

Pat Osbourn, Associate Director

**Center for Development &
Disability, University of
New Mexico
Autism & Employment**

Center for Development & Disability

- CDD is New Mexico's University Center for Excellence in Research, Education & Service – UCEDD.
- These 68 Centers are federally designated, authorized by the Developmental Disability Assistance and Bill of Rights Act; at least one in each state.
- The Center receives core funding through the Administration on Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities.

CDD – NM UCEDD

- UCEDDs
 - Key role in every major disability initiative over the past 4 decades
- Issues & initiatives
 - Early Intervention
 - Health Care
 - Community Based Services
 - Employment

CDD – NM UCEDD

AUCD's mission: Advance policies and practices that improve the health, education, social, and economic well-being of all people with developmental and other disabilities, their families, and their communities by supporting our members in research, education, health, and service activities that achieve our vision.

Mission of the CDD:

To advance exemplary services, research, education & policy to support the well-being of all New Mexicans.

CDD – NM UCEDD

- Our charge is to facilitate the flow of disability-related information between community and university
- We provide, as a Center, training, technical assistance, service, research, advocacy and information sharing
- Focus on building the capacity of communities

The Autism Programs & Other Developmental Disabilities Center for Development & Disability

- Autism Programs & Other Developmental Disabilities is a collection of programs at the Center for Development & Disability, focusing on ASD, IDD, FASD, Deafblind, and other disabilities.
- Focus is lifespan
- More recently, the intersect of mental/behavioral health with these disabilities has been a focus

CDD – Autism Programs

Clinical Services

Education, Capacity Building

Resources & Parent Support

Research, Evaluation & Policy

Importance of Employment to Healthy Outcomes

- World Health Organization describes social determinants of Health as the “non-medical factors that influence health outcomes”.
- Research suggests that social determinants can be more important than health care or lifestyle choices and may account for 30-55% of health outcomes.

Social Determinants of Health

- Can influence health equity in positive and negative ways:
 - Income & social protection
 - Education
 - Unemployment & job insecurity
 - Working life conditions
 - Food insecurity
 - Housing, basic amenities
 - Social inclusion and non-discrimination

Autism – Why We are Concerned

- Autism prevalence
 - Currently 1 in 36
 - No longer an uncommon diagnosis
 - April traditionally has been “Autism Awareness” now changed to “Autism Acceptance”
 - Autism Speaks has declared April “World Autism Month” with a tag line: “Change Takes Courage: Act Fearlessly”



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Autism – Why We are Concerned

- Lowest employment rate across disabilities – 58%
- Poorer health outcomes than other populations
 - Access and quality of health care is often in question.
 - Concerning given more susceptibility to physical and mental health issues as well as frequently cited higher mortality rates.

“Michael”

- Young man in his early 20s
- Well established diagnosis of ASD
- Other health issues include epilepsy
- Cannot work full time; needs a flexible schedule due to medical issues
- Resume is “inconsistent”
- Skills in computer programming; received certificate from CNN

“Michael”

- Creative HR processes
 - Initially hired in “temporary position” for 6 months
 - Allowed him to accrue experience and learn the work culture

“Sandra”

- Woman, mid thirties
- Well established diagnosis of ASD
- Creative with many interests
- Never held a job
- Could not work full time

“Sandra”

- Performs office work
- Inventories supplies and insures that they are stocked
- Enjoys filing, computer file organization
- Loves to read and has established an informal free “library” for staff

“Michael & Sandra”

- Amazing work ethic
- Accurate
- Passion & enthusiasm
- Can take an obsessive approach when needed!

Other Benefits of Hiring Individuals with ASD

- Better quality of work
- Fast turnaround times
- Unique perspectives
- Less distracted by social interactions

- Jobs for non-verbal individuals

- Librarian
- Factory assembly
- Restocking shelves
- Lawn & Garden work
- Data entry
- Fast food crew
- Plant nursery

- Jobs for more verbal individuals

- Computer programming
- Drafting
- Photography
- Equipment designing
- Car mechanic
- Accounting
- Mathematician
- Animal trainer

Autism & Employment-Act Fearlessly

- How to move the needle?
 - Social skills important
 - Work with companies to accept the uniqueness of employees with ASD
 - Highlight/develop skills
 - Persons with ASD: self-determination, advocacy for self

CDD-Autism Programs Contact Information

- Contact Information:

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