

ABSTRACT

POSTER TITLE: Ready 2 Work: Development of an Online Employment Platform for People with Autism

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Employment success has been identified as a top priority for people with autism, both locally and nationally. Despite evidence indicating that people with autism are motivated to obtain employment, rates of unemployment and underemployment still remain among the highest in Canada. Considerable research has focused on personal and social characteristics that contribute to meaningful employment for people with autism; however, there has been relatively less emphasis on the job-finding skills and resources needed to secure ongoing employment, including the role of caregivers or facilitators in this process. What also appears to be missing is an exploration of the skills or tools that job seekers with autism need to engage in the job-seeking process and the barriers that they face along the way. Online resources may be helpful in this process, although little is known about the tools and supports needed by people with autism to engage in effective job-seeking, networking, and marketing of their skills to potential employers. The purpose of this project is twofold: 1) to understand what job-seekers with autism, caregivers of job-seekers with autism, and professionals who support people with autism in an employment capacity, perceive to be important for job seekers with autism to successfully enter the workforce that is amenable to an online delivery platform (Phase 1), and 2) to use this feedback to develop an online platform to address these needs (Phases 2 and 3). We will be reporting preliminary findings from our Phase 1 focus groups with job seekers with autism, caregivers, and employment professionals.