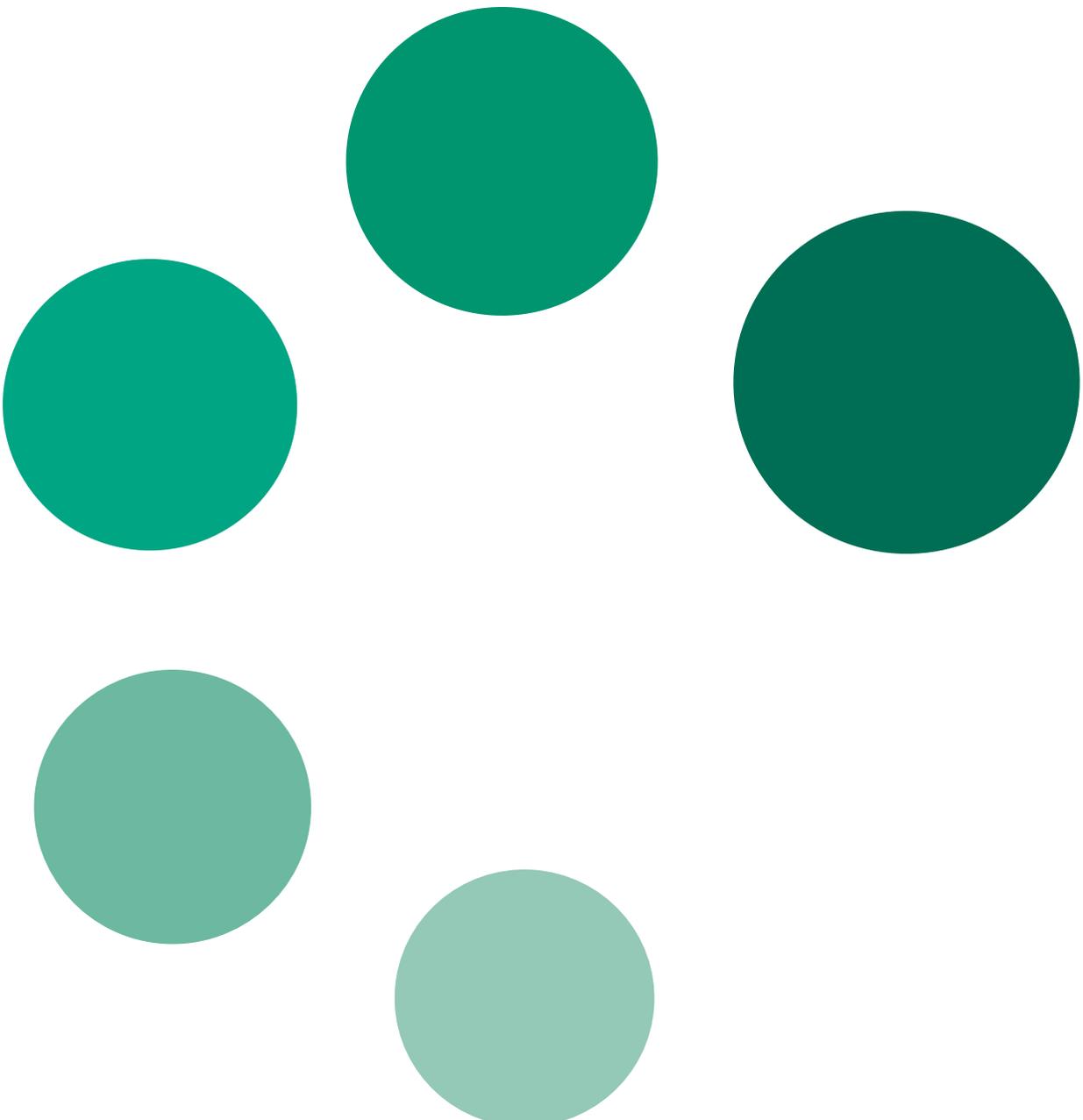
- 1. PREPARE**—Start by designing the workplace culture, educating staff, connecting to free community resources, and understanding government benefit programs
- 2. HIRE**—Learn how to recruit, assess, and hire qualified workers with autism
- 3. ONBOARD**—Find out how to get new employees off to strong start and train them through the first year
- 4. RETAIN**—Discover how to inspire long-term productivity and satisfaction among workers with autism
- 5. ADJUST**—Assess what's working and refine what's not in order to strengthen your program

In our training series, we offer four modules presented by young adults with autism that offer step-by-step best practices and instructions for each phase. Easy to view in online self-paced "lunch and learn" modules, the complete training is suitable for HR continuing education units with the TAP completion certificate.

**Visit [tapautism.org](http://tapautism.org) for TAP Training for California Employers materials, updates, and latest news.**

### **What Do We Mean When We Speak of Autism?**

Autism spectrum disorder is a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication. Signs of autism typically appear during early childhood, often before the age of 3, and last throughout a person's lifetime, affecting their ability to communicate and interact with others. Although there is no known cause of autism, research suggests it develops from a combination of genetic, non-genetic, or environmental influences.





## PHASE 1 | PREPARE

An inclusive workplace is one that encourages helping others and treating all people with dignity and respect. When people come together in an inclusive environment, they feel safe from retribution and are accepted for who they are.

Creating an inclusive workplace is essential to recruiting and retaining employees with autism. One employer, auticon, uses the term “compassionate workplace” interchangeably with “inclusive workplace.” After all, an inclusive workplace is a compassionate workplace for all employees.

A well-executed planning process will foster a culture of inclusion and compassion by focusing on two important elements:

1. Understanding and empathy for others’ feelings and experiences, even if they are different from your own
2. Willingness to provide action and support to ensure each employee knows their feelings and experiences matter

There are a number of vital steps, both internal and external, that should be taken to create an inclusive environment.

### INTERNAL STEPS

#### Assess Company Culture

First, it is essential to have the commitment of an organization’s leadership. Staff surveys and discussion groups can provide opportunities to establish a baseline and assess pre-conceived notions. Start by asking if employees know anyone with autism and what they know about it. It’s also important to assess how inclusive to disabilities the company already is, how flexible managers are generally, whether certain work processes can be slowed down for a period of time while a new hire is onboarded, and whether there is a willingness to build a position from a part-time start towards full-time as the worker develops skills.

If there is willingness to be inclusive, flexible, and patient, then the company is ready to take the next steps. A link to a Disabilities and Inclusion Survey template can be found in the Resources section, and a hard copy is available in the Supplements section of the printed manual.

#### Educate Staff

As part of an effective autism employment effort, California employers should work to build buy-in from all levels of management and staff, and also learn how targeted autism employment helps to meet the “reasonable accommodations” and other

## **PHASE 1**

### **PREPARE**

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. There are government and non-profit agencies throughout the state available to work with employers at no cost, to help them build and meet ADA requirements.

A main point made by employers who have established autism employment initiatives is the importance of gaining buy-in from all levels of the company. This involves educating all levels of management and staff on the strengths of adults with autism, the benefits of an inclusive and diverse workplace, and the minor adjustments that might be necessary for employment success.

### **View Module 1: Prepare**

## **Find and Develop a Champion**

Identify at least one employee who is willing to be the “champion” for the employee with autism.

1. They will act as a liaison with other employees to help them understand and empathize.
2. They should have daily check-ins to ensure the employee with autism feels comfortable and able to communicate needs.
3. They should be empowered to go to supervisors and managers and advocate on behalf of the employee with autism.

Many of the autism hiring initiatives in California and nationwide started at the urging of family members of adults with autism. Walgreens and Dogtopia, for example, are national brands that launched autism hiring programs as the result of a family member's initiative. The energy and expertise of family members within your own company may be the key to starting or expanding an initiative.

*“Have a compassionate workplace. Make the small changes, meaningful changes, that will help support people on the spectrum in your workplace. I would argue that it [will] help everybody.”*

**Rebecca Beam**, President of United States Operations, auticon

## PHASE 1

### PREPARE

## Design Workplace Environment

Work to create an environment that allows for acceptance of different behaviors while providing direct feedback when behaviors are unacceptable. This dichotomy is important in retaining an employee with autism. For example, it may be acceptable for employees to be shy, standoffish, or avoidant of social interaction, but they cannot be rude to others. Direct and honest feedback, given in private and without emotion, can help the employee with autism understand how their behavior or what they said impacted others.

Inclusive workplace design includes acceptance of different behaviors in terms of physical needs, too. Try to create a physical environment that supports the employee's physical comfort. Examples may include:

- Rooms with dimmable lighting.
- A designated calm space with soft furnishings and flooring where employees can relax if they become anxious or overwhelmed.
- Assistive devices or rooms that filter or reduce noise. Sometimes furnishings can accomplish this, but also make headphones available if needed or allow the employee to work with reduced sound.
- Avoid strong smells such as perfume. Note that an infuser can help cover these smells but it can also add to them.

*“When it comes to workspaces, many of us on the spectrum are sensitive to and easily distracted by things such as bright flickering lights, background noise, ringing phones, squeaking and slamming doors, other people’s conversations and even the clatter of keyboard keys that are not our own. If employees need it, they should be given a workspace that is free from as many distractions as possible.”*

**Jennifer Brooks**, San Francisco AASCEND member

- Install desks, monitors, and chairs that can be adapted to address sensory issues such as stability, mobility, boundaries, and sound.
- If food is provided to employees, include healthy food options. Many people with autism have dietary restrictions.
- Make participation in company social events optional while encouraging participation.
- Use lower voices in hallway conversations.

## PHASE 1

### PREPARE

## Develop a Plan

A written plan with measurable goals for the next 12-36 months, specific steps toward meeting those goals, and milestones to check progress will help ensure a successful implementation. Details can also help establish appropriate accountability and identify the resources necessary for the initial stages of any program. Links to Organization Success Plan templates can be found in the Resources section, and hard copies are available in the Supplements section of the printed manual.

**View Module 1: Prepare**

## EXTERNAL STEPS

### Connect with Community Resources

In California, employers can draw on multiple resources at no cost to identify potential hires, provide assistance in the evaluation and hiring processes, and to provide support following hiring. Below is a brief description of these resources.

#### **Assistance in Identifying Potential Hires**

Each of the regions of California has multiple agencies and organizations that serve adults with autism who are seeking employment. The Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) has local offices throughout the state and is a frequent starting point for accessing talent. As noted more fully below, adults with autism who are DOR and/or regional center clients may also bring with them needed support, such as a job coach, at no cost to the employer.

*“Access to training services, labor market information, access to wage subsidies in crisis situations for employers, access to layoff emergency strategies and rapid response in the face of potential layoffs are all services that are accessible through the Workforce Development Boards and all are funded under the WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) from the federal level.”*

**Brandon Anderson**, Operations Director, California Workforce Association

#### **Additional Services to Identify Job Seekers**

Additionally, there are non-profits and other groups that place adults with autism into employment. In the Bay Area for example, The Arc, Toolworks, Best Buddies, East Bay Innovations, EvoLibri, and Pomeroy Center are a few of the organizations that provide placement assistance and job coaching to adults with autism. There are also volunteer groups, like AASCEND, that can provide referrals. Stanford University’s new Neurodiversity Job Bank promises to be a leader in linking employers with neurodiverse workers.

[med.stanford.edu/neurodiversity/NaW/employers-home/snjb](https://med.stanford.edu/neurodiversity/NaW/employers-home/snjb)

## **PHASE 1**

### **PREPARE**

#### **Assistance in Evaluation and Onboarding**

Agencies that serve adults with autism can also provide assistance evaluating candidates, onboarding with job coaches, and more. This assistance can help ensure the right fit for the position, an important element of employment success.

#### **Assistance in Support Following Hiring**

Some adults with autism could be clients of DOR and/or one of the 21 regional centers. These adults are entitled to various job support benefits at no cost to the employer. Among the support options are job coaches as well as supportive counseling, transportation assistance, and sometimes funding to cover equipment needed for a job or role.

#### **Benefits to Employers of Your Local Workforce Development Board**

In California, there are 45 Workforce Development Boards that work in partnership with training providers and community entities that have access to job seekers. All services are free.

There are many benefits for an employer to use the services of the Workforce Development Board, including:

- Access to capital
- Access to quality training programs for that capital
- Access to wage subsidies when implementing a training program
- Development support for internship programs
- Development support for access to quick, short-term labor that might develop into full-time opportunities

Access these services by contacting the CalJob system and set up an account as an employer.

- CalJobs: [www.caljobs.ca.gov/vosnet](http://www.caljobs.ca.gov/vosnet)
  - Los Angeles County: [workforce.lacounty.gov/business-services](http://workforce.lacounty.gov/business-services)
  - Sacramento County: [sacramentoworks.org/employers-business](http://sacramentoworks.org/employers-business)  
[www.seta.net/workforce-development-services](http://www.seta.net/workforce-development-services)
- Hotline: 877-920-JOBS (5627)

## PHASE 1

### PREPARE

## Explore Funding Sources and Supports

There are three main sets of financial incentives available to employers in California for hiring adults with autism and other developmental differences.

- **Paid Internship Program:** This is a program by which wages of regional center clients are covered 100% by Department of Developmental Services (DDS), up to \$10,400 per year for each client. DDS provides funding for the 21 Regional Centers that support the individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities. The employer not only does not need to pay anything, but all of the paperwork and payment is made by a third party payment agent. Despite these program strengths, the program has been greatly underutilized in recent years, with less than half of the millions allocated each year actually spent.
- **On-the-job training/work experience programs through the Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs).** The LWDBs in California administer over 80% of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds—the \$400 million or so of funds from the federal government that come to California for workforce training. Additionally, the LWDBs administer job training funds under CalWORKS, CalFresh and Adult Basic Education. The WIOA funds provide for wage subsidies for workers with developmental differences (including those who are not DOR or Regional Center clients) that can be up to 100% of wages for work experience and up to 75% of wages for on-the-job training. As with the Paid Internship Program, these incentives have not been attractive enough for employers in good economic times, so that their uptake has been below the funding allocated.
- **Work Opportunity Tax Credit:** Employers who hire workers with developmental differences can receive a tax credit of \$1200-\$9600, depending on the length of employment and wages earned.

*“What I learned from this project is that individuals with autism can develop into really wonderful people, and that there are agencies out there to help them with their development and care.”*

**Joseph Mark**, Fair Oaks Recreation and Parks District, Senior Activities Program Manager

## **PHASE 1**

### **PREPARE**

## **Understand Accommodations**

Targeted autism employment is consistent with “reasonable accommodations” requirements and ADA requirements, and actually helps employers meet these requirements in California.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires employers to provide “reasonable accommodations” for their workers with physical or mental impairments. The ADA applies whether the worker is hired through a regular or targeted hiring process, and whether the worker discloses the disability at the time of hiring or not.

“Reasonable accommodations” require an individualized assessment on what accommodations are needed and can be provided without undue hardship to the employer. When done effectively it is an interactive process between the employer, the worker, and the agency supporting the worker. Examples of reasonable accommodations that have been provided for adults with autism include job coaches (like the ones provided by DOR, regional centers, or the agency supporting the worker), offering quiet areas for workers, telecommuting, and a flexible schedule.

Employers in California who have been active in autism employment initiatives report no increases in ADA claims or requests for accommodation firmwide. Further, they do not report ADA claims or additional accommodation requests by program participants. Instead, a well-structured autism employment program can reduce the likelihood of ADA and related claims by leading a company to think through and document its approaches for program participants, as well as non-participants who qualify for ADA accommodation mandates.

For detailed information and support about accommodations, see Job Accommodation Network: [www.askjan.org](http://www.askjan.org)

## **Understand California Employment Laws**

Human Resources and Legal departments often have concerns about autism employment. At the center of these concerns is how the employer can best balance an autism employment effort with fairness to other employees and in conformity with laws in California regarding employment.

Here are four of the main legal issues raised, and how a targeted autism employment initiative can help meet ADA requirements.

### **1. Does a targeted hiring and recruitment process violate the ADA or other disability employment laws?**

The ADA prohibits unlawful discrimination at all stages of the hiring process, including the intake of applicants, the job application process, determining who to interview, the relevant questions for candidates, and what constitutes appropriate

## **PHASE 1**

### **PREPARE**

qualifications for a position. However, the ADA does allow for preference to be given to protected classes of people, including distinct hiring processes for workers with autism or other defined neurological conditions.

#### **2. If program participation requires disclosure of an applicant’s medical condition for participation, does this violate the ADA?**

Voluntary disclosure is permissible, as in a targeted program. Under the ADA, an employer may not inquire about an applicant’s medical condition prior to making a conditional job offer. After a job offer has been made and prior to commencing employment, the ADA permits employers to make a disability-related inquiry of an individual so long as the employer does so for all individuals entering the job category.

Upon hiring an individual, an employer must maintain the confidentiality of all disclosure information, sharing it only with those on a “need-to-know” basis, such as managers who are involved in implementing any agreed-upon reasonable accommodations.

#### **3. If an employer provides job coaches or mentors for participants in an autism employment program, does the employer need to provide job coaches for all employees?**

The employer is not required to provide job coaches or mentors to all employees. The determination of what services are to be provided is on an individual basis.

The ADA requires employers to provide “reasonable accommodations” that do not constitute an undue hardship to qualified disabled individuals. What constitutes a reasonable accommodation will vary for each employee, based on an individualized assessment. These requirements apply to all disabled employees and are independent of any targeted program.

There is no general requirement under the ADA to provide all employees with supports simply because they are provided to individuals within a targeted program. Through an individualized, interactive process between the employers, the employee, and their healthcare provider, if a particular accommodation is identified as necessary and reasonable the employer must provide it, absent an undue hardship.

#### **4. Progressive Discipline: Are there different limits on the flexibility of the employer to discipline and even terminate the employment of a participant in a targeted program?**

Participating in a targeted program does not exempt an employee from the requirements of all employees, nor does it prevent an employer from disciplining or terminating an employee who is in a targeted program.

In general, under the ADA, an employer may maintain performance standards for individuals with disabilities. The employer may maintain job-related and necessary

## **PHASE 1**

### **PREPARE**

conduct standards, and can discipline individuals for violating these standards, even where the conduct is related to a disability. These principles apply equally to disabled employees, whether or not they are participants in a targeted neurodiversity program.

The key to lawfully managing performance and conduct standards with respect to disabled employees is to be consistent with respect to the enforcement of such standards. In investigating issues of performance or misconduct, an employer must also take steps to ensure that an employee receives appropriate accommodations to effectively participate in the investigation.

Establishing a targeted program should not in and of itself limit the employer's flexibility in progressive discipline or generate additional ADA claims, so long as the employer is otherwise complying with the law. In fact, a well-structured program has the potential to reduce the likelihood of ADA and related claims due to the increased awareness and sensitivity of participating employers to the reasonable accommodation process.

### **Understand Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**

As beneficial and necessary as it is for adults with autism to find meaningful employment, there are financial concerns that employers should be aware of when working with adults with autism who receive Social Security benefits. Concerns may stem from the belief that if an adult with autism receives benefits, any employment will result in the loss of these benefits. That is not necessarily the case. As an employer it is important to be aware there are positive options available so these benefits can be maintained.

The rules governing SSI, health care benefits, and work income involve several factors that are individual to each worker. The adult with autism and employer should consult with the worker-supporting agency to identify benefits on a case-by-case basis as these are complex and can change quickly.

