

## Few studies but promising results on employment outcomes for individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD)



*People with ASD are gainfully employed at disproportionately lower rates than individuals without a disability.*

### What is the aim of this review?

This Campbell systematic review update examines the effects of employment interventions for people with autism spectrum disorders. The review summarizes evidence from three randomized controlled trials.

Few studies evaluate interventions to improve employment outcomes for individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The available studies – which all have small sample sizes – suggest large effects.

### What is this review about?

The incidence of ASD is on the rise, yet individuals with ASD are gainfully employed at disproportionately lower rates than individuals without a disability. Employment interventions are vocational programs that provide training associated with access and maintenance of employment such as interviewing or vocational/social skills training.

This review looked at whether employment interventions and business-as-usual have different effects on the rates of employment.

### What studies are included?

This review uncovered three randomized studies from the USA that evaluate the effects of employment interventions for individuals with ASD. The studies spanned the period from 2014 to 2016.

### Do interventions improve employment rates for individuals with ASD?

Yes. There is an overall improvement in employment rates for individuals with ASD that participate in vocational-related interventions.

### What do the findings of the review mean?

The main policy-relevant findings include further consideration for how vocational rehabilitation is conducted among individuals with developmental disabilities such as ASD. Moreover, the relative paucity of empirical studies meeting inclusion criteria for this review points to an urgent need for greater funding for high-quality research and technical assistance to support the employment of individuals with ASD.



#### How up-to-date is this review?

The review authors searched for studies up to 2017.

#### What is the Campbell Collaboration?

Campbell is an international, voluntary, non-profit research network that publishes systematic reviews. We summarise and evaluate the quality of evidence about programmes in the social and behavioural sciences. Our aim is to help people make better choices and better policy decisions.

#### About this summary

This summary is based on Fong, C. J., Taylor, J., Berdyeva, A., McClelland, A. M., Murphy, K. M., & Westbrook, J. D. (2021). Interventions for improving employment outcomes for persons with autism spectrum disorders: A systematic review update. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 17, e1185. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1185>

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