

# Training Modules for Advancement and Transition Services

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## Background

While there is an increasing number of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) graduating from high school each year, there are limited post-secondary opportunities for meaningful employment and quality of life experiences.

The University of Cincinnati's Advancement and Transition Services (ATS) programs serve high school students and young adults with ID/DD (associates) to help them become more independent and live fulfilled lives.

ATS consists of three programs:

- **Collaboration for Employment and Education Synergy (CEES)** is a 12-week program designed for high school students ages 14 to 21 with ID/DD.
- **IMPACT Innovation** is a year round program for adults 22 years of age and older who have the diagnosis of autism. These individuals have significant communication and/or behavioral challenges.
- **Transition and Access Program (TAP)** is a four-year college experience designed for individuals with mild to moderate ID/DD.

Federal mandates, such as Employment First, set the stage for these individuals to become contributing members of their communities.

Revisions to the Higher Education Opportunities Act (2008) provide individuals with ID increased access to postsecondary education, including access to financial aid.

The challenge is to create quality experiences with appropriate staff supports that lead to the greatest level of independence possible.

Although there has been significant research supporting evidence based practice for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), there is an inadequate amount of research to guide service providers in their work with adults (Gerhardt and Lainer, 2011).

There is a lack of research available to inform how student worker training affects the outcomes of adults with ID/DD in terms of independent daily living skills, employment, integration, and social/emotional well-being.

## Objectives

- Assess knowledge and training needs of current ATS employees prior to working with associates
- Develop three systematic training modules to prepare staff to implement evidence based practice in community integrated employment settings to support adults with ASD who have significant communication, sensory, and behavioral needs
- Determine the effectiveness of training modules on staff ability to support individuals with ID/DD in community settings

## Methods

### Setting

- ATS programs at the University of Cincinnati

### Participants

- 37 ATS student workers
  - 67.5% are undergraduate communication & education majors
  - 59.9% have prior experiences working with individuals with ID/DD who were school-age, 40.5% high-school age children, and 18.9% with young adults



### Process

- Conducted observations of IMPACT Innovation program to see staff in action
- Created and distributed a 23 question needs assessment survey to all current ATS student workers
  - 67% response rate
- Conducted review of training modules being utilized in the field
  - current ATS staff training modules
  - Online and Applied System for Intervention Skills (OASIS) from The Kansas Center for Autism Research and Training
- Consulted with the directors of all three ATS programs and other experts in the field of ASD for module content accuracy and appropriateness

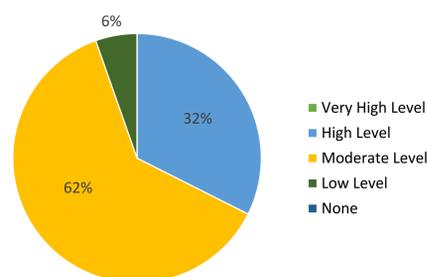
## Results

### Findings

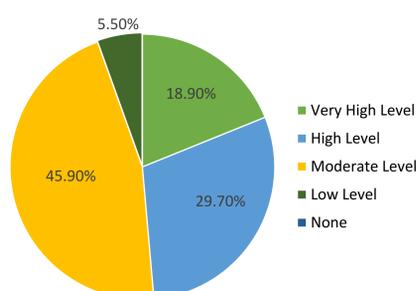
ATS student workers desired increased information about:

- Characteristics of developmental diagnoses
- Communication
  - Non-verbal cues
  - Visuals
  - Simplified language
  - Decrease demands
  - Communication aids & adaptive devices
- Behavior (moderate to high level of awareness)
  - Positive reinforcement
  - Coping skills
  - Timing and awareness of de-escalation strategies
- Prefer online or a hybrid format

Rate your level of skill at implementing behavioral strategies for young adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities?



When beginning this program, what was your comfort level working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities?



### Development of Module One

- Provides an overview of characteristics of individuals with ID/DD and supports through communication and behavioral strategies
- Discusses taking a person-centered approach to help associates have increasing independence and functioning
- Contains case studies and videos that bring the content to life
- Has been reviewed by local stakeholders within ATS leadership and the disability community
- Currently exploring interactive formats to embed the module content



## Discussion

Although there is research supporting training techniques when working with children with ID/DD, limited evidence based techniques exist for working with adults with these same challenges.

Based on current ATS employee knowledge and needs, the first training module was created to address the gaps in knowledge when working with adults with ID/DD.

As children with ID/DD transition into adulthood, it is essential to create purposeful programs and develop partnerships with external agencies, such as Advancement and Transition Services at UC. This endeavor supports CCHMC's 2020 Strategic Plan to support building a "best in class" end to end system.

## Next Steps

Next steps are to a) test the effectiveness of the module created and b) develop additional training modules in order to provide direct support staff with all the necessary knowledge and skills to systematically apply information and practices with adults with ASD.

### Effectiveness Testing of Module One

Once the module has been transitioned into an interactive format, a pre- and post- evaluation will be used to determine if the new student workers have increased their knowledge in the areas of characteristics, behavior, and communication of young adults with ID/DD.

### Develop Modules Two and Three

If module one proves effective, then modules two and three will be created with increased detail about the behavioral and communication strategies as well as provide ATS employees information about the fundamentals of Applied Behavioral Analysis.

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See supplemental handout for references.