#### **Social Security Administration**

[www.ssa.gov/redbook](http://www.ssa.gov/redbook)

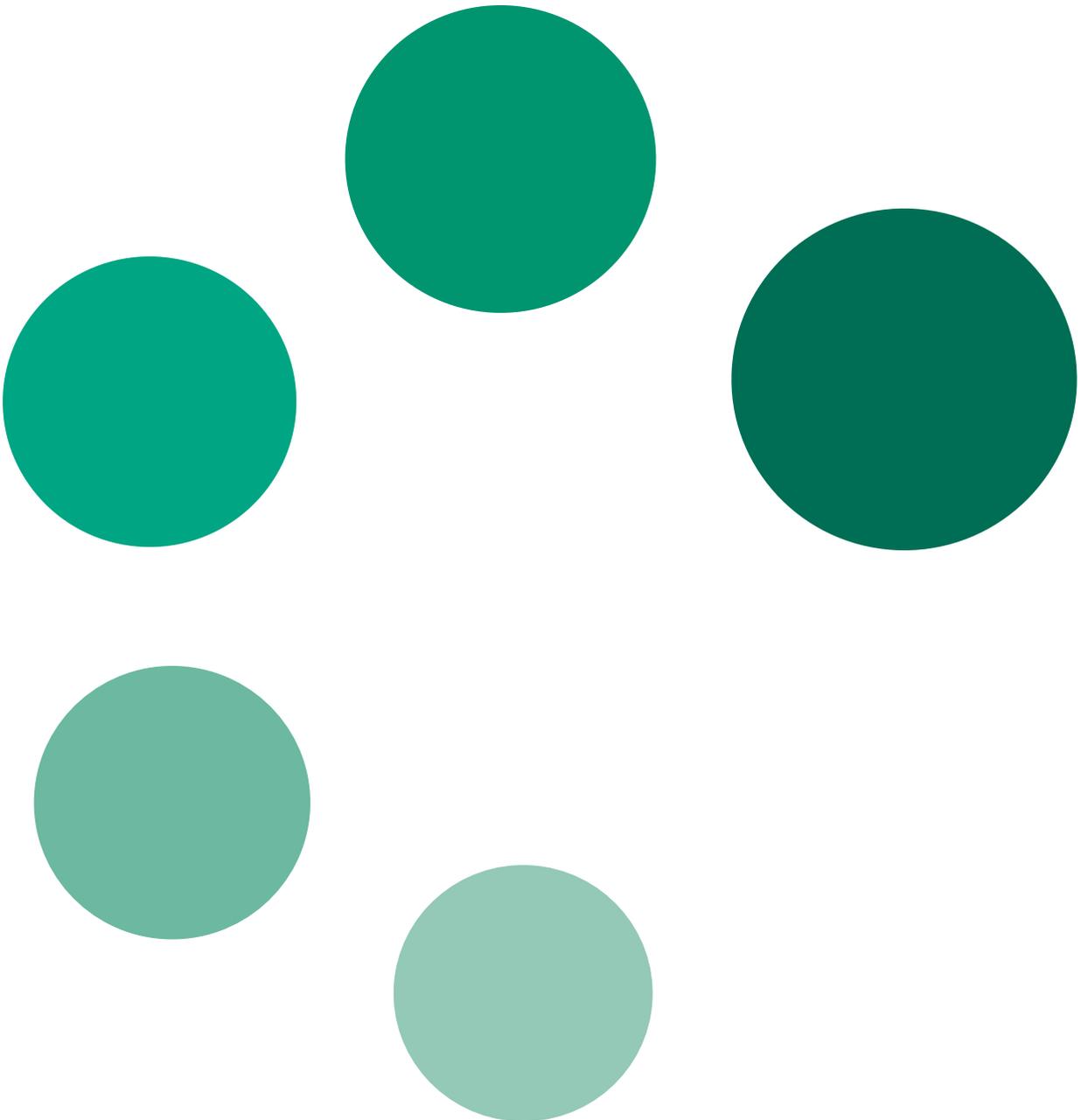
**PHASE 1**

**PREPARE**

**Checklist**

- Assess Company Culture
- Educate Staff
- Find and Develop a Champion
- Design Workplace Environment
- Develop a Plan
- Explore Funding Sources and Supports
- Connect with Community Resources
- Understand Accommodations
- Understand California Employment Laws
- Understand Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

**View Module 1: Prepare**





## PHASE 2 | HIRE

Phase 2 is where the actual connection between the organization and person with autism starts.

Whenever possible, a company should work to implement the plan one person at a time. Each person with autism will require a unique approach in order to achieve the success you seek.

Although it is imperative to have a plan in place and an educated team, the person with autism seeking to join your organization is going to respond best to a process that shows them you are genuinely committed to creating an environment in which they can succeed. Employees given this level of attention can often be loyal, effective, and long-term members of an organization.

On the front end this may sound complex. It is not. Through our research of companies that are succeeding in their inclusion programs and through our direct contact with both employers of people with autism and employees with autism, we have developed a process that will help any company increase their hiring and retention rate of qualified people with autism.

*“Our autism hiring program started with one person.”*

**Philip Leung**, Disabilities and Inclusion Officer at SMUD, Sacramento Municipal Utilities District

### **How Do We Recruit Our New Hire?**

How does a company attract qualified people with autism to their open positions?

People with autism utilize the same job seeking tools used by other job seekers, and many use assisted services such as the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) and employment services agencies that support people with autism and other special needs in seeking, securing and retaining employment. The DOR, California Workforce Boards, and the Regional Centers can help employers find agencies with qualified candidates. Our research has led us to the conclusion that companies willing to use one or both of the following steps will experience an immediate increase in the number of applications from individuals with autism.

**PHASE 2**

**HIRE**

**Speak to People with Autism in Your Job Postings**

The language you use in your job announcements is important. Here are a few basic steps you can take to ensure someone with autism knows your company is thinking about them and speaking to them.

Consider adding language to your opening paragraph that lets the job seeker with autism know your company embraces diversity and inclusion, and is committed to hiring people based on what they are capable of doing.

Include a statement about how your company values each employee as an individual first and builds the position around the person, as opposed to building the person around the position.

Below are examples of how to write job postings that will attract job seekers with autism:

**WRONG WAY**

**Job Overview**

*We seek an organized, quick-thinking, multi-tasking individual to support our team by handling several administrative functions—from managing the office, to answering member calls to assisting with our social media efforts. Individual must be able to handle many interruptions and still remain focused and friendly. We consider a self-motivated “I can” person a valuable asset.*

**RIGHT WAY**

*Our company thrives on having a diverse team that optimizes our unique abilities to collectively bring our customers the best products and services.*

*As appropriate to the company's culture, consider one of the two options:*

*Option 1: We hire individuals and work to build a team that will ensure success for employees and for the business.*

*Option 2: We hire based on the individual first and then we work together to build a system around you for success.*

**Job Duties**

Modify the language in the subsequent sections with standard headings like, “Job Duties,” “Essential Duties,” “Qualifications,” “Position Requirements,” etc. by removing subjectivity and replacing with measurable expectations.

**WRONG WAY**

*Excellent written and verbal communications skills.*

*Must be comfortable answering and routing calls.*

**RIGHT WAY**

*Able to write professionally via email and use Microsoft Word.*

*Able to speak clearly with customers and co-workers on the phone and in person.*

**PHASE 2**

**HIRE**

**RIGHT  
WAY**

*Able to learn a call routing system for incoming calls and manage it independently.*

*Our interviewing process provides candidates the opportunity to demonstrate these skills.\**

**Job Qualifications**

Consider changing the traditional format from a list of requirements to a series of self-reflective questions.

**WRONG  
WAY**

*Able to keep multiple projects and office spaces organized.*

*Able to think quickly and react effectively to changing demands.*

*Able to handle multiple tasks at once.*

**RIGHT  
WAY**

*Are you an organizer of things?*

*Do you care about where work supplies are placed and how they look?*

*Can you process a lot of information quickly?*

*Are you good at setting up items on a “to do” list and checking them off?*

*Do you get faster and faster at finishing your “to do” list after you’ve done them a few times?*

*Can you stop in the middle of a task, do something else, and get right back to the task you were on?*

*Can you take directions from multiple people?*

*Can you ask questions if you are not sure about something?*

*Do you like to learn how to do something and then do it on your own?*

*If you answered yes to most or all of these questions, we are really interested in meeting you.*

*“Instead of trying to change people to fit job descriptions, change the job descriptions to fit the people.” **Jennifer Brooks**, San Francisco AASCEND member*

\*By adding this one line you speak to the person with autism who may be more able to demonstrate skills rather than talk about them.

## **PHASE 2**

### **HIRE**

## **Build a Network of Partners that Connect with People with Autism**

Almost every successful company brings on new employees through some form of referral. Selecting the right candidates to bring through the interview process is perhaps the most critical part of the hiring process. A company that utilizes its most vital internal resource (current members of the team) to recruit people with autism is taking a step in building a diverse and successful team. A company that commits itself to building a network of partners that have a vested interest in helping people with autism secure meaningful employment will experience a significantly higher number of qualified applicants who are on the spectrum.

What strategies does your company currently use to encourage members of your team to recruit and refer qualified job candidates that do not have autism? We suggest you start there and expand to open the doors to a more robust pool of candidates that includes people with autism.

## **Strengthen Your Recruitment Efforts Internally**

- Reach out to your entire team and let them know the company wants to build a recruitment plan designed to attract qualified candidates that have autism.
- Solicit ideas from the team on how to increase the pool of qualified candidates with autism.
- Ask everyone on the team with a personal connection to autism to share their knowledge and experience.
- Utilize a company newsletter, email, or any other “all team” communication system to address or enhance your recruitment efforts.
- Incorporate a specific “call to action” related to the company’s commitment to increase the number of job candidates with autism.
- Develop (or enhance) a company-wide recruitment plan led by people who have expressed interest in helping the company increase the number of employees with autism.
- Build your recruitment team with at least one person from each department.
- Provide enough time for members of the recruitment team to collaborate with your HR department to prevent frustrations that may arise in the recruitment, interviewing, and hiring process.

## **PHASE 2**

### **HIRE**

- Allow your team to share both successes and challenges they are experiencing in their recruitment efforts.
- Empower your team to build a retention plan and support the team in their efforts to ensure each person hired through the program is given every opportunity possible to be a long-term vital member of the company.

### **Increase Recruitment Efforts Externally**

- Partner with agencies and organizations that provide support and services to people with autism who are seeking employment. (See Section on Community Resources on page 6)
  - Stanford Neurodiversity Job Bank ([www.med.stanford.edu/neurodiversity/NaW/employers-home/snjb](http://www.med.stanford.edu/neurodiversity/NaW/employers-home/snjb))
  - Hire Autism ([www.hireautism.org](http://www.hireautism.org))
  - Autism @ Work ([www.disabilityin.org](http://www.disabilityin.org))
  - California Department of Rehabilitation ([www.csavr.org](http://www.csavr.org))
  - Disability resource centers at local colleges
  - Local advocacy groups
  - Regional centers
- Reach out to agencies and organizations that work with people with autism and let them know your company wants to hire people with autism. Parents, teachers, therapists, and other professionals who are working with young people with autism are in constant pursuit of organizations that are committed to building an inclusive workforce. Many are connected to adults with autism and partnered with organizations that support employment for people with autism, and referrals will be nearly immediate.
  - Autism Society ([www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org))
  - California Autism Foundation ([www.calautism.org/understanding-autism/resources](http://www.calautism.org/understanding-autism/resources))
  - Child Mind Institute ([www.childmind.org](http://www.childmind.org))
- Have current job postings readily available so they can be shared. Try to ensure job postings have been written in a manner that speaks to a person with autism.
- Use your company's social media presence to align with groups that are promoting workplace inclusion programs and are specifically increasing the number of people with autism who are employed.

*“These techniques are good for all the workers, not just those with autism.”*

**Dan**, Fair Oaks Parks Supervisor, Fair Oaks

## **PHASE 2**

### **HIRE**

- Engage post-secondary education (private/public universities and community colleges) and career and technical education (CTE) schools through partnering with their career counselors as well as participating in other outreach programs and events.
- Research and connect with agencies that specialize in job placement. Many job placement companies are a step ahead in their recruitment strategies and already have a built in pool of qualified candidates on the spectrum.
  - Adecco ([www.adecousa.com](http://www.adecousa.com))
  - DKKD Staffing ([www.dkkdstaffing.com](http://www.dkkdstaffing.com))

Try not to limit partnerships to just local organizations. People with autism and members of their support networks are often willing to consider major geographical shifts in order to secure a position that has value and meaning.

A link to a sample Job Announcement can be found in the Resources section, and a hard copy is available in the Supplements section of the printed manual.

### **Adapt the Application Process**

The application process can be overwhelming for anyone. Many people with autism will either give up during the application process or miss a few steps in the process and never understand why they didn't get a response.

Many companies use the application process to “weed out” applicants who can't successfully navigate the application requirements. This is highly effective when a company is receiving an abundance of applications or using them as a vetting process.

As employers ourselves we see the need and value in the above. However, we have also learned that more often than not there is a person with autism interested in the position that is indeed highly qualified and who may end up not being considered for the position simply due to “mistakes” made during the application process.

### **How can employers modify the application process to hire a qualified person with autism?**

Provide the candidate an assurance that their application is important to the company and that it's been designed to help them be as thorough and accurate as possible.

**PHASE 2**

**HIRE**

**Example:**

*Our company believes in building the most diverse and talented workforce possible. The application process is the first stage of our selection process and we want you to be successful. Some qualified candidates may find this application difficult to fill out completely and accurately. If at anytime during the application process you have questions please go to our FAQ section on our website ([www.company.com](http://www.company.com)) for directions. If you still have questions after reviewing our FAQs please contact us directly at 555.555.5555.*

**Our research has found that people with autism often will not or do not want to disclose that they have autism.**

Although many are aware of inclusion programs and their right not to be discriminated against, there is a resounding fear that disclosure will be viewed as a liability and they will not be genuinely considered for a position. Many people with autism believe they must not disclose in order to demonstrate their capacity to meet or exceed the expectations of a person who does not have autism.

**This manual is intended to allay both the fears that people with autism have about disclosing and discussing their autism and destroying the assumptions some employers might have about an applicant with autism.**

The following question embedded into the application serve as perhaps the single most important action in making this a reality.

*In order for you to be as effective and successful in this position as possible, what types of additional support or modifications to your work environment would best help you?*

Additional time to learn new materials related to the position  
Yes / No

Training materials presented in writing, verbal, or visual formats  
Yes / No

A training mentor who will stay consistent throughout my first few weeks on the job  
Yes / No

Work areas available that remain quiet for most or all of the work shift (free from distractions)  
Yes / No

**PHASE 2**

**HIRE**

Soft or dimmable lighting

Yes / No

Ability to take short breaks as needed

Yes / No

Ability to meet with my direct supervisor daily to address any issues, concerns, or questions I may have

Yes / No

Ability to speak to small rather than large groups

Yes / No

Ability to learn one task at a time before moving on to another one

Yes / No

Official meetings with my direct supervisor at least once a month to discuss how I'm doing

Yes / No

Ability to wear headphones and listen to music while I work

Yes / No

Ability to wear earplugs to reduce noise while I work

Yes / No

One strategy companies use to increase the application success rate is to minimize the number of questions on the employment application and to use the candidate's resume as the primary tool to review experience and qualifications.

We suggest you wait to have the candidate fill out certain forms and answer certain questions until you have reviewed the initial application and performed a preliminary or official interview. After you make the human connection and work past the inherent barriers to successful application and interview processes, you will know whether or not the person with autism is potentially a good fit for the job you seek to fill, and you can then complete the application process.

A very progressive strategy is to provide interested candidates with the opportunity to fill the application out on site with a member of your inclusion program. This person can assist with the application process, and more importantly, perform an informal assessment (screening) of the candidate and provide invaluable feedback to the hiring manager.

## **PHASE 2**

### **HIRE**

Many people with autism will apply and make mistakes regardless of the efforts your company puts forth to increase the success rate. Remember that the change we seek to create in our workforce is based on the “one individual at a time” premise. Employ all or a few of these strategies and you will make a difference one person at a time. The companies that implement some or all of these strategies will quickly become known to the autism community and your pool of qualified applicants with autism will increase over time simply by your willingness to try.

A person with autism might struggle during the application process with providing clarity on:

- How many hours they wish to work
- When they are available to work
- Their ability to get to and from work
- Previous job titles and responsibilities
- Past employer contact information
- Appropriate references

Not all people with autism have these struggles. Some have mastered the application process.

*“We suggest that you work harder to let the potential employee with autism know—as they go through the selection process—that you genuinely are open to the fact that they may have autism and that you have a workplace plan, a workplace culture, and an idea of a business structure that embraces the strengths that come with autism.”*

**Eric Steward**, TAP Trainer and Company Coach

### **Activate the Interview Process**

The purpose of a job interview is to assess the candidate's ability to do the job, willingness to do the job, and if they'd fit into the company's culture. To many, the interview process is stressful. But to a candidate with autism, the anxiety can be crippling.

In our online survey, 64% of young adults with some job experience cite anxiety as the greatest barrier to successful employment. Many businesses have altered their interview process, some even eliminating it altogether in favor of skills-based observations and exercises. This restructuring is changing the business landscape, making it more inclusive of the needs of applicants with disabilities such as autism.

## PHASE 2

### HIRE

#### **Before the Interview**

Ask the applicant if they would prefer to review the interview questions beforehand. Include an itinerary of the day's activities and specific instructions that include names of interviewers and their contact info, any personal equipment, documents, or portfolios needed, and an idea of how long the interview will take. Knowing what to expect is one of the most effective relievers of pre-interview anxiety.

#### **What can businesses do to help in the interview process?**

There are many strategies employers can use to help facilitate a successful interview before the day arrives.

- As an interviewer, try to be specific in your communication and forthright with the needed skill set you are looking for. Identify the types of activities that will be presented during the interview period, and have clear expectations of outcomes.

#### **Example:**

*"Karen, we are looking for someone who can both effectively use Microsoft Word and write professional documents. We will be giving you the topic of break room etiquette to write a 1-2 paragraph company memo as a practice exercise during your interview. We will expect professional language with no grammatical errors, formatted on our company letterhead. In the future, we would like to have our company manual updated. If you have skill sets in this area, please bring examples."*

- As many applicants will have trouble with eye contact, consider offering an option of a phone interview.

#### **Example:**

*"Michael, we offer in-person, phone, or video interviews. Which is your preference?"*

- Ask the applicant if they would prefer to review the interview questions beforehand. You may also wish to include an itinerary of the day's activities, if the interview process is extensive, and specific instructions that include names of interviewers, any personal equipment, documents, or portfolios needed, and break and lunch times.

#### **Example:**

*"Ben, would you like us to send you the interview questions beforehand? We will have two to three managers from our different departments attending: Joel from Sales, Ann from Marketing and Sara from HR. We would like you to bring a portfolio of past marketing campaigns and products that were produced successfully."*

- Provide contact information for a company mentor or HR person who can handle any further inquiries, pre- and post-interview.

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### **HIRE**

#### **Example:**

*“William, Dakota is a coworker in the department you are applying to work in and has volunteered to answer any questions you may have before and after the interview. You can reach him at Dakota@company.org. Or, if you would like to ask company policy questions, you can contact Sara in HR. She will also be more than happy to help you with travel, overnight, and meal recommendations. Sara will provide you with a map of our organization, directions to our reception entrance, and expected dress code of our employees. She can be reached at SaraJ@company.org.”*

These simple steps can allow the applicant ample time to review their questions and answers, and prepare mentally in a non-stressful environment.

Knowing what to expect has been reported to be one of the most effective relievers of pre-interview anxiety.

#### **The Day of the Interview**

What are some simple steps a company can implement to make the interview process with the individual with autism more successful?

#### **The Interview Team**

Decide who will be at the interview and what role each person plays. Interpersonal skills and social conversations can be challenging, even overwhelming, to many on the autism spectrum. A group interview should be undertaken with care. Here are some tips to consider:

- When creating your interview team, consider how many company employees will be at the interview and, if possible, reduce the number. Facing one to two interviewers is far less intimidating than facing four to five.
- Brief all interview participants in advance so they understand explicitly the skills needed for the open position. They should also have an awareness and basic understanding of the needs of applicants with autism.
- Each person should have a strategy in place for how to use interview tools, work skill exercises, and/or equipment and tools.
- Breaks and transitions to other areas should be scheduled and shared with the applicant.
- Try to limit the use of company slang and acronyms.
- If possible, provide an inter-department glossary of terms.

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#### **Example:**

*“Kate, we have a whole way of communicating at BridgeWay that can be confusing for new hires. Please don’t hesitate to ask if you don’t understand an acronym or word we are using. Here is a sheet with acronyms and slang from the department you are applying to work in. Feel free to reference it during the interview.”*

Slow down and speak at a comfortable or slower rate. Some candidates with autism need longer processing times and slower communication to think and answer. Do not be worried if there are long pauses but instead ask if they are comfortable with the rate of speech.

#### **Example:**

*“Brandon, are you comfortable with the pace of the questions? I can ask slower or faster if you would like.”*

Offer the candidate the option to skip a question if nothing comes to mind, and let them know they can come back to that question later if they like.

Ask one question at a time and allow the applicant to finish the answer before moving on to the next. If no answer is forthcoming, rephrasing the question and then asking if they understand is acceptable and helpful.

#### **Example:**

*“What were two changes you successfully implemented in your last position? What were two situations that challenged you the most?”*

Try to limit question sessions to 45 minutes or less with short breaks. Not all applicants will need this but for those who do, providing breaks and a quiet space before and during the interview will help them re-group and calibrate to the unfamiliar surroundings.

#### **Example:**

*“Kelly, let me know when you need a 5 or a 10 minute break. We have a quiet space down the hall in the break room.”*

*“The first day of work was rough. It was just getting to know them and them getting to know us. And I think a level of comfortability and trust. And then once that was established, every day after that just got better and better.”*

**Jacob Giorgi**, President, House to Home Moving Company

## **PHASE 2**

### **HIRE**

#### **Planned Activities as an Alternative to Interviews**

Some companies steer away from interviews, preferring to focus on skills, teambuilding and problem solving with planned activities. Some individuals with autism have faced ridicule and bullying from past school and social situations. They may not have had opportunities to play sports, be on teams, or even get invited to social events. Consider how important it is to have a team attitude versus a focused, uninterrupted skillset to get the job done.

Technical exercises can be implemented to assess competency with data, analytics, software programs, and equipment.

- Have exercises and technical equipment available to allow applicants the chance to demonstrate rather than explain their skill sets.
- Information exchanges where there is some sharing back and forth between the applicant and interviewer on tasks that can be evaluated over a few sessions can be beneficial to both parties, giving an overall evaluation rather than a one-time interview. Many individuals with autism relish the chance to be able to show what they are capable of rather than make a first impression of poor eye contact, awkward verbal communication, or other distractions that can mask skill sets and talents.

#### **Assess the Candidate**

Now you've made it through the application and interview part of the selection process, it's time to assess the candidate for employability and viability.

#### **Extended Pre-Hire Training and Internships**

Some companies, such as SMUD and auticon, have extended internship programs that allow a candidate time to develop and demonstrate skills in a supportive and progressive manner. SMUD accesses job supports and funding via the local regional center internship program that can fund a worker up to \$10,400 (which can run 5-6 months for a part-time placement) and attributes their 100% retention rate on this extended process. Auticon has a long training program and then a 250-hour internship with no promise of hiring as a process to determine a good match for their company. These programs are not good for everyone and may exclude good candidates who are already working or in school, but for many companies it's a process that shows good results.

#### **What are the most essential areas to be assessed at this phase of the selection process?**

Ability, reliability, teachability

## **PHASE 2**

### **HIRE**

#### **Current Ability to Perform the Job**

Depending on how much information you gather from the application and interview, it's imperative that your selection process both allows for and encourages additional points of contact. This should clearly encourage the candidate, as well as their employment support network, to further assess their capacity to meet the baseline expectations for hire.

##### **What**

Can the candidate perform the functions of the position with the quality our organization would expect of any new hire in the same position?

##### **How**

Review the candidate's work history and have in-depth discussions with references who can speak to the candidate's job performance, as well as verbal and visual competencies.

##### **Modification**

The most impactful action you can take at this time is inviting the candidate for an additional interview and letting them know exactly what it is you will be assessing during the second interview. Give the person with autism the chance to be fully prepared for the follow-up interview and/or skill demonstration exercises. This positions the company to gain critical insights into the candidate's actual capacity to be successful from the time of hire through long-term employment.

#### **Reliability**

Every company is challenged to build and sustain a reliable work force. All the strategies in the world collapse when employees can't be relied upon. A person with autism who is qualified for the position and truly wants to be a part of your company can and will be able to demonstrate reliability through the selection process.

##### **What**

Is the candidate a reliable worker?

##### **How**

Longevity in previous positions is often the primary indicator of a candidate's reliability factor. However, many times a person's work experience will not accurately reflect reliability. In addition to reviewing longevity with past employers and thoroughly exploring reliability with listed references, you can include specific requests within your selection process to assess the candidate's reliability.

## PHASE 2

### HIRE

#### **Modification**

After the initial interview give the candidate one to three simple tasks to follow through on with very specific directions on how and what to do. This does not need to be a test of the person's ability to "problem solve" and "figure things out." If the job doesn't call for that kind of skill set, there is no reason to assess it.

#### **Example:**

Upon finishing the interview, tell the candidate you have a few requests for them to answer after they leave. Ask them to research your company website and share three pieces of interesting information they learn. Ask for reflections on the interview, specifically asking for successes and areas that can be improved upon. Finally, consider asking a random question (for example, how many times have the Patriots won the Superbowl?). Ask to have an email with all of the answers submitted at a specific time (offer a specific time range and date). Once you've verbally shared this information, offer the same directions on a written sheet of paper.

*Special note: This exercise not only will give you a glimpse into the person's reliability but also their ability to follow simple directions.*

#### **Teachability**

Being teachable is perhaps one of the most underestimated attributes during the selection process. Many companies bypass this vital indicator because they are looking too closely at the need for immediate job fulfillment instead of the much greater need for a workforce that is highly capable of learning new skills as well as taking feedback constructively and applying it both efficiently and effectively.

*"Many young adults on the spectrum struggle with being teachable. Sometimes it's learning all the steps of a task. Sometimes it's in the communication process with the manager, job coach, or mentor. Usually it's a combination of factors. When I break the steps of a task down and work on them one at a time and make certain the employee is fully understanding my instructions and training before moving on I get the desired results."*

**Eric Steward**, TAP Trainer and Company Coach

## **PHASE 2**

### **HIRE**

#### **What**

Is the candidate teachable?

#### **How**

In addition to gathering data from the above methods, the answer to this question can illustrate whether or not you have a candidate who is able to build on skill competencies as well as evolve with the changes that are inevitable in a thriving and growing company.

#### **Modification**

Incorporate “new skill challenges” in your interview process. These challenges don’t need to be long or even complex. The idea is to provide the candidate an unknown scenario or task to attempt. Once complete, provide the candidate with some short training—an actual model demonstration is best—and then have the candidate do it again with only slight modifications to the scenario or task.

If the candidate is able to demonstrate their ability to listen and execute what you’ve taught them then you are indeed dealing with someone who is teachable and who happens to also have autism. You’ve got yourself a potentially great new hire.

## **PHASE 2**

### **HIRE**

## **Make the Job Offer**

At the point your company decides to offer a person with autism a job the real work is just beginning. Although the company has done a remarkable service and is actively “moving the needle” of employment for people with autism, the process of making these valiant efforts worthwhile starts now. Of the steps outlined in this process the job offer is by far the easiest and most rewarding. Still, there are some key areas to pay close attention to during this part of the selection process to ensure a seamless transition from the offer to the employee starting their first day. A link to a sample Job Offer letter can be found in the Resources section and a hard copy is available in the Supplements section of the printed manual.

### **What’s the best way to ensure the job offer is done effectively?**

#### **Communicate**

Send an email to the candidate that clearly states in the body of the email that the decision to hire them has been made. If the offer letter is attached to the email, clearly explain what you want the candidate to do upon reading and reviewing the offer letter.

#### **Include Next Steps**

Many people with autism respond well to lists. We suggest that your offer letter has a numbered list of next steps.

#### **Call the Candidate**

Explain that the company has decided to offer them the job. Give the candidate the choice of going over the offer letter with you now or reviewing it in private first before calling you back. Give them the option of coming in to meet with you personally to review the offer letter. Use the opportunity to describe company benefits and tell the new employee what the next steps will be.

#### **Set Benchmarks**

Explain what your new employee can expect as they “onboard” on Day 1, over the first two weeks, go through the 60/90 day “probationary” and training period, and annually thereafter as they are retained and advanced in your company.

It’s critical that the company include benchmarks in the offer letter. Many people with autism hesitate to seek counsel or even ask questions. They may wait for direction out of fear of engagement in matters related to what they are supposed to be doing or if what they are doing is meeting the company’s expectations.

By assuring the new hire that the company is committed to their success through a well-planned on-boarding process (outlined in the job offer), you are setting the new hire at ease and positioning them to optimize their talents and abilities.

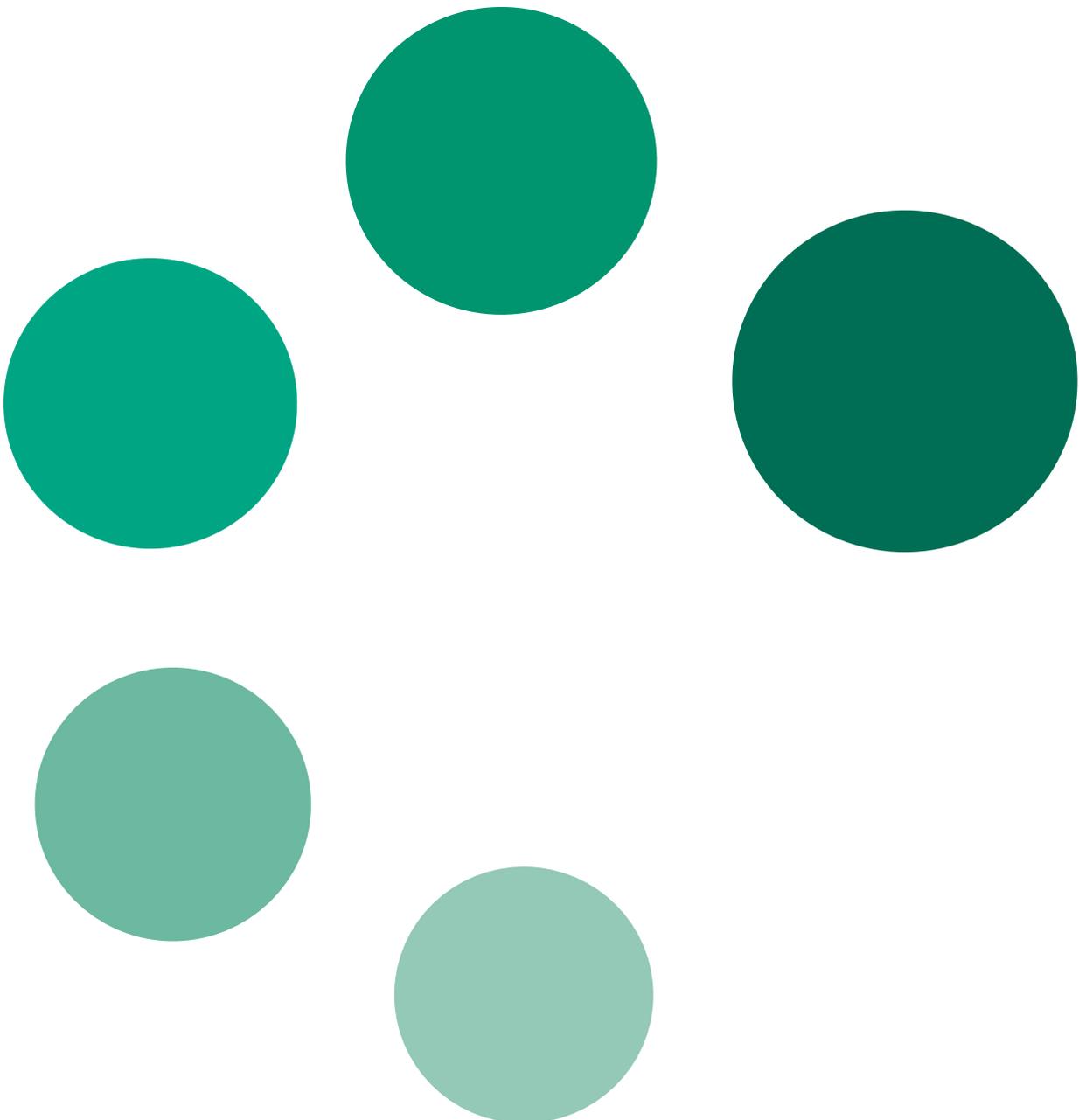
**PHASE 2**

**HIRE**

**Checklist**

- Speak to people with autism in your job postings
- Build a network of partners that connect with people with autism
- Strengthen your recruitment efforts internally
- Increase your recruitment efforts externally
- Adapt the application process
- Activate your interview process
- Assess the candidate
- Make the job offer

**View Module 2: Hire**





## PHASE 3 | ONBOARD

### **How Do You Onboard a New Hire?**

For most employers, the onboarding or orientation process can be quick and simple. Sign all the state-required paperwork, introduce the employee around the office, and have someone train them. The employee with autism may require more preparation prior to starting and throughout the probationary period in order for them to be successful.

In addition to setting up an inclusive workplace there is a need to establish predictability in their schedule, location, and expectations, potentially on a daily basis. If there are task-related responsibilities, consider setting up the location and task prior to the employee's orientation.

*“Have awareness training. Educate employees and managers on what it means to work with an individual with autism and provide opportunities for them to ask questions.”*

**Harper Rathman**, TAP Peer Mentor

### **Educate Staff**

Utilize our explanation in our module, *Prepare*, to educate your current employees about autism. You may also invite a community resource to talk about people on the spectrum. Depending on the level of disclosure identified, this would also be the time to introduce your Champion and/or a mentor who will assist in the orientation and be the liaison for the employee with autism.

### **Plan Day 1**

Before their first day, create a check list detailing what they can expect during this phase. Have your Champion review it with them *before* the first day. Design your Day 1 in a way that limits the amount of information shared as well as the amount of interactions with team members. Many people with autism experience fear, anxiety, discomfort, and worry at higher levels than others. Or, they may experience the same levels that many of us do but their ability to remain focused and attentive can be compromised, especially on their first day. The focus of Day 1 should be on allowing the new hire with autism to process the environment through observation. Having one or two team members as mentors who know to limit the number of introductions and the amount of information being shared.

### **First Day Checklist**

Give an employee with autism a checklist on the first day that includes the following:

- Exact time they need to be at work. Ask how they are planning on getting to work, and if they need any help figuring out transit, traffic patterns, or parking.
- What paperwork they need to complete for orientation. Tell them what they need to bring, like their Social Security card and birth certificate for citizenship verification.
- Location of workplace. We are aware in some companies the workplace may be in a different location each time, however the employee with autism needs to orient to the same workstation at the same location when they begin a job.
- Names and positions of people they will work with. Consider listing what these individuals do, what they are working on, and what they can help with, specifically.
- Names and contact info of Champion, mentor, or liaison who will check with them daily to see how they are doing. It would be good to set up a specific time each day to meet with that mentor and keep the meetings short, less than 3-5 minutes.
- Name of their direct supervisor and how to contact them.
- If applicable, the name of the HR contact and their location.
- What the job entails and how they do it each day. It would be very beneficial if you can break down each of the responsibilities into a step-by-step task analysis so that the employee knows how to perform their job.
- Sometimes you may need to set up time frames such as “At 10:30-10:40 am you take a break in the break room. At 12:30 pm to 1:00 pm you go to lunch. Bring your lunch or visit local places where you can buy food.” (provide a list of local places).
- Dress code (be specific as possible).
- Be sure to outline your productivity expectations for the first day, week, and month. This is very important to employees on the spectrum because they expect to work on their first assignment upon arrival on the job. If not immediately given a productive task they may become anxious and uncomfortable. They may not be comfortable sitting around and being social with their co-workers.
- Supply noise-cancelling devices for the employee to use if the environment is noisy or distracting, if they don't have their own.
- Provide the employee with your company's Employee Handbook, with instructions to read it within a certain timeframe. We suggest at least a week. Some employees with autism will appreciate the emphasis on allowing them time to learn the company's rules and expectations. Set up a specific time—after a week or more—to review the policies and procedures with the employee. If needed, break the review up into hour-long meetings until you have thoroughly gone through it with the employee.

### **PHASE 3**

#### **ONBOARD**

## **Progress through the Probationary Period**

During this probationary period, you may need to have the worker gradually work into a full eight-hour day. They may start with part-time for a while but should get plenty of advance notice that they need to increase their hours beginning a certain date. The mentor or HR representative will need to check with the employee to ensure they can manage extra hours or responsibilities. You may also provide them with more breaks to ensure they can go to a quiet place to reduce their anxiety, if needed.

Provide them with consistent feedback on how they are doing and what they need. Don't be afraid to provide feedback to the employee identifying the exact behaviors you want them to continue or behaviors that are unacceptable. Initially their mentor needs to check in with them frequently, to ensure they understand the expectations and can follow them.

If the employee is struggling initially, take the time to identify what their perception is of what they are expected to do so you understand why they are struggling. You will need to provide clear instructions with predictable needs. Many times, the mentor may have to help the employee with problem solving, critical thinking, and communication.

You can establish "What if" scenarios so that if something happens, they will know how to respond. For example, you may tell them "If the phone rings, don't pick up the phone because [Insert Name] handles that job." Then go on to explain "If [Insert Name] does not pick up the phone then contact [Insert Name] to pick up the phone."

Always give the employee with autism options for managing their anxiety, frustration, or stress. For example, you can say, "If you are having difficulty call [Insert Name] or if you need time to be alone, you can go to this location." The more tools and options they have to manage those situations the more successful they will be through this initial period.

Remember that an inclusive environment has the flexibility to make changes as needed to accommodate the employee with autism. Sometimes that employee doesn't know what they need to be successful and you will have to go through a series of trial and error opportunities in order to find the right situation to promote that success.

## **Training**

### **What are standard training objectives?**

Workers should understand the job tasks, be able to complete them to the satisfaction of the supervisor, understand workplace rules, know start, end, and break times, understand sick leave and vacation policies, be aware of emergency procedures, know their way to key areas in the building, and know how to get to work

On-the-job training is proven to be most effective in a natural setting where the real job is performed. Many people with autism learn best by observing how to do something.

All workers benefit from regular routines in the day and week, and for some with autism a steady predictable workflow is helpful. As much as possible, keep schedules and tasks clear, concise, and consistent.

Working side-by-side is an excellent technique if applicable to your workplace. This “shouldering” with another worker is effective for many training and communication scenarios. The trainer should demonstrate what the new hire will be doing so that the person with autism is positioned to process what they’ve seen and can start to build a plan for execution.

Even on Day 1, demonstrate a few smaller and simpler tasks that the new employee will be asked to do the following day.

Visual supports such as guides, lists, and “cheat sheets” that break down tasks into steps are valuable for everyone.

Daily and weekly goals should be clearly articulated and written.

Daily, if possible, and weekly feedback loops with supervisor should be scheduled and maintained as a key component to developing and retaining your new worker. This will be a time when clear job benchmarks and progressions with job tasks and salary reviews are scheduled and reviewed.

If an external agency or job coach is used, regular communications should be scheduled. Depending on the type of work the employee is doing, job coaches should slowly and systematically provide on-the-job training for job tasks, orienting to the job site, and social integration with colleagues. Some job coaches are present for the first few weeks, then they fade as the worker gains skills and confidence in the workplace. Other job coaches connect to workers and managers with regular or as-needed phone calls.

## **The Meristem Method of Teaching Adults with Autism for the Workplace**

The Meristem Method is based on the principle of experiential learning—that is, “doing to learn.” It allows a person to repeatedly immerse themselves in experiences, while encouraging self-reflection about those experiences. This objective process allows a person to gain insight into the impact of their actions, a simple but effective model that has been shown to unlock potential and help to build a solid foundation for subsequent growth.

Three of these processes in particular offer workplaces simple and effective means to enhance success on the job: Orienting, Instructional Sequencing, and Reflective Practices.

### **Orienting**

Key to navigating a new environment is orienting to the physical spaces of the site and the worker’s place within it. Beyond a simple walk-through to see and experience the entrances, exits, lounges, and work zones, all workers will benefit from spatial orienting techniques that can be revisited each day. These include:

- Noticing the location of the sun in the sky at the start of the workday
- Noticing the four cardinal directions (North, South, East, West) from the workplace and workstation
- From the workstation, noting which is right and left orientation
- Feeling the ground or floor beneath the feet and noticing changes in the flooring from space to space when walking on the job
- Noticing ease in sitting at a desk or workstation and with job equipment
- Organizing job tools for efficiency and safety
- Practicing a 10-second grounding exercise silently during the day at regular intervals

### **Instructional Sequencing**

**Say It** —————> Hear it orally.

**See It** —————> See it visually written as a guide or a photo/video.

**Observe It Modeled** —————> Observe the movement of the activity. We call this the “hear it to move it” sequence.

We call this the “hear it to move it” sequence. Using these three learning styles in sequence when giving instructions is quite effective and key when giving directions to an employee with autism.

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ONBOARD

**Reflective Practices**

A regular practice of reflection or mindfulness whether at the start or end of each shift, is an effective training and retention tool for all employees, whether on the autism spectrum or not. A short reflection at the start of the day and at the end of the shift and will go a long way towards deepening understanding, satisfaction, equilibrium, and initiative in the workplace. Recounting the day or reviewing the next day's schedule orients staff to key follow-up tasks to the workday ahead.

*“What was very beneficial in the training process was to see the job coaches giving or explaining instructions in several different ways. They would verbally say what the directions were, then they would physically show it, then work side-by-side to actually execute it. So there were three different ways it was presented.”*

**Courtney Marx**, Kitchen Manager at Plates Cafe, Sacramento

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*“We’re all different. We’re not focusing on what they can’t do, but what they can do.”*

**Paloma Palomares**, Activities Director, Eskaton Village Gold River, CA

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*“Put the worker with autism where they are strong. All individuals with autism have strong skill sets along with areas where they can be very weak”*

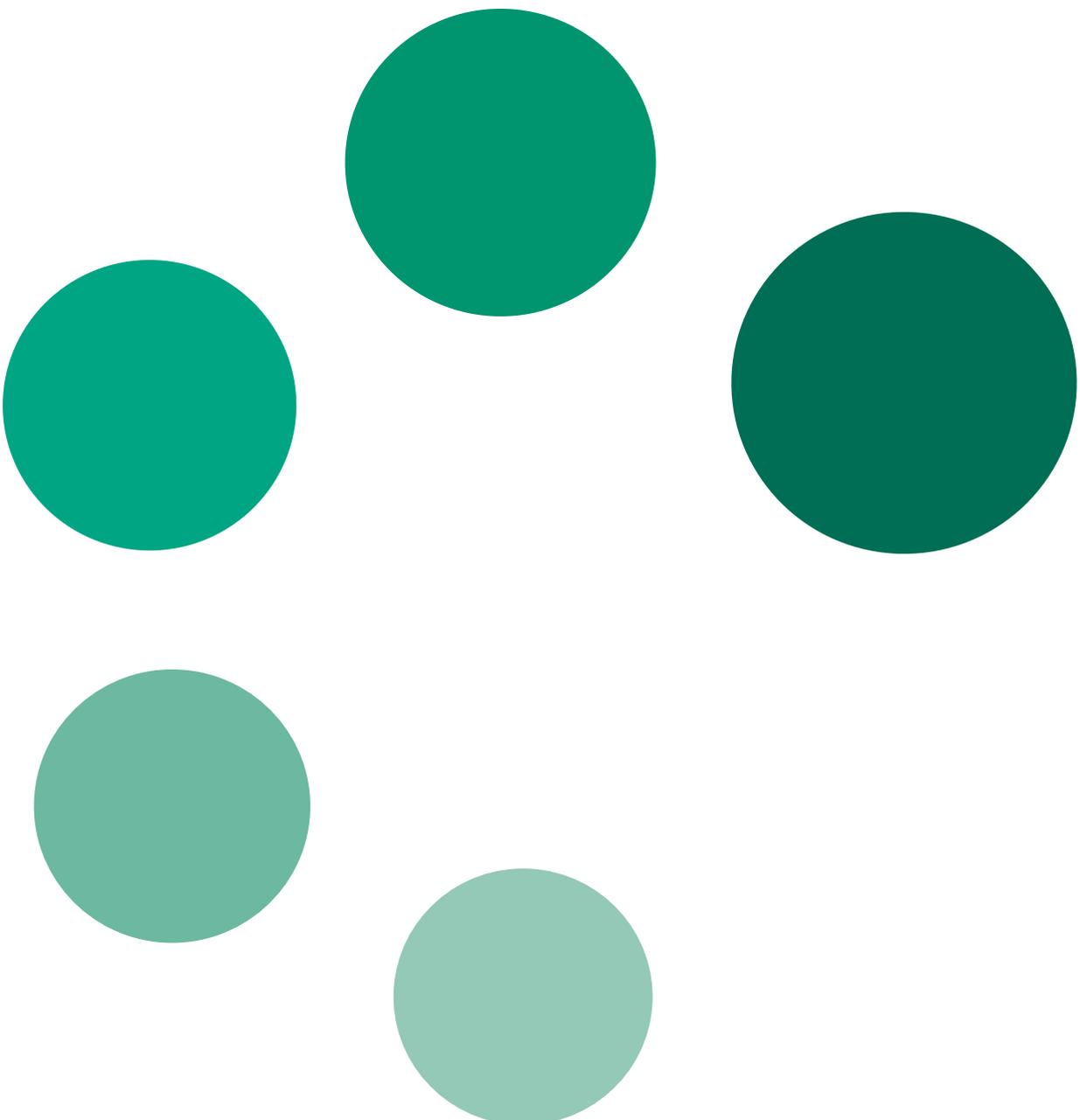
**Harper Rathman**, TAP Peer Mentor

**PHASE 3**  
**ONBOARD**

## Checklist

- Educate All Levels of Management and Staff
- Plan Day 1
- Progress Through the Probationary Period of 90 Days
- Plan and Progress Training Through Year 1
- Master the Meristem Method of Teaching Adults with Autism for the Workplace

**View Module 3: Onboard**





## PHASE 4 | RETAIN

### How Do We Retain Our Workers with Autism?

*“People with disabilities aren’t less capable humans, but social stigma and negative perceptions of persons with disabilities make it harder to find work, make friends, and build community.”*

**Mickey Rowe**, Actor/Autism Activist, National Disability Theatre

There are numerous benefits of employing adults with autism. Provide the support necessary to retain these employees to:

- Improve organizational culture and climate
- Foster a sense of value among all employees
- Have a positive effect on the workplace and the customer, especially within a customer-service oriented business
- Receive the inherent social benefits of creating and sustaining an inclusive workplace

### Implement an Employee Success Plan

Individuals with autism are no different from other employees in that they desire a chance to use their skills, get recognition for their contributions, and be given growth opportunities.

An employee success plan, which is also sometimes referred to as an employee onboarding plan or a career development plan, is a tool that you give an employee and the manager to help set clear expectations when you have a new person coming on in your workplace. This tool is intended to give the employee the best opportunity to succeed in the new environment. Setting that plan will help your new employees stay on board and facilitate communication. Without such a plan, there can be subpar performance, missed expectations, and also in the long run, even employee turnover.

The plan itself should be very specific. It should have measurable objectives that are achievable and they’re relevant to the organization, and they are timely and have an end date. These are known as SMART goals. A link to a sample Employee Success Plan can be found in the Resources section, and a hard copy is available in the Supplements section of the printed manual.

### Use SMART Goals

SMART is an acronym for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. When you are setting benchmarks, it is important to set these specific goals that you actually can measure, and they need to have an end date or a completion date.

## **PHASE 4**

### **RETAIN**

Progress toward the goals should be documented and discussed regularly between the employee and their supervisor. There should be a way to identify if improvements are being made or if they haven't been made. If there are gaps where the new employee might not be meeting expectations, then the manager should provide resources to help remove those barriers so that that employee can make their goals.

#### **Benchmarks After 90 Days**

This is going to vary widely from person to person and even organization to organization, depending on the goals of the organization and the person's individual skills and their experience level. Autistic people all learn at different speeds, but many struggle with new situations or change. It can take longer than other people to learn new tasks, but they can learn them and become efficient workers.

The first 90 days is a learning period for all employees, and especially for your autistic workforce, because of possible learning differences and even possible struggles with perfectionism. Autistic workers might need a little bit more reassurance to know they are on track and are getting the job done the way it is expected. It's helpful and even essential to have this communication.

When setting goals, it's important to remember that everyone should be working towards the same goals as the company. The individual's goals should align with company goals.

#### **Here are some examples of SMART benchmarks:**

- Ask a new employee to spend one day a week building organizational understanding by shadowing teammates, and maybe their sales team or their customer service team, to get to understand the customers and organization better. The measurable part would be sharing the items that are learned with the supervisor in the weekly one-to-one meetings through the end of this quarter.
- Ask another employee to improve product understanding by creating, drafting and delivering their first product or customer sale by a certain date. This way it always has a date and it's very specific with what they need to do to reach that goal.

*“A lot of autistic people are very upfront and very honest and direct communicators, and we do get to the point. A lot of us will take what you say at face value. And sometimes that might mean that we need you to spell out all the details for us. Please don't expect us to read between the lines, just tell us what you want.”*

**Christa Holmans**, VP of Marketing and HR Advisor, Austin Alliance Group (AAG)

## PHASE 4

### RETAIN

## Establish Employee Success Plan for Employees with Autism

Implementing a career development program for individuals with autism should include:

- Expanding on-the-job training opportunities
- Rotating assignments
- Finding outside training and education opportunities
- Defining mentoring programs
- Creating employee resource groups
- Educating management teams to match individuals with positions that suit their strengths, positioning them for success rather than frustration and failure
- Refreshing support and buy-in from management and colleagues

Remind supervisors that all employees, including those with autism, desire equitable opportunities for advancement and should be encouraged to take advantage of training and stretch assignments that lead to career growth opportunities.

*"We have a natural intrinsic benefit going on with all of our employee retention just because we are working with dogs and a lot of people love working with dogs. So, we tend to enjoy a higher retention rate than one might expect for all of our employees. Surprisingly, our retention rate for employees who are on the spectrum is even higher than the neurotypical employees."*

**Diane Foos**, Owner and General Manager, Dogtopia

## Create a Calendar of Benchmarks for an Annual Program and Review

It's important to establish clear goals and expectations for the employee. What are some "smart" benchmarks to establish for an employee with autism through the first 90 days?

1. Learn the names, positions, and basic job functions of immediate staff team.
2. Learn the safety protocols that must be followed at all times for each task.
3. Be able to perform at least five essential job duties (list each task and the exact components of each task that must be completed in order to be considered a success).
4. Learn the systems and protocols for time and attendance.

## **PHASE 4**

### **RETAIN**

5. Participate in and complete the mandatory trainings (provide dates and times for the trainings and clear instructions on what to do if any training is cancelled or missed).

Developing ongoing and annual benchmarks after the first 90 days should be done with the employee and their input. These benchmarks should be reviewed monthly. Here are a few examples:

1. Decrease the time it takes to complete a specific task.
2. Increase the amount of tasks completed.
3. Learn how to do new tasks (provide names of people who will train as well as dates/times the trainings will take place).
4. Participate in at least one team project (provide details on how the employee can learn about the project options, what roles they could take on and who to communicate with).

Our research shows that, over time, a certain amount of “job slippage” occurs in all positions. Clear benchmarks and feedback loops can help keep workers on track with job goals and progress towards them. Managers should be reminded to review and update job coaching and other resources in the community and in the company.

### **Access Long-Term Supports**

Unexpected changes, such as illness, transportation, schedules, and staffing, can be disruptive to the worker with autism. These day to day challenges can be supported within the company by supervisors who gradually take on the relationship of guide as the job coach's role fades.

External supports may be relied upon for on-site visits, phone calls with employers, and contact with families.

Contact your local DOR/regional center for more long-term resources and referrals for long-term support strategies.

*"Our people with autism are included in all the retention practices we have for everyone else. In addition to that, there are built-in layers, kind of free partnerships with local agencies that help us out, like the Department of Rehabilitation and the regional center. So, they actually have more retention programs in place, layered into what we do. There might be a job coach, check-ins with a supervisor and job coach. We are also regularly reviewing accommodations and different things just to make sure our employees have everything they need to be successful."*

**Diane Foos**, Owner and General Manager, Dogtopia

## **PHASE 4**

### RETAIN

## **Celebrate Every Benchmark**

According to a 2016 Gallup workplace survey, employees were asked what types of recognition they've found most memorable. The top five were:

1. Public recognition or acknowledgment
2. Private recognition from a boss, peer, or customer
3. Receiving or obtaining a high level of achievement through evaluations or reviews
4. Promotion or increase in scope and responsibility
5. Monetary awards, pay increase, trips, etc.

As your worker with autism successfully meets a benchmark goal, that success might be celebrated with a written acknowledgement, certificate, or other private recognition between supervisor and worker.

In our TAP workplace research projects, workers with autism were given certificates of participation suitable for framing. They were a big hit.

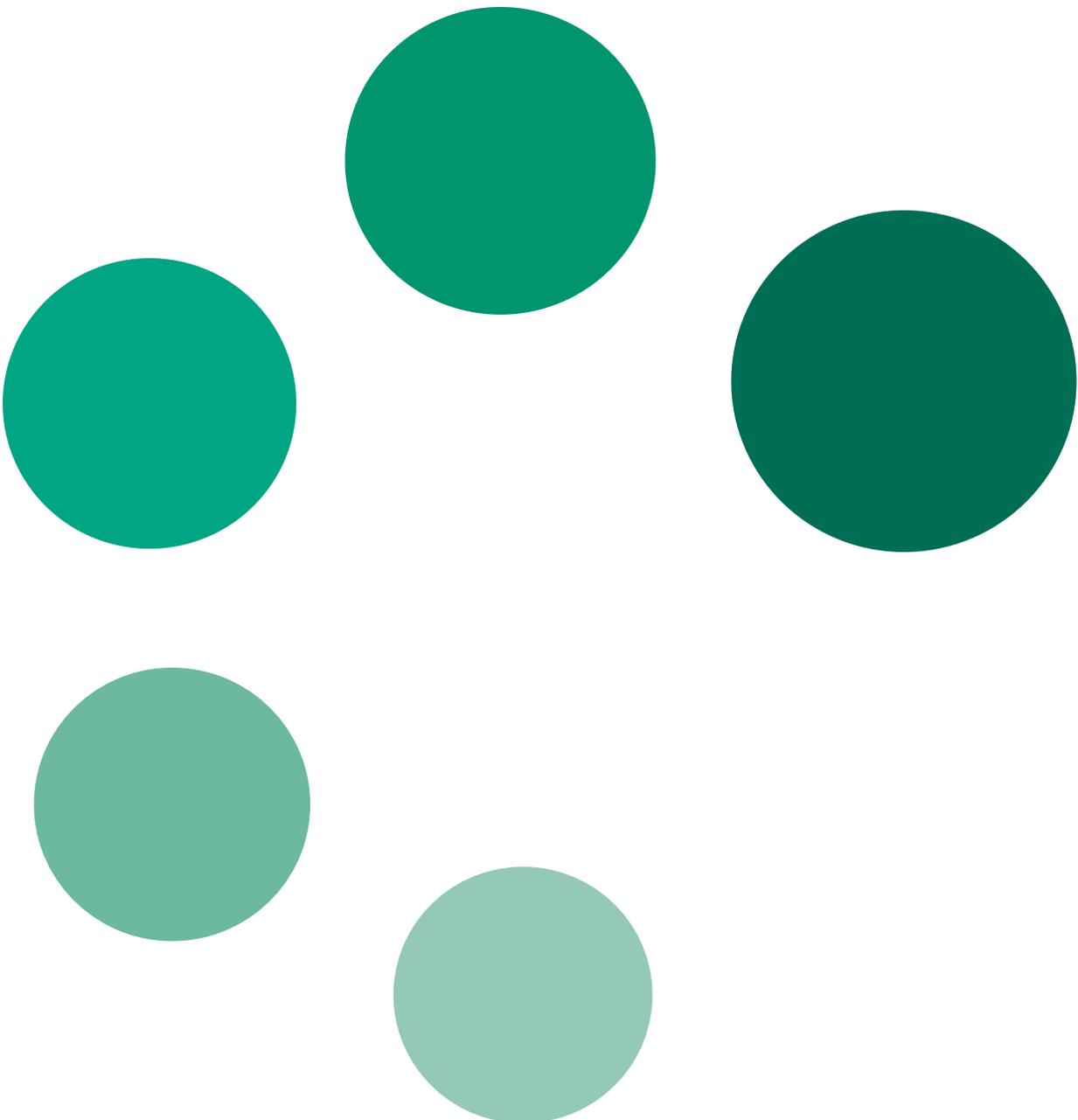
*"Take time with individuals to get to know them. Be respectful of their time to become comfortable. Companies have to have the willingness to work with the individual. The key is how we administer feedback."*

**Rebecca Beam**, President of United States Operations, auticon

## **Checklist**

- Establish an Employee Success Plan for employees with autism
- Create a calendar of SMART goals
- Access long-term supports
- Celebrate every benchmark

**View Module 4: Retain**





## PHASE 5 | ADJUST

### **Adjusting to New Workplace Realities of the Pandemic Era**

#### **Remote Working**

While employers are advised to periodically review and adjust hiring programs (see below), fast adjustments have been mandated by the current public health crisis with COVID-19's effect on all workplaces likely continuing far into the future.

Stay-at-home mandates have created a huge work-from-home culture for many workers, and remote working, while not new, is certainly becoming a new normal for many, including autistic workers. Some companies, such as SAP, Microsoft, Salesforce, and VMWare already have generous work from home policies, few are totally remote. The current pandemic makes working from home even more attractive for employees and employers alike, but most people, including autistic workers, do best with some connection to the workplace, even if it means coming in only one or two days a week.

*“Most of the research that we’ve seen on productivity and compensation over the years shows that we all need to have some kind of emotional connection to our work to be productive. That’s certainly true for autistic people as well. Part of that typically comes from a sense of comradery, from being part of a team and the larger efforts that keeps us connected. Staying in touch becomes critical for management. A manager may or may not have regular staff meetings or one-on-one meetings when they’re in the office, but that becomes really vital when teams are working remotely. Staff meetings are critical, even if they’re only 15 minutes every day, just to get everybody assembled and remind them all why they’re still working. Also, it’s important to meet with individual employees hopefully once a week for a few minutes just to check in with them and see how their progress is going.”*

**Jan Johnston-Tyler**, Founder and CEO, EvoLibre Consulting

#### **Adapt Best Practices To Review and Adjust Your Program**

Like the daily and weekly feedback loop between the new worker and supervisor, regular periodic review of the targeted autism hiring program is valuable to evaluate processes and goals.

The Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN) recently produced a valuable program to support a company's ability to measure success in four key ways:

- Name annual priorities
- Measure outcomes
- Refine processes
- Measure results

**PHASE 5**

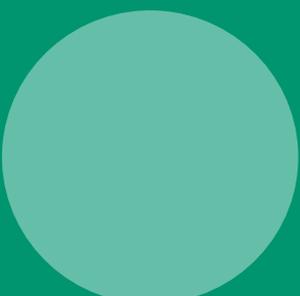
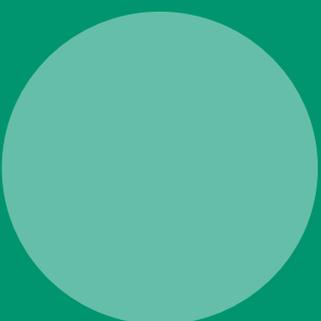
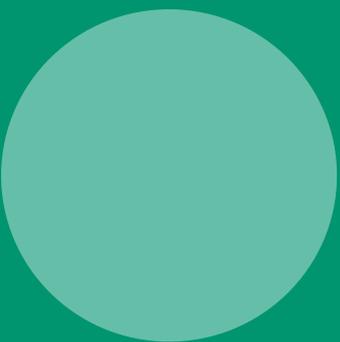
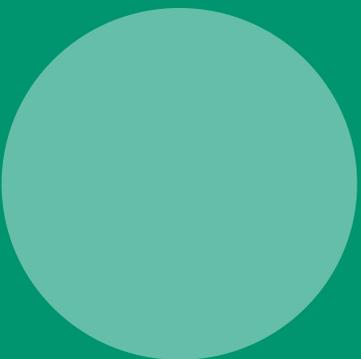
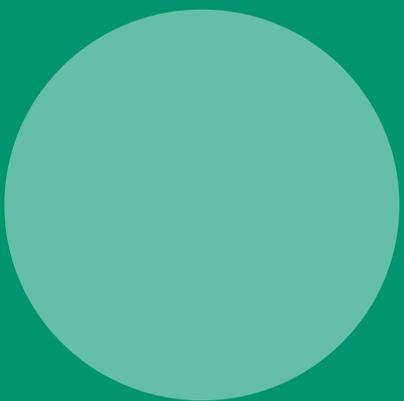
**ADJUST**

Autism @ Work Playbook points out additional questions to consider in your assessment reviews, including:

- What is the long-term impact of our program on our community?
- How do we measure that impact?
- What is the impact on our organization? How is it measured?
- What kind of impact does this program have on our customers?
- How does our autism program fit in with diversity and inclusion efforts?

Your company may not have the answers to these questions, but the discussions arising from them will help inform the choices to be made as your program develops.

**View Module 4: *Adjust***





## ABOUT ADULTS WITH AUTISM AND AUTISM EMPLOYMENT IN CALIFORNIA

### **Autism Employment Rates**

There have been several attempts to quantify high unemployment among young adults with autism. In 2013, The Journal of American Academy and Child and Adolescent Psychiatry estimated that 90% of young adults with autism were unemployed or underemployed. The report noted that, compared to other young adults with disabilities, people with autism are often unemployed until late in their twenties and have the lowest rates of employment at just 58%. Even when employed, a young adult with autism has an average pay of only \$8.00 an hour.

In early 2017, Drexel University published a “National Autism Indicators Report” based on a survey of 3520 adults with autism, 16 to 64 years of age. The survey only included adults who were using developmental disability services, so it skewed toward the more severely impacted. It reported that only 14% of this group held a job for pay in the community with the remainder either in an unpaid activity (54%) or in no work or day activities (27%).

The Drexel report projects roughly 728,000 youth with autism will enter adulthood in the decade 2018-2028. Many of these young people will be looking for employment.

There have been no recent published studies of autism employment and unemployment rates focused on adults in California. The most frequent estimate is that only around 30%-35% of adults with autism in California are in employment of more than 15 hours a week. This is taken in part from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimate of employment of a broader category used by BLS, “workers with disabilities.”

### **Autism Hiring and Employment During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic**

In April, 2020, Stanford Neurodiversity Project formed a Task Force to address the urgent issues arising during and after the pandemic for employers and workers with autism alike. Three workgroups are working in many areas including outreach, employer training, vocational training, workforce hiring funding, and legislative advocacy. Members of our TAP program for Breaking Barriers in the Workplace are part of this Task Force.

For more information, contact: [neurodiversityatwork@stanford.edu](mailto:neurodiversityatwork@stanford.edu)

### **Targeted Autism Employment Programs in California and Benefits They Are Reporting**

In response to the recognized high unemployment among adults with autism, a wide range of employment initiatives have been launched in the past few years by the state of California's Department of Rehabilitation, Department of Developmental Services, and Employment Development Department, and by local governments. Additionally,

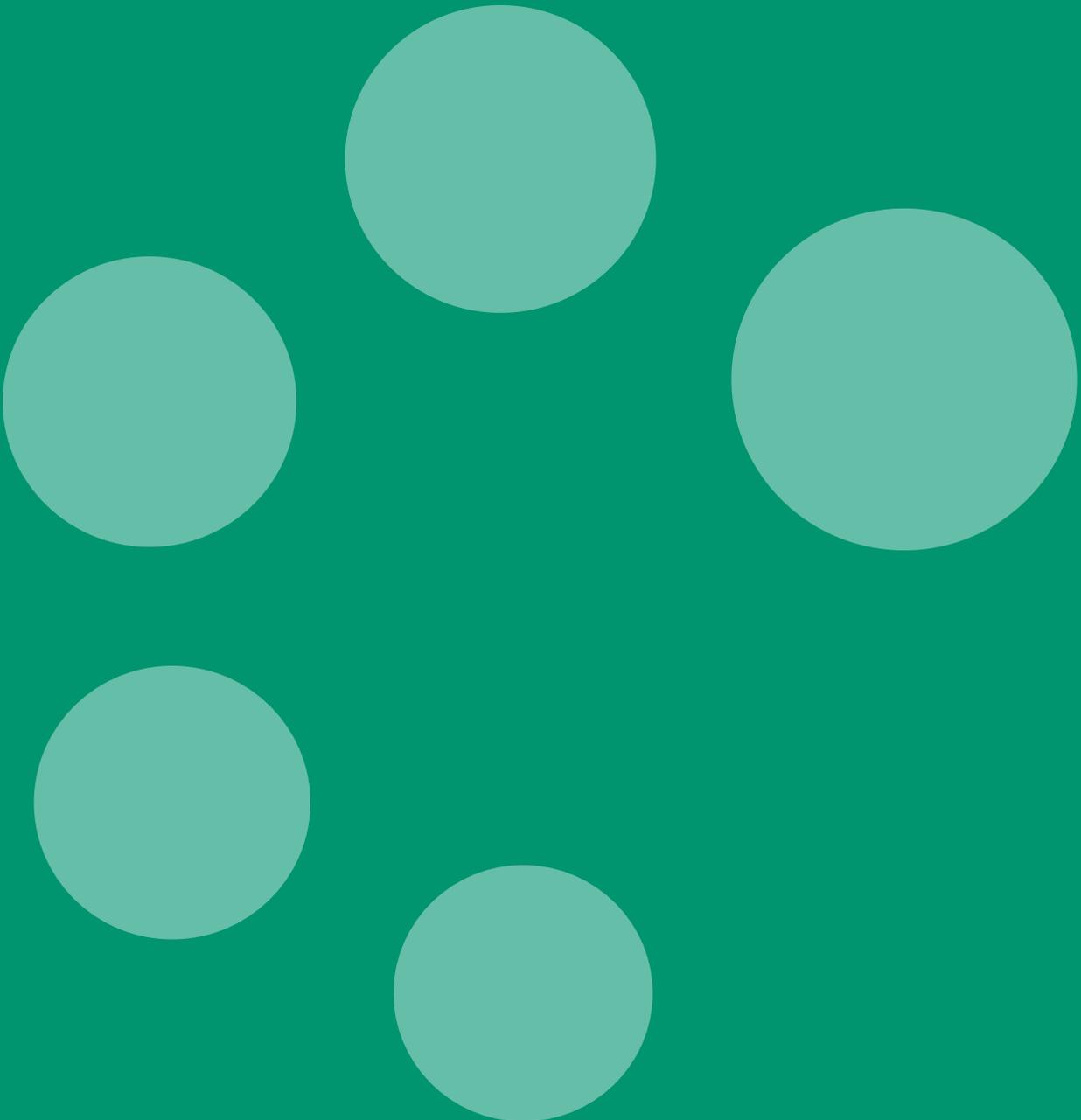
private companies have launched targeted autism employment programs that include targeted recruitment, screening, and retention services.

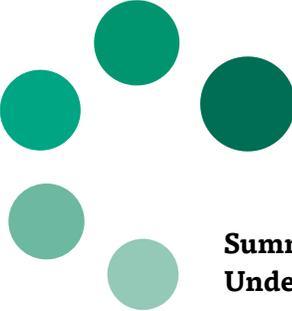
Among the larger private employers in California, companies spanning a range of sectors have initiated targeted autism employment efforts. A few of these large employers are SAP, Microsoft, Salesforce, CVS Pharmacies, EY Consulting, JPMorganChase, Stanford University, Cintas, MITRE Corporation, Deloitte, Chevron, and VMware. Additionally, other major California employers have discussed targeted autism hiring efforts, including high-profile employers Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Airbnb.

Smaller companies also actively hire workers with autism. Berkeley Bowl, the independent grocery, recently launched a company-wide targeted autism hiring program.

Autism-focused businesses such as Glorious Pies in Los Angeles give young adults with autism on-the-job work experiences in a supported yet professional and meaningful setting. Other autism-focused businesses in California include Exceptional Minds and Specialist Guild.

Without exception, the major California companies with autism employment initiatives express satisfaction with these initiatives. Several have formed an “Autism @ Work” association, drawing employers from throughout the country to an annual conference hosted at Microsoft’s headquarters. They also have worked with the University of Washington to produce a manual detailing best practices drawn from four of the employers: Microsoft, SAP, EY, and JPMorganChase.





## BREAKING BARRIERS

### Summary of Research, Interviews, and Pilot Jobs Program Undertaken by the TAP Team

The following research, interviews and pilot jobs program were undertaken by TAP members to gain a better understanding of what might be needed for employers to recruit and retain young adults with autism in California.

- Review of 12 employer manuals
- Surveys of over 50 young adults with autism who have had job experience
- Interviews with 25 young adults with autism who have had jobs
- Surveys of 15 parents of young adults with autism who have had jobs
- Surveys and conversations with employers who have had employees with autism
- Interviews with employers who have had employees with autism
- Conversations with California agencies, employment agencies, job counselors, and job coaches
- Research via manuals, articles, neurodiversity research programs, and labor trends
- A 3-week employment program for 14 workers with autism in the local community
- Videotape and audio recordings of all interviews and all job sites

*“Somewhere out there, there might be a two-year-old who is just being diagnosed with autism or learning differences, and through what we are doing we’re creating a better and happier future for them 16, 18, or 20 years down the line.”*

**Caroline Eggert**, Meristem graduate student and TAP co-chair

### Takeaways By the TAP Team From the Surveys and Interviews

#### Employers

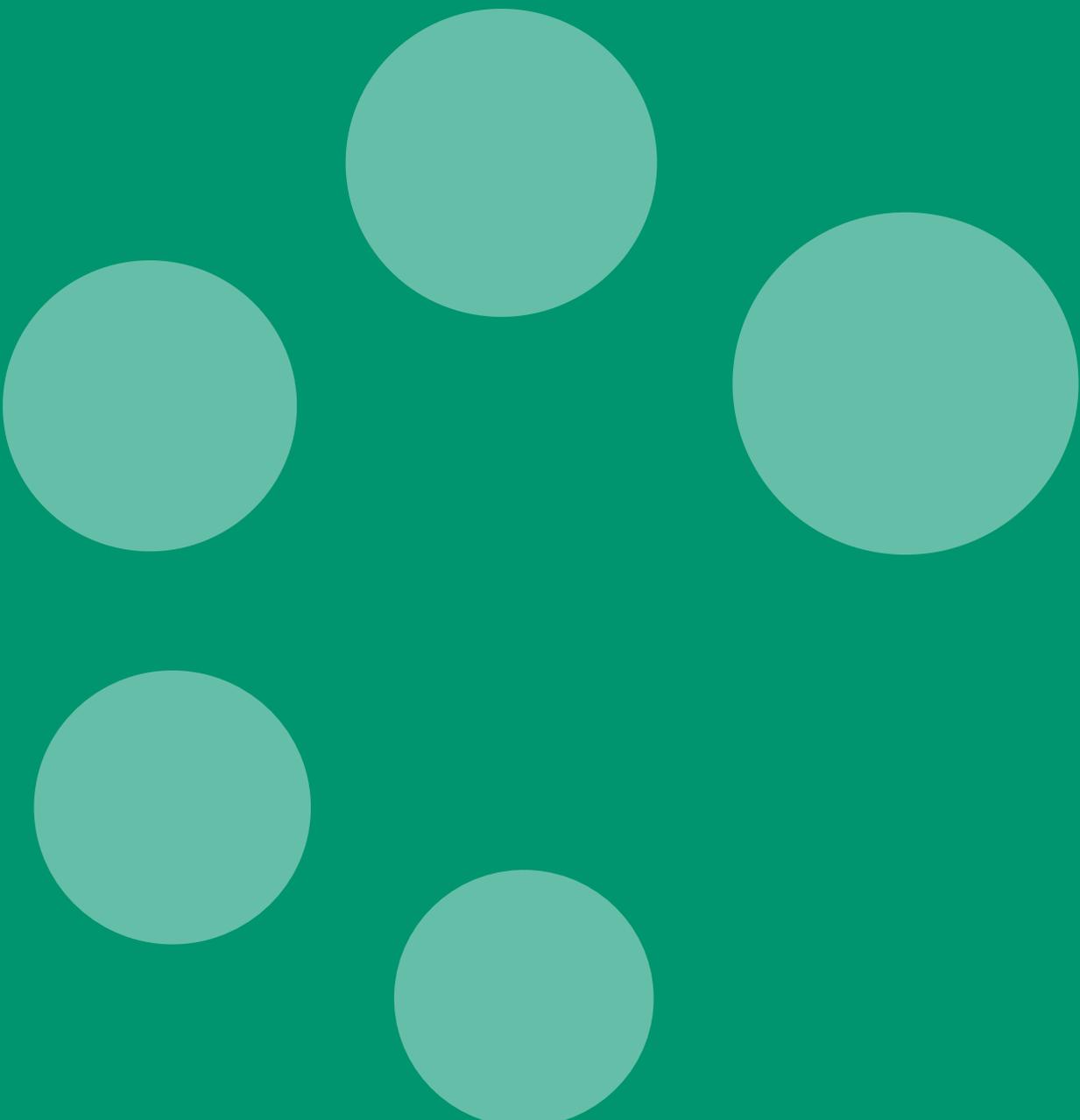
In their surveys, employers made the following points about the impacts of their targeted autism employment efforts:

- Boost in morale among their employees
- How well the workers with autism did in the tasks assigned, better, in some cases than many of their neuro-typical new hires
- Supervising staff improved their overall skills by managing the new challenges of working with adults with autism

- Presence of job coaches reduced the anxiety and strain of managing the new workers with autism.
- Job coaches benefitted the employer as much or even more than the workers with autism.
- Progressive training techniques of oral - visual - gestural/kinesthetic were valuable for all workers and supervisors, not only for those with autism
- Extended trainings and on-boarding processes allowed time to assess the likelihood of a “good match” of skills and interests of the prospective employee with the requirements of the job.

### **Workers**

- Said anxiety on the job was the #1 cause of difficulties (62%), followed by communications with supervisors and co-workers (46%) and difficulties managing work/life balance (45%)
- Were motivated by being paid a competitive hourly rate of \$15/hour
- Said transportation to and from job sites was challenging
- Were on time (+/- 5 minutes) to their shifts, even with challenges in transportation
- Identified that whether or not to disclose their autism in the hiring process was an issue for many
- Reported that when they did disclose, often their requests for accommodations were ignored
- Were often not aware of the rights granted by such disclosure. Others expressed anxiety that disclosing would jeopardize their employment prospects. Some were not aware of the disclosure option and what it signified
- Asking for accommodations was problematic for many. Some workers didn't know how to begin the conversation, or even if they needed any accommodations
- Found that visual and gestural prompts and supports were often absent or inadequate on most of the job sites
- Said that job announcements and job descriptions asked for qualities that discouraged or disqualified them from applying for the open position: for example, “self-starter”, “team player”, “problem solver”
- Felt that standard job applications did not ask an important communication query: “How do you best receive and send communications with us?”





## CONCLUSION

In January, 2019, Meristem advocates invited twelve young adult students, all with autism, to form a leadership group to practice self-advocacy and promote autism in the workplace. During the nearly year-long course of developing this manual, we met and spoke with many wonderful people about their experiences as workers and employers of those with autism. We listened for common themes to support success, many of which we have laid out here, in a step-by-step approach.

We hope you find this manual easy to use, inspiring, and helpful. Further, we invite you to provide us with feedback on the manual itself as well as your experience in hiring people with autism.

Thank you for joining TAP–Breaking Barriers in the Workplace. We hope this is the beginning of a long partnership.

## Thank you to our community partners, collaborators, helpers, and advisors:

**California Workforce Development Board  
Meristem**

**Sacramento Employment and Training Agency  
California Workforce Association**

**AASCEND**

**Fair Oaks Rotary Club**

**Fair Oaks Chamber of Commerce**

**Orangevale-Fair Oaks Food Bank**

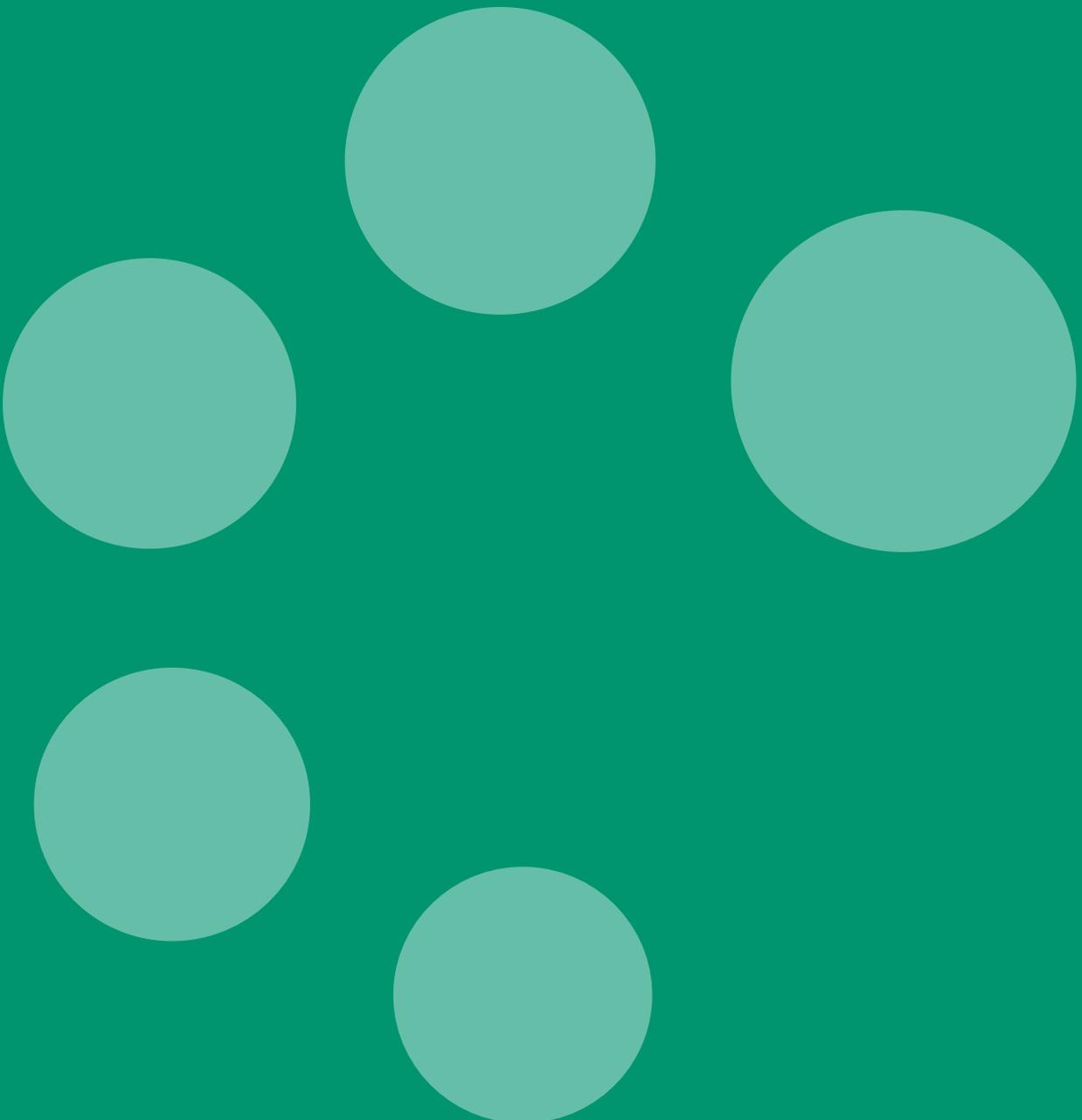
**Fair Oaks Recreation and Parks District**

**Meristem Rotaract Club**

Mike Aho, Fair Oaks Recreation and Parks District	Dave Gaines, Sacramento Autism and Special Needs Alliance	Anthony Mullins
Brandon Anderson, CWA	Jacob Giorgi, House to Home Moving Company	Michelle O'Camb, SETA
Valerie Baadh, Meristem	Kate Gonzales, Capital Public Radio	Susan Orleans, Autism Works Now
Rebecca Beam, President of United States Operations, auticon	David Greva	Keegan Osterlund
Jason Berlin	Matt Harmetz, Meristem	Paloma Palomares, Eskaton
Michael Bernick	Megan Hendrickson	John Parrilli
Will Bernick	Brett Hess	Shannon Penrod, Autism Live!
Andrew Bixler	Christa Holmans, Austin Alliance Group	Antonio Perricone
Camilla Bixler	Kristi Johnson	Harper Rathman
Maddie Bond	Jan Johnston-Tyler, EvoLibre	Ivan Rosenberg, Uniquely Abled
Michael Boyd	Jeri Kendle, Dogtopia Foundation	Mickey Rowe
Caroline Breeding	Edmund Knighton, Meristem	Steve Ruder, Northern California Business Advisory Council
Nick Broad, Fair Oaks Rotary Club	Diane Krehbiel, DKKD Staffing	Sean Russell
Jennifer Brooks	Kristin Kucia, Exceptional Minds	Rex Schiavo
Cornelius Brown, Meristem	Harrison Lane	Shannon Shields, Meristem
Marc Cawdrey, Saint John's Program for Real Change	Joanne Lara, Autism Works Now	Shea Smith, Meristem
Kathy Coss, Fair Oaks Recreation and Parks District	Joel Lamica, Meristem	Eric Steward, Meristem
Caleb Crawford	Adam Laughter	Lauren Sweet
Darlene Cullivan, Eskaton Foundation	Philip Leung, SMUD	Zac Task
Ryan Davis	Ben Lewis	Maurice Thomas, Meristem Cafe
Gabrielle DeAnda	Wyatt Lewis	Midhun Tripuraneni
Anne Duncan	Alex Logan	Hannah Tucker
Caroline Eggert	Ariana Marez	Nicolaus Valenzela
Michelle Edmondson, Eskaton	Brandon Mark	Sean Ventura, Fair Oaks Recreation and Parks District
Brody Espinoza	Courtney Marx, Plates Café and Catering	John Walker
Diane Foos, Dogtopia	Shannon McElroy	Canyon Williams
Mackenzie Foy	Matthew McIntyre	Yla Williams
Lawrence Fung, Stanford University Neurodiversity at Work Project	Paco Melgar	Jackson Willoughby
Stephen Gaiber	Meristem Board of Directors	Kassidy Wilson
	Alex Meyers	Keith Wright, Orangevale-Fair Oaks Food Bank
	Ian Moura	

A special thank you to Assembly member Blanca Rubio and the funding provided by the California State Legislature through the Breaking Barriers in Employment for Adults with Autism Initiative.

And thanks to all the young adults with autism who participated in workshops, surveys, internships, interviews, and Leadership Labs.





## RESOURCES

California employers can access a wide range of job coaching and supportive services for adults with autism at no cost. Further, they can access no-cost assistance in recruiting and screening adults with autism.

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### Government Agencies

**California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR):** Many adults with autism will be existing clients of DOR. As such, they will be entitled to receive job coaching and supportive services (i.e. transportation assistance, assistance in purchasing equipment) as needed. Employers also can contact DOR as they seek to identify qualified adults with autism to hire, and DOR will help recruit and screen candidates. [www.dor.ca.gov](http://www.dor.ca.gov)

**California Department of Developmental Services (DDS)/regional centers:** Some adults with autism in California will also be clients of the DDS/regional center system in California. DDS and DOR are separate departments. Some adults with autism will be clients of DDS/regional centers but not DOR, and vice versa. DDS/Regional Centers also provide worker recruitment and referral, as well as job coaching and supportive services. [www.dds.ca.gov](http://www.dds.ca.gov)

**listing of DDS regional centers:** [www.dds.ca.gov/rc/listings](http://www.dds.ca.gov/rc/listings)  
**map of DDS Regional Center districts:** [www.dds.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/RC\\_DCMAP2\\_20190322.pdf](http://www.dds.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/RC_DCMAP2_20190322.pdf)

**California Employment Development Department (EDD)/America's Job Centers of California:** The state EDD provides job recruitment and screening for all California workers, free of cost to employers, but also has specific programs for workers with disabilities. Recruitment and screening is also done free of charge by America's Job Centers of California, the network of job placement centers throughout the state funded by the federal government and include staff from EDD and other agencies. [www.edd.ca.gov/jobs](http://www.edd.ca.gov/jobs)

**Social Security Administration:** [www.ssa.gov/redbook](http://www.ssa.gov/redbook)

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### Workforce Intermediaries Focused on Adults with Autism

Beyond the government agencies, a structure of workforce intermediaries has grown in California that aim to recruit and support adults with autism. Below is a cross-section of these workforce intermediaries in the Bay Area, indicating their reach and breadth across sectors and occupations. These workforce intermediaries, and many others, are seeking out employers to partner with.

**AASCEND:** [www.aascend.org](http://www.aascend.org)

**Adecco:** [www.adecousa.com](http://www.adecousa.com)

**Autism @ Work:** [www.disabilityin.org](http://www.disabilityin.org)

**Autism Society:** [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org)

**Autism Society of California:** [www.autismsocietyca.org/ca-affiliates.html](http://www.autismsocietyca.org/ca-affiliates.html)

**Child Mind Institute:** [www.childmind.org](http://www.childmind.org)

**Neurodiversity Pathways:** Based in the Silicon Valley, this organization recruits and places adults with autism and other neurodiverse conditions in jobs, particularly tech positions in the Silicon Valley.

[www.ndpathways.org](http://www.ndpathways.org)

**Toolworks:** Based in San Francisco, this organization recruits, places, and supports adults with disabilities in a range of jobs, both tech and non-tech, at all pay levels.

[www.toolworks.org](http://www.toolworks.org)

**The Arc of San Francisco/The Arc of the East Bay:** The Arc programs throughout the Bay Area counties place workers with disabilities in a range of jobs, both tech and non-tech, at all pay levels.

[www.thearcsf.org](http://www.thearcsf.org)

**Best Buddies:** Originally, a social inclusion group for adults with disabilities this organization has expanded into employment services throughout the Bay Area to include jobs at all pay and education levels for adults with autism.

[www.bestbuddies.org](http://www.bestbuddies.org)

**East Bay Innovations:** Based in the East Bay, this organization recruits, places and supports adults with autism in a range of jobs.

[www.eastbayinnovations.org](http://www.eastbayinnovations.org)

**EvoLibri:** Based in Santa Clara, this organization recruits, places and supports adults with autism in a range of jobs, with a focus on the tech sector.

[www.evolibri.com](http://www.evolibri.com)

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### **Job Boards Where Adults with Autism in California Post Resumes**

Adults with autism utilize the same job boards other workers turn to in their job searches (i.e Indeed.com; LinkedIn, Monster.com). There also are job boards being established to focus on adults with autism. These three are among the first:

**Hire Autism:** [www.hireautism.org](http://www.hireautism.org)

**DKKD Staffing:** [www.dkkdstaffing.com](http://www.dkkdstaffing.com)

**Stanford Neurodiverse Candidate Registry:**

[www.med.stanford.edu/neurodiversity/NaW/ND-employee-home/sncr](http://www.med.stanford.edu/neurodiversity/NaW/ND-employee-home/sncr)

**Spectrum Careers:** [www.thespectrumcareers.com](http://www.thespectrumcareers.com)

**Spectrum Employment Community, by AASCEND on LinkedIn:**

[www.linkedin.com/groups/5086843/](http://www.linkedin.com/groups/5086843/)

**California Regional Centers (Sacramento County/Los Angeles County)  
Paid Internship Program<sup>1</sup> Contact List**

**Alta California Regional Center (ACRC):** [www.altaregional.org](http://www.altaregional.org)

2241 Harvard Street  
Suite 100  
Sacramento, CA 95815  
(916) 978-6400

**PIP Link:** Individual Service Coordinators

**Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center (ELARC):** [www.elarc.org](http://www.elarc.org)

Main Office:  
1000 S. Fremont Avenue  
Alhambra CA 91802  
(626) 299-4700

Whittier Office:  
13215 Penn St., Suite 410  
Whittier, CA 90602  
(562) 698-1046

**PIP Link:** [www.elarc.org/home/showdocument?id=11027](http://www.elarc.org/home/showdocument?id=11027)

**PIP Contact:** George M. de la Loza, Employment Specialist (626) 299-4627

Email: [gdelaloza@elarc.org](mailto:gdelaloza@elarc.org)

**Harbor Regional Center (HRC):** [www.harborrc.org](http://www.harborrc.org)

Main Office:  
21231 Hawthorne Blvd.  
Torrance, CA 90503  
(310) 540-1711

Long Beach Office:  
1155 E. San Antonio Drive  
Long Beach, CA 90807  
Suite A – Reception

**PIP Link:** Individual Service Coordinators

**Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center (FDLRC):** [www.lanterman.org](http://www.lanterman.org)

FVO Solutions, Inc.  
3303 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 700  
Los Angeles, CA 90010  
(213) 252-5600

**PIP Link:** [www.lanterman.org/work-program#.XoRDH5NKhp](http://www.lanterman.org/work-program#.XoRDH5NKhp)

**PIP Contact:** Individual Service Coordinators

<sup>1</sup>California budgets \$29 million annually in PIP and CIE payments: [www.arcenet.org/docs/building-for-tomorrow.pdf](http://www.arcenet.org/docs/building-for-tomorrow.pdf)

**North Los Angeles Regional Center (NLARC):** [www.nlacrc.org](http://www.nlacrc.org)

Main Office:

15400 Sherman Way, Suite 170  
Van Nuys, CA 91406  
(818) 778-1900

Santa Clarita Valley Office:

23560 Magic Mountain Parkway, Suite 150  
Santa Clarita, CA 91355  
(661) 775-8450

Antelope Valley Office:

43210 Gingham Avenue, Suite 6  
Lancaster, CA 95353  
(661) 945-6761

**PIP Link:** [www.nlacrc.org/home/showdocument?id=5881](http://www.nlacrc.org/home/showdocument?id=5881)

**PIP Contact:** Employment Specialist Danny Castanon, Email: [dcastanon@nlacrc.org](mailto:dcastanon@nlacrc.org)  
or (818) 756-5029

**South Central Los Angeles Regional Center for Developmental Disabilities, Inc. (SCLARC):** [www.sclarc.org](http://www.sclarc.org)

2500 S. Western Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90018  
(213) 744-7000

**PIP Link:** [www.desiserve.org/what-we-do/pip/](http://www.desiserve.org/what-we-do/pip/) — Designated Exceptional Services for Independence (D.E.S.I.) an agency, funded through SCLARC, connects individuals with developmental disabilities and employers

**PIP Contact:** Individual Service Coordinators

**San Gabriel/Pomona Regional Center (SGPRC):** [www.sgprc.org](http://www.sgprc.org)

761 Corporate Center Drive  
Pomona, CA 91768  
(909) 620-7722  
(800) 822-7504

**PIP Link:** [www.sgprc.org/home/showdocument?id=1895](http://www.sgprc.org/home/showdocument?id=1895)

**PIP Contact:** Linh Lee, (909)706.3579 or [llee@sgprc.org](mailto:llee@sgprc.org)

**Westside Regional Center (WRC):** [www.westsiderc.org](http://www.westsiderc.org)

5901 Green Valley Circle, Ste 320  
Culver City, CA 90230-6949  
(310) 258-4000

**PIP Link:** [www.westsiderc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Got-Internship-The-No-Cost-to-Employers.pdf](http://www.westsiderc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Got-Internship-The-No-Cost-to-Employers.pdf)

**PIP Contact:** Westside Regional Center Employment Specialist (310) 258-4000

## **Additional Resources**

**Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN):** [www.autisticadvocacy.org](http://www.autisticadvocacy.org)

**California Work Opportunity Tax Credit:** [edd.ca.gov/Jobs and Training/Work Opportunity Tax Credit.htm](http://edd.ca.gov/Jobs_and_Training/Work_Opportunity_Tax_Credit.htm)

**CalJOBS:** [www.caljobs.ca.gov](http://www.caljobs.ca.gov)

**Job Accommodation Network:** [www.askjan.org](http://www.askjan.org)

**Universal Design in the Office Makes Business Sense:** [www.abilities.com/community/universal-design-office.html](http://www.abilities.com/community/universal-design-office.html)

**Michael Bernick on California employment laws:** *Module 3—Onboard, 1:34 - 2:15*

**The Meristem Method:** *Module 3—Onboard, 15:55 - 18:40*

**Demonstration of Instructional Sequencing:** *Module 3—Onboard, 18:41 - 20:19*

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## **Sample Documents and Templates**

*The links below provide a direct download for the sample documents and templates. These sample documents and templates are also available in the Supplements section of the Manual.*

**Diversity and Inclusion Survey (template):** [tapautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Sample-Staff-Autism-Diversity-and-Inclusion-Survey.docx](http://tapautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Sample-Staff-Autism-Diversity-and-Inclusion-Survey.docx)

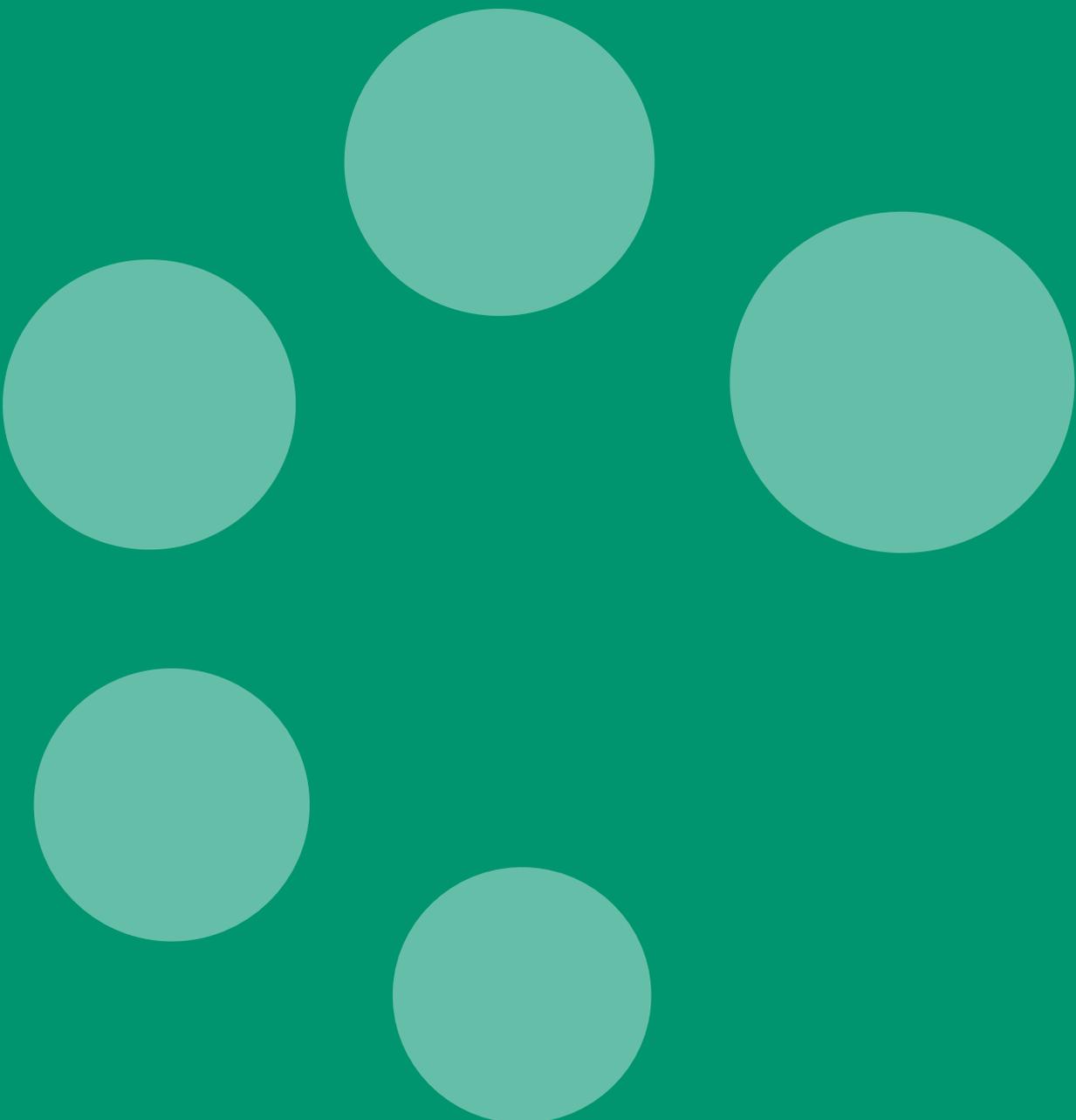
**Organizational Success Plan (template):** [tapautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/TAP-Organizational-Success-Plan-Template.xlsx](http://tapautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/TAP-Organizational-Success-Plan-Template.xlsx)

**Organizational Success Plan (with sample milestones):** [tapautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/TAP-Organizational-Success-Plan-Template-with-Milestones.xlsx](http://tapautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/TAP-Organizational-Success-Plan-Template-with-Milestones.xlsx)

**Job Announcement—TAP Trainer (sample):** [tapautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Sample-Job-Announcement.docx](http://tapautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Sample-Job-Announcement.docx)

**Job Offer Letter/Email (sample):** [tapautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Sample-Hire-Letter.docx](http://tapautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Sample-Hire-Letter.docx)

**Employee Success Plan (sample):** [tapautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/TAP-Employee-Success-Plan-Template.docx](http://tapautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/TAP-Employee-Success-Plan-Template.docx)





## APPENDIX

- **Survey Data**
  - **Testimonials**
  - **Select Bibliography**
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### Survey Data

#### From Young Adults with Autism

- 45% began looking for a job at age 16/17
- 33% have applied for 17+ job openings
- 90% of interviews were held face to face
- 44% had a follow up interview
- 76% of respondents had job offers without help from job developers
- 87% accepted a position they were offered
- 20% employed after one year

Disclosing one's autism in the workplace is a controversial subject. Our research reports that 34% never disclosed their autism, while some disclosed on the job application (16%), during the interview (11%), and after hiring (21%).

Disclosing one's autism enables reasonable accommodations to be made. 34% of respondents reported that the accommodations offered were effective more than half the time while 46% said they didn't need accommodations or that they were not offered.

Respondents reported that anxiety was their #1 challenge on the job (62%), followed by communications with supervisors (46%), communications with co-workers (46%), and maintaining work/life balance (46%).

They described three key effects of their autism in the workplace: anxiety (62%), communications (54%), and sensory sensitivity (46%).

#### From Summer Interns

- 100% felt internship coordinators were extremely (33%) or very (67%) important to their success
- 67% felt job coaches were somewhat important; 33% not so important
- 100% reported they were given the accommodations needed

33% struggled with work/life balance (getting up early)

67% felt that they found a type of job they were interested in doing as a result of the internship

100% said they would recommend this program to others

### **From California Employers**

#### **Keys to success from programs of 1-5 years:**

- On boarding process 1-4 weeks
- Lots of communications, multiple times daily
- Clarity of communications
- Accommodations
- Partnering with local agencies
- Mentor for each hire
- Use of expert job coaches to help with training

#### **Challenges from programs of 1-5 years:**

- Communications Customer Interaction
- Family/personal life boundaries
- Not taking things personally
- Educating managers to overcome stereotypes of people with disabilities
- Transportation
- Keeping commitments
- Disagreements with coworkers
- Learning work skills OTJ

### **Observations by the TAP Team**

#### **Regarding Employers:**

In the employer surveys, employers made the following points about the impacts of their targeted autism employment efforts:

- Boost in morale among their employees.
- How well the workers with autism did in the tasks assigned, better than many of their neuro-typical new hires.
- Supervising staff improved their overall skills by managing the new challenges of working with adults with autism.
- Presence of job coaches reduced the anxiety and strain of managing the new workers with autism.
- Onboard coaches benefitted the employer as much or even more than the workers with autism.

- Progressive training techniques of oral - visual - gestural/kinesthetic were valuable for all workers and supervisors, not only for those with autism.
- Extended trainings and on-boarding processes allowed time to assess the likelihood of a “good match” of skills and interests of the prospective employee with the requirements of the job.

**Regarding Workers:**

- Said anxiety on the job was the #1 cause of difficulties (62%), followed by communications with supervisors and co-workers (46%) and difficulties managing work/life balance (45%).
- Were motivated by being paid a competitive hourly rate of \$15/hour.
- Said transportation to and from job sites was challenging.
- Were on time (+/- 5 minutes) to their shifts, even with challenges in transportation.
- Identified that whether or not to disclose their autism in the hiring process was an issue for many.
- Reported that when they did disclose, often their requests for accommodations were ignored.
- Were often not aware of the rights granted by such disclosure; others expressed anxiety that disclosing would jeopardize their hire; and some were not at all aware of the disclosure option and what it signified.
- Asking for accommodations was similarly problematic for many. Some workers didn’t know how to begin the conversation, or even if they needed any.
- Found that visual and gestural prompts and supports were often absent or inadequate on most of the job sites.
- Said that job announcements and job descriptions asked for qualities that discouraged or disqualified them from applying for the open position: for example, “self-starter”, “team player”, “problem solver”.
- Felt that standard job applications did not ask an important communication query: “How do you best receive and send communications with us?”

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## Testimonials

### From California Employers

*“What surprised me was that, with the workers with autism, I didn’t have to modify the training, and I didn’t have to make accommodations. Once they were shown, they were very quick to learn but they did need to have that person go and physically show what the expectation was.”*

*“At the cafe, one of the servers put in an incorrect order, and the worker [with autism] was able to catch it and we were able to fix it ensuring that the customer got their food promptly and correctly. It was a great experience for me.”*

*“Having workers with autism in a 3-week internship opened my manager’s eyes as well as mine as to integrating people that are special needs into our program. There’s no reason to not.”*

*“What was very beneficial in the training process was to see the job coaches giving or explaining instructions in several different ways. They would verbally say what the directions were, then they would physically show it, then work side-by-side to actually execute it. So there were three different ways it was presented.”*

*“My overall impression of TAP’s program is that it should be instituted in businesses all across. Every single thing that occurred here, every interaction brought to light just how amazing it can be when you come together.”*

**Courtney Marx**, Kitchen Manager at Plates Cafe, Sacramento

*“These techniques are good for all the workers, not just those with autism.”*

**Matt**, Fair Oaks Parks Supervisor

*“Take time with the individuals to get to know them”*

*“Be respectful of their time to become comfortable.”*

*“Companies have to have the willingness to work with the individual.”*

*“The key is how we administer feedback.”*

*“I chose this field with autism because I truly believe that everybody should have the opportunity to use their talents and skills in meaningful employment and be given the opportunity to have that.”*

*[Our workers...] “have been in a career for awhile, had a hard time getting a job, keeping a job, or have just grown exhausted by being in mainstream environments without any supports. So we provide those supports, and then we find them a role within our company working for us as our employee.”*

*“500,000 teens with autism will become adults in the next 10 years. And where are they going to work? And most are unemployed or underemployed. We know these statistics. I’ve heard 90%, I hear 80%, I hear 70... It doesn’t matter. The percentage is incredibly high. And so we have to fix it. And I think that’s super compelling that 77% of those who were surveyed, who were unemployed, said they want to work. And many of the individuals that we speak with, they don’t want to be on social services. They don’t want to rely on that income. They want to have their own, independent income and they want to live independent lives. And when you speak with parents, it’s the same thing. All they want for their children is independence.”*

*“Have a compassionate workplace. Make the small changes, meaningful changes, that will help support people on the spectrum in your workplace. And I would argue that it’s going to help everybody.”*

*“Job coaches are good for more emotional support and guidance, but peer coaches are better because they can understand one another.”*

*“Our job coaches for individuals that are on site, they’re there for the individual, but let me tell you who they’re really there for. The manager, the employer.”*

*“Educate them, educate that workplace, do lunch and learns, teach them how to work with individuals on the autism spectrum and then make sure they’re following the accommodations that were agreed upon up front. So that’s important too, just making sure that the accommodations are being met.”*

**Rebecca Beam**, President of United States Operations, auticon

*“What surprised me in starting our autism hiring program was that the process is a lot easier than it seems to be. I didn’t have the knowledge at first but the available free services from community agencies made it possible.”*

*“Our autism hiring program at SMUD started with one person, and, to be honest with you, it took awhile, probably over a year for us to warm up to the idea. One of the local agencies asked us if we would use an intern, and from then, it all started.”*

*“The most important thing is just to make sure we find the right match, the right position for each candidate. And if we tweak the interview or change the format up a little bit, that’s perfectly fine for us.”*

*“One of the first things a hiring manager might say [about hiring a worker with autism] is, ‘I don’t have the time to bring on somebody.’ So, I’ll explain the program, how the job coaches work to come and help with the training. The manager probably spends about an hour with the coach, really a very little time having to train them, so other than just some time here and there answering some questions, it’s not that much of a commitment.”*

*“I started asking hiring managers, ‘What are those responsibilities that you just don’t have time to do?’ or, ‘What are those things that you put to the side year after year, and it piles up, and you never have time to complete it?’ That’s when the program began*

*making progress. I brought workers with autism in on a part-time basis, and after proving themselves and gaining confidence they would go into more hours. Most of our staff now work full-time, at least the ones that want to work those hours."*

*"An obstacle hiring managers have to get around is our own fears of working with people with disabilities, of not knowing what it's like. We provide awareness training for that department or unit before the new hire starts so we can answer all their questions. We make sure everyone feels very comfortable with the process and gets to know that one individual better even before they start. That has worked very well for us."*

*"The bottom line is that the employees have to prove themselves. At the end of the day, if they're not working hard, it's going to be a hard sell for me. By the employees proving that they work hard, that they deserve to be there, they really do the selling [to the hiring managers] for me. They really do the selling of the program, and that's why we're so successful. It's because every single one of these employees are top notch."*

*"We have a 100% retention rate. We hired 8 young adults with autism through our program, and all of them are still working for us, some up to five years."*

**Philip Leung**, Disabilities and Inclusion Officer at SMUD,  
Sacramento Municipal Utilities District

*"I was quite impressed by the workers' demeanor and their approach. They were just wonderful."*

*"They were very teachable. They fit in quite well and made sure the seniors were comfortable."*

*"What I learned from this project is that individuals with autism can develop into some really wonderful people, and that there are agencies out there to help them with their development and that care."*

*"I have three young grandchildren on the spectrum and never really had an opportunity to see young adults from the autistic spectrum develop. I just wish my daughter and my son could see what the possibility is, what potential that they can reach with the aid of folks like you that have programs and folks like us that'll give them a chance to come in and grow. So it is a, it's a positive, hopeful, happy thing and just makes me feel good that my grandkids can reach a potential where they can be introduced to mainstream."*

**Joseph Mark**, Fair Oaks Recreation and Parks District,  
Senior Activities Program Manager

*"We're all different. We're not focusing on what they can't do, but what they can do, which I think is just amazing and because they can do just as much as my other employees can. "*

*"The only difference I see is reassurance, reassuring the workers with autism that they are doing a good job, reassuring that they're doing what they should be doing."*

*“We could have used more time for training instead of putting them right there into the task.”*

**Paloma Palomares**, Activities Director,  
Eskaton Village Gold River, CA

### **From California Young Adult Workers with Autism**

*“We need you to have understanding. There needs to be a new way of thinking. There has to be a compromise. Businesses should be more open-minded about professional appearance and demeanor, dress code, etc. Companies need to base positions on a person’s strengths. Jobs need to be designed dependent on an individual’s scope of ability.”*

**Dave Gaines**, Sacramento Autism and Special Needs Alliance

*“I never disclose my autism. I don’t believe in disclosure. Autism has nothing to do with my terminations.”*

**Christopher C**

*“I always disclose my autism because it would be dishonest to withhold that. I disclose during the hiring process but employers have not acknowledged that disclosure or asked about needed accommodations.”*

**Michael M**, San Francisco AASCEND member

*“Instead of trying to change people to fit job descriptions, change the job descriptions to fit the people. Employees without autism will benefit from this too.”*

*“What we do need is flexibility. We need flexibility in all aspects of the employment process, from job interviews to work hours and work spaces to job descriptions.”*

**Jennifer Brooks**, San Francisco AASCEND member

*“Some of the accommodations I’ve had, well if I could have requested accommodations, which are no multitasking, please let me finish one thing before telling me another and don’t talk all the time, help me prioritize, write down instructions and be specific.”*

*“Since I’m on the autism spectrum, I’m typically best with one thing at a time and once when I was working at Gold’s Gym, I did one thing then and they were interrupting it and it became a problem because I wanted to finish it. Both of us got upset.”*

**Jerry B**, San Francisco AASCEND member

*“Put the worker with autism where they are most strong. All individuals with autism have strong skill sets along with areas where they can be very weak. Try your best to put the fast thinker and typist but less social individual on the computer and the polar opposite employee in customer service.”*

*“Have awareness training. Educate employees and managers on what it means to work with an individual with autism and provide opportunities for them to ask questions. If you’re not qualified to do this, ask someone who is.” - Harper Rathman, TAP Leader and young adult with autism”*

*“Create a quiet space that anyone can use. It’s a perfect place to go if any staff member is feeling anxious.”*

*“Know you may have to repeat yourself sometimes, and be prepared for questions and any concerns.”*

**Harper Rathman**, TAP Peer Mentor

*“If a dispute arises involving an employee with autism it should be handled like any other dispute, with the understanding that the employee may not know all the unwritten rules they are expected to follow. Accommodate this but do not excuse bad behavior.”*

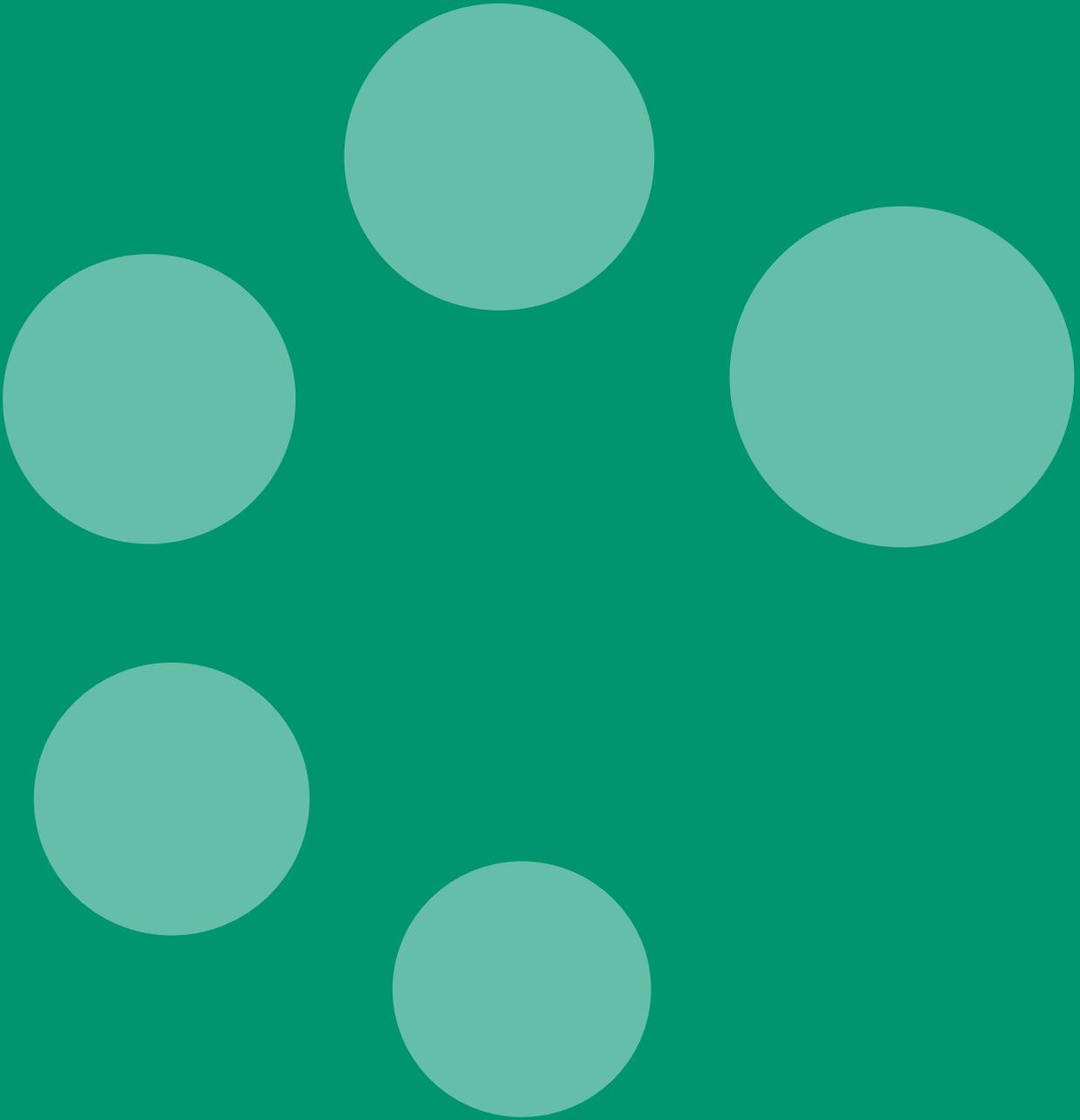
**Jennifer Brooks**, San Francisco AASCEND member

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# SUPPLEMENTS

The following items are contained in this Supplements section:

- Disabilities and Inclusion Survey (template) . . . . .** S-2
- Organizational Success Plan (template) . . . . .** S-10
- Organizational Success Plan (with sample milestones) . . . . .** S-11
- Job Announcement—TAP Trainer (sample) . . . . .** S-12
- Offer Letter/Email (sample) . . . . .** S-15
- Employee Success Plan (sample) . . . . .** S-19



## TAP | TRANSFORMATIVE AUTISM PROGRAM

*Breaking Barriers in the Workplace*

### **Organizational Survey**

An inclusive culture is a culture where every employee comes to work feeling supported and empowered, ready to do their best work. [Research shows that satisfied, motivated employees will positively influence organizational performance.](#)

Unfortunately, some problems can stay hidden, unless you do a little digging. Surveying the members of your organization is a great way to prevent small, hidden issues from growing into much more significant problems that you can't ignore.

Results from this autistic inclusion survey will highlight how autistic and neurodivergent employees experience your company's culture, shining a light on problem areas and giving direction, based on the feedback of your employees.

Employee feedback and input are invaluable resources to help in understanding the current dynamics within your organization, helping you to create a plan with focus areas tailored to your individual business needs.

### **Considerations**

- Allow feedback providers to submit feedback anonymously.
- Be prepared to share the outcomes with appropriate team members within a reasonable time-frame.
- Don't ask questions if you are not prepared to take action based on the responses.

## **Success Tip**

To develop, implement, and maintain a successful inclusion program, commitment must come from the top down. To maximize your initiative's effectiveness, you must have the support for your program from your leadership and the custodians of people within your organization. Autism & Neurodiversity training and acceptance programs should be made available to all leaders and staff.

Whether your organization is taking its initial steps to measure inclusivity, or if you already have an established initiative, measuring employee engagement with regular polls helps you spot potential issues early and take action before problems arise.

By using the information gathered to implement positive change, you can encourage and promote the enthusiasm of your employees as you work to creating a more inclusive organization.

## **Technology**

Organizations are increasingly using sophisticated tools, such as electronic surveys, to analyze information shared by their employees. Using an electronic survey system for inputting employee feedback often results in higher participation rates due to easier access and quicker data analysis.

If possible, it is recommended that organizations use electronic surveys because they are often faster, more efficient, and aide in confidentiality.

Ensure employees without computers at work have a paper version of the survey or are given access to computers to complete the survey online. You may want to ensure survey participants can complete the survey via mobile devices to improve survey accessibility.

The following questions are for analytic purposes only. They will not be used to try to identify any individual. However, if you feel uncomfortable about answering any of the following please feel free to leave any of the questions below blank.

### **Diversity & Inclusion Questions**

1. To your knowledge, does your organization currently have an inclusion or non-discrimination policy?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

2. To your knowledge, does your organization currently have an employee handbook that outlines our organizational policies and procedures?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Please choose the most appropriate options.

3. My organization respects individuals and values their differences.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

4. My company believes that all people can greatly improve their talents and abilities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

5. Racial, ethnic, disability, age, and gender-based jokes are not tolerated within this organization.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

### **Neurodiversity Specific Questions**

If you feel comfortable, please share the following:

6. Are you autistic or neurodivergent?

- Yes
- No

If you answered "Yes" above, have you disclosed this information to your employer?

- Yes
- No

7. If you answered "Yes" to question 1, have you disclosed this information openly within your organization or to only certain people (Leaders, Managers, HR)?

- Openly autistic/neurodivergent within the organization
- Not openly autistic/neurodivergent and only sharing as needed

If you have not disclosed this information to your employer, why have you chosen not to disclose this information?

---

8. If you are not autistic, what experience do you have with autism/autistic people?

---

9. In your own words, what IS autism?

---

10. My organization is currently doing a great job supporting recruiting, onboarding, and retaining autistic and neurodivergent employees.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

What is my organization doing correctly to help support autistic and/or neurodivergent employees? What needs improvement?

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11. People feel safe disclosing needs and requesting accommodations from others without fear of discrimination.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12. My organization is sensory friendly and leaders within my organization understand sensory issues, working to minimize triggers that can be discomforting for some people (can include smells, light, noise, temperature, colors, and textures).

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

13. What improvements, if any, can be made to make this organization more accessible to autistic and neurodivergent individuals?

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---

### **Communication, Guidance, & Culture**

14. Each job role has a detailed and accurate job description that aligns with each team member's tasks and responsibilities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

15. Leaders in my organization are willing to provide directions in writing, or will allow members of the team time to take notes and ask questions when instructions are given.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

16. When planning meetings and activities multiple learning styles are taken into consideration.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

17. I can tell my immediate supervisor when I'm struggling or things are going wrong.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

18. Bullying is not tolerated within my organization, and leaders respond appropriately to quickly shut down aggressive or exclusionary behaviors.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

19. People in the organization can voice a contrary opinion without fear of negative consequences.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

20. People at all levels within the organization take ownership for solving problems, with a focus on forgiveness, learning, and growth instead of blaming others.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

<b>Organizational Success Plan Template</b>		MONTH 1	MONTH 2	MONTH 3	MONTH 4	MONTH 5	MONTH 6	MONTH 7	MONTH 8	MONTH 9	MONTH 10	MONTH 11	MONTH 12
Use this calendar as a starting point for customizing to your organization's specific needs. For example, extend milestones when there are limited resources to complete activities, or when multiple priority initiatives are underway.		Strengthen recruitment efforts internally	Educate All Levels of Management and Staff	Increase recruitment efforts externally	Make a job offer	Establish a career development program for employees with autism							
<b>Projects &amp; Activities</b>	<b>Resources</b>	Milestone	Milestone	Milestone	Milestone	Milestone	Milestone	Milestone	Milestone	Milestone	Milestone	Milestone	Milestone
Modify job postings	TAP												
Start or modify employee referral program	SHRM												
Adapt the application process	TAP												
Roll out Recruitment Plan at All Hands meeting	SHRM												
Host lunch and learns with guest experts	Community												
Newsletter spotlight (feedback/stories/involvement)	Solicit Staff												
Share "Prepare" training module with staff	TAP												
Partner with agencies that support the community	TAP												
Partner with agencies that hire from the community	Adecco: Kelly												
Connect with social media influencers	TAP												
Engage with schools and colleges	TAP												
Make a job offer	TAP												
Activate the interview process	TAP												
Assess candidates	TAP												
Assign Mentors	Solicit Staff												
Establish Day 1 Plan	TAP												
Create a calendar of benchmarks for annual program and review	EE SP												
Progress Through the Probationary Period of 90 Days	EE SP												
Master Teaching Adults with Autism	Meristem												
Plan and Progress Training Through Year 1	EE SP												
Access long-term supports	TAP												



**TAP | TRANSFORMATIVE AUTISM PROGRAM**  
*Breaking Barriers in the Workplace*

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Modify job postings	TAP	X											
Start or modify employee referral program	SHRM	X											
Adapt the application process	TAP		X										
Roll out Recruitment Plan at All Hands meeting	SHRM			X									
Host lunch and learns with guest experts	Community			X									
Newsletter spotlight (feedback/stories/involvement)	Solicit Staff			X									
Share "Prepare" training module with staff	TAP			X									
Partner with agencies that support the community	TAP				X								
Partner with agencies that hire from the community	Adecco: Kelly				X								
Connect with social media influencers	TAP				X								
Engage with schools and colleges	TAP				X								
Make a job offer	TAP					X							
Activate the interview process	TAP						X						
Assess candidates	TAP							X					
Assign Mentors	Solicit Staff								X				
Establish Day 1 Plan	TAP									X			
Create a calendar of benchmarks for annual program and review	EE SP												
Progress Through the Probationary Period of 90 Days	EE SP									X			
Master Teaching Adults with Autism	Meristem									X			
Plan and Progress Training Through Year 1	EE SP										X		
Access long-term supports	TAP											X	



## SAMPLE JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

The Transformational Autism Program (TAP) was established in 2018 with the intent to increase the number of young adults on the spectrum that are actively employed. TAP is managed by Meristem. Meristem is a continuing education and transition program for young adults on the spectrum that is located in Fair Oaks, CA. Students work towards greater independence in three core areas.

1. Independent living
2. Post Secondary education
3. Internships & employment

Over the last 18 months, TAP has built a training manual for employers to help them recruit, hire and retain employees that are on the spectrum.

Starting in 2020 we will be rolling out the training all across California. We are building our team and seek someone who can connect with and relate to a broad range of stakeholders and perform numerous project management functions.

We thrive on having a diverse team that optimizes our unique abilities to collectively bring young adults on the spectrum and employers the best training and support services possible. We hire based on the individual first and then we work together to build a system around you for success.

**Job Title:** TAP Trainer

**Job Description:** The TAP Trainer will have 3 primary responsibilities upon hire.

*\*These responsibilities may change or be modified based on your skill sets and preferred areas of focus.*

- Teach TAP Curriculum to students attending Meristem
  - Can you teach young adults with autism how to:
    - Outline a project?
    - Develop a task list?
    - Set timelines?
    - Establish responsibilities?
    - Utilize Google Suite?
    - Compose professional emails?
    - Speak effectively to small and large groups?
    - Engage in productive critique sessions?
    - Research and summarize unfamiliar material?
    - Train someone to do a specific task?
    - Interact professionally during a web based video conference?
    - Build a simple business plan?
- Coordinate TAP project development, training and implementation for and with selected employers
  - Can you work independently and/or with a small team and:

- Assess the effectiveness of the TAP training program for respective employers?
  - Interpret feedback from employers in order to develop strategies to overcome challenges employers experience implementing the TAP program?
  - Provide direct (face to face) and indirect (phone, email, web-based) support to employers using the TAP training manual?
  - Compose professional level manual writing to modify the manual as needed?
  - Collaborate with various internal and external stakeholders on ideas and ways to improve the overall program and/or to expand it?
  - Manage specific projects from start to finish?
  - Seek support and assistance from other members of the team as needed?
  - Teach students on the spectrum how to be job coaches and mentors to other people on the spectrum?
  
- Provide Job Coaching & Mentoring to Meristem students that secure paid employment and internships
  - Can you provide employment support to young adults on the spectrum by:
    - Demonstrating how to do numerous entry level tasks/jobs at a pace that would meet the employers expectations?
    - Analyzing a job/task and break down each component of the job/task for the student employee/intern to better understand when to perform certain functions and what to do?
    - Providing immediate - on the job - feedback and guidance to a student employee/intern to ensure the job is completed successfully?
    - Working closely with the employer on developing and utilizing any necessary modifications/adaptations (accommodations) the student employee/intern may need in order to succeed?
    - Keeping track of the progress and/or barriers the student employee/intern experiences while on the job?
    - Providing feedback to both the employer and student employee/intern about any areas you identify that should be improved upon in order to ensure success for both parties?
    - Preparing a potential student employee/intern to engage with a co-worker or supervisor about areas of concern they have?

**\*If you answered yes to most or all of the questions above we would really like to hear from you on the condition that you can meet ALL OF the following requirements.**

**Job Requirements:** Qualified candidates should meet the following requirements:

- High School diploma is required and a Bachelor's degree is preferred
- At least 25 years old and licensed to drive in California
- Paid employment in at least 2 jobs for 6 months or more is required and 2 or more years of paid employment experience is preferred
- An intermediate level (or higher) of proficiency using a computer (MAC or PC), Google Suite (docs, sheets, slides, calendar and drive) and email
- Ability to get to and from the Meristem Campus as well as student employment/internship locations

- Willingness to have a flexible schedule that may include some weekday evening work and/or weekend work

**Additional preferences:**

- 1 or more years in a supervisory, managerial or coaching position

**Compensation**

- Salary: \$15 to 20 per hour based on experience and skills

**Schedule**

- This is a part time position that could turn into a full time position
- 20 hours per week minimum

May 28, 2020

Dear [First Name] [Last Name],

Congratulations, you have been selected to be a part of the Transformative Autism Program (TAP) Summer Internship as a Food Preparation Specialist team member.

**The details are as follows:**

Job Title	Food Preparation Specialist
Supervisor Name	Maurice Thomas
Supervisor Phone	707.812.5539
Supervisor Email	<a href="mailto:mth@meristem.pro">mth@meristem.pro</a>
Start Date	Monday June 8, 2020
Regular Shift	Monday - Friday, 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Day 1 and Day 2 you will work from 10:00 AM to 2:30 PM</b></li><li>• <b>Starting on Day 3 your regular schedule (listed above) will begin.</b></li><li>• <b>Shifts may vary but only after your supervisor discusses it with you and you accept.</b></li></ul>
Location	Meistem Cafe 9200 Fair Oaks Blvd. Fair Oaks, CA 95628
Pay Rate	\$XX.XX per hour

**Day 1 details:**

Time	Activity
10:00 AM to 12:00 PM	Reviewing and filling out New Hire Paperwork <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>You must bring your Social Security Card or a picture of it.</b></li><li>• <b>You must bring your California ID or License or a picture of it.</b></li><li>• <b>If you have not completed and turned in your Job Application you must bring it completely filled out</b></li></ul>
12:00 PM to 12:30 PM	30 minute non-paid lunch break <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Bring your own lunch and drink</b></li></ul>

12:30 PM to 1:30 PM	Review Job Descriptions
1:30 PM to 2:30 PM	Review Internship Objectives

### Day 2 details

Time	Activity
10:00 AM to 12:00 PM	Food Handlers Safety Course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>If you have a laptop please bring it with you on Day 2. If you do not have a laptop computer that is ok.</b></li> </ul>
12:00 PM to 12:30 PM	30 minute non-paid lunch break <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bring your own lunch and drink</b></li> </ul>
12:30 PM to 2:30 PM	Food Handlers Safety Course

### Day 3 details

**\*This is the day your “regular schedule” will begin (see above for your regular schedule)**

Time	Activity
1st hour	Beginning of shift training
2nd hour	Food preparation training
3rd hour	Food cooking training
4th hour	End of shift training

### Day 4 and ongoing details

**\*Starting on day 4 you will be given a daily schedule of tasks to follow. Please remember that we are preparing food for needy families throughout the Fair Oaks community. What we need to accomplish may change from day to day. It’s important to be flexible and prepared to take on different tasks as assigned. Your supervisors are there to help you succeed and you should never hesitate to ask questions and seek help.**

### Additional important information:

#### Daily Reflection

- At the end of each shift you will have 15 minutes to fill out a form where you reflect on your workday. This is a mandatory part of each work day.

### Timesheets

- At the end of each shift you will have to fill out your timesheet.

### Pay Dates

- Monday, June 22
- Monday, July 6
- Monday, July 20
- Wednesday, August 5
- Thursday, August 20

### Time Off

- You will begin accruing “Sick Time” the day you start. Your pay stubs will show you how much time you have accumulated. If you have accrued sick time and have to take time off due to being sick you can use your sick time to earn your normal rate of pay. If you do not have any sick time accrued and have to take time off for being sick you will not receive any compensation for the time you take off.

### Calling In Late

- If you are going to be late you must call your supervisor as soon as possible. Failure to notify your supervisor that you are going to be late to your shift could result in disciplinary actions. Being late to more than one shift per week could result in termination.

### Calling In Sick

- If you are going to have to miss a shift due to health reasons you must call your supervisor as soon as possible. Failure to notify your supervisor that you are going to miss your shift due to health reasons could result in disciplinary actions.

### Personal Safety

- It is your choice to wear a mask to work or not. We recommend that you do bring and wear a mask at all times. If you are not feeling well we recommend that you call your supervisor immediately and take the day off.

### Dress Code

- Wear clothes that are clean.
- Wear clothes that do not have any writing that could be offensive to co-workers or members of the community.
- Wear clothes that do not have any tears in them.
- Wear a belt if you wear pants or shorts that will not stay above your waist at all times.
- Wear shirts that are lightweight and breathable (cotton preferred).
- If you prefer to wear a hat instead of a hairnet bring a hat and make sure the hat is clean and can stay securely on your head without requiring you to touch it.
- Wear shoes that fit snugly, are closed over the toes and are slip resistant.

#### Breaks

- You will be given one scheduled 10 minute paid break per shift. If you need more than one break you will have to ask your supervisor and receive permission before taking a 2nd break. Under no circumstances are you to take a break without receiving permission to do so from your supervisor.

#### Cell Phones

- Cell phones must be put away and out of site while you are working. The only time it is ok to be on your cell phone is during your 10 minute break. Failure to follow this policy could result in disciplinary action.

Please contact me - Eric Steward - directly via email or phone/text if you have any questions.

Email: [eric@tapautism.org](mailto:eric@tapautism.org)

Phone: 916.671.2141

Sincerely,

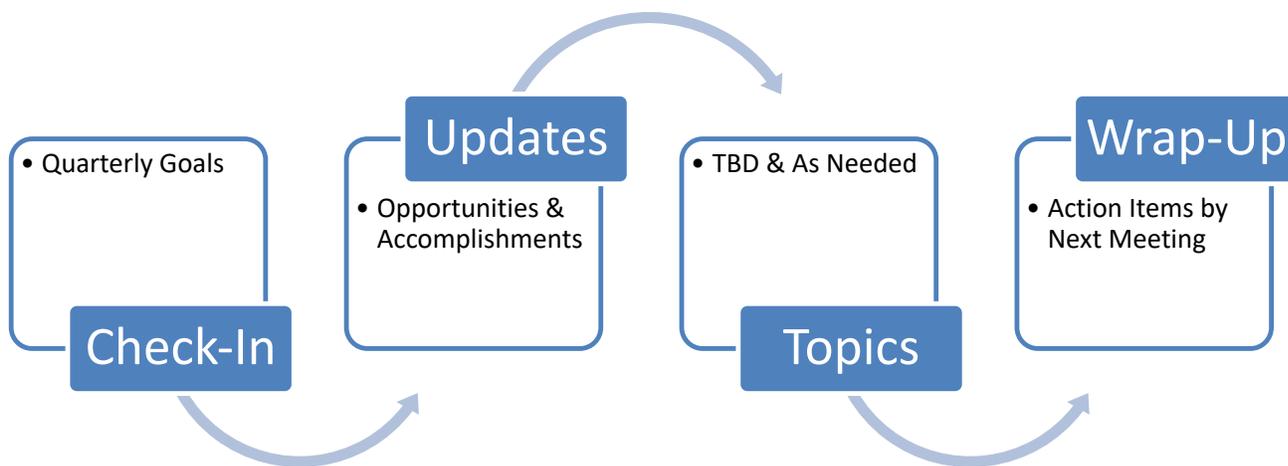
Eric Steward (on behalf of the entire TAP Team)

## EMPLOYEE SUCCESS PLAN FOR ACHIEVING GOALS

Date Goals Set: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Name/Job Title	Manager Name/ Title

Each employee should identify 3-5 quarterly S.M.A.R.T goals to be successful in their position, and then discuss, modify, and finalize with their supervisor/manager. The agreed upon goals should then be incorporated in weekly 1:1 meetings in the following manner:



When setting goals, ensure they are:

1. **S**pecific
2. **M**easurable
3. **A**chievable
4. **R**ealistic
5. **T**ime bound

Outline SMART goals on the following page and then use new copies of the entire document each meeting.

IDENTIFIED GOAL #1:	
1. SPECIFIC	
2. MEASUREABLE	
3. ACHIEVABLE	
4. REALISTIC	
5. TIME BOUND	
IDENTIFIED GOAL #2:	
1. SPECIFIC	
2. MEASUREABLE	
3. ACHIEVABLE	
4. REALISTIC	
5. TIME BOUND	
IDENTIFIED GOAL #3 :	
1. SPECIFIC	
2. MEASUREABLE	
3. ACHIEVABLE	
4. REALISTIC	
5. TIME BOUND	
IDENTIFIED GOAL #4:	
1. SPECIFIC	
2. MEASUREABLE	
3. ACHIEVABLE	
4. REALISTIC	
5. TIME BOUND	
IDENTIFIED GOAL #5:	
1. SPECIFIC	
2. MEASUREABLE	
3. ACHIEVABLE	
4. REALISTIC	
5. TIME BOUND	

After the Quarterly Goal check-in, employee and supervisor/manager together should discuss any opportunities for improvement and accomplishments from the past week. List those here:

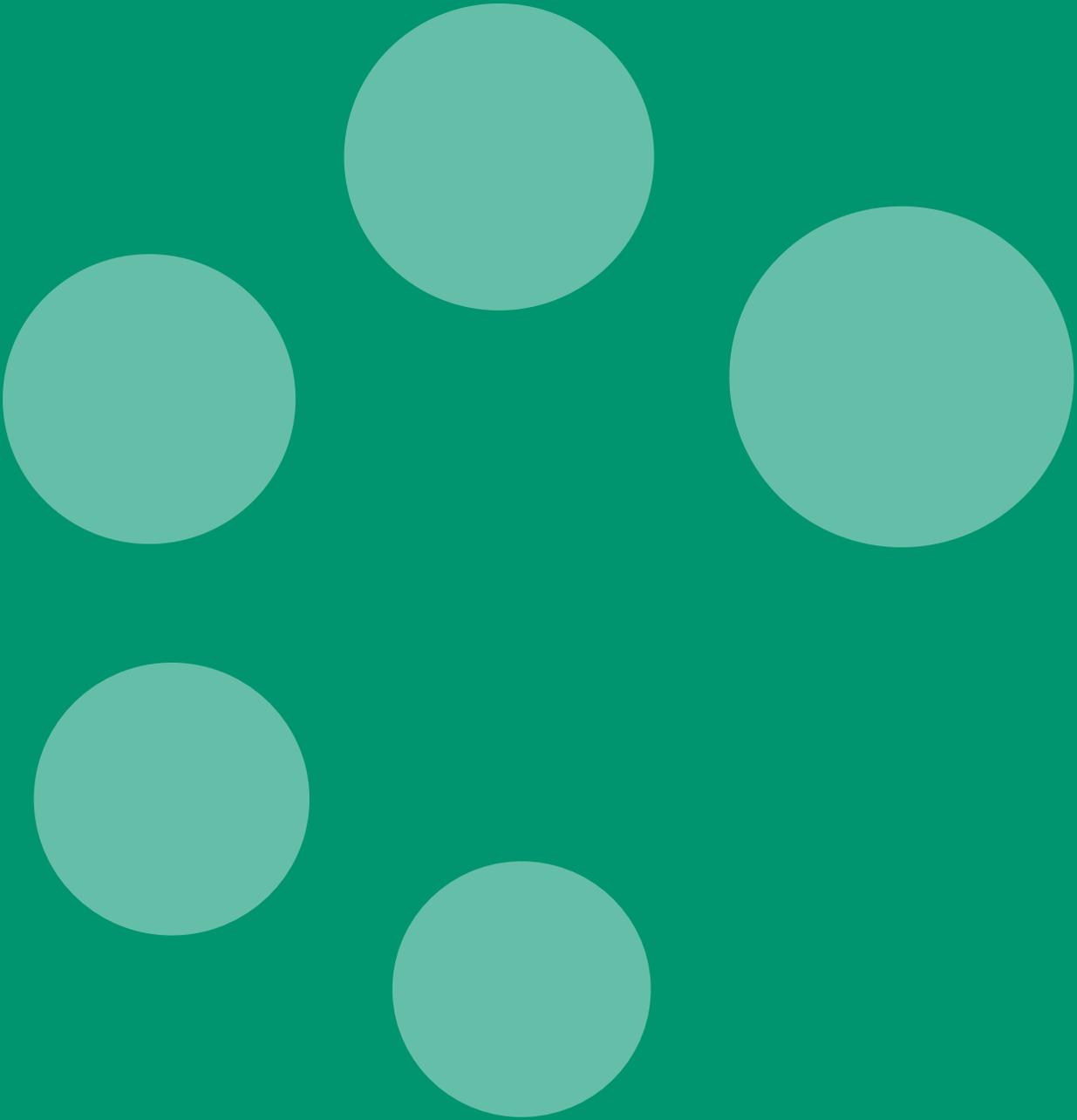
<b>Opportunities</b>	
1.	
2.	
3.	
<b>Accomplishments</b>	
1.	
2.	
3.	

If there are any updates to share with one another, such as upcoming time off or company headlines, now is the time to discuss those. Also clarify action items and due dates for those things that need progress or completion by the next meeting.

Finally, the supervisor/manager should constructively summarize performance feedback in the form of Continue-Start-Stop:

- Continue doing these things
- Start doing these things
- Stop doing these things

<b>Continue</b>	
1.	
2.	
3.	
<b>Start</b>	
1.	
2.	
3.	
<b>Stop</b>	
1.	
2.	
3.	



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**MERISTEM**

