

**Pathways to Employment for Individuals with ASD**

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Stanford University

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No conflicts of interest to report

What are the current outcomes for young adults with ASD? (Wehman et al., 2014)

Unemployed and underemployed at higher levels than others with disabilities

Low rates of independent living -- Most individuals with ASD continue to live at home with their parents

Low incidence of friendships and relationships

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Key to Changing This...


**Refocus on Strengths, Interests, and Preferences!**



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The Goal of Education is to have a life where you have:

- A place to call home
- Places to go
- People to see
- Important tasks to do that you like!



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How do you get that life?

**A JOB!**

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What kind of job?  
Real Work for Real Pay!

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## Does not include






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PLEASE NOTE: These pictures were accessed through the internet

## What are the Pathways to Employment?



**Project SEARCH plus ASD Supports**

**Supported Employment**

**Customized Employment**

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### Project SEARCH Plus ASD Supports

#### Project SEARCH

- 9 month (senior year) high school program
- Placed in large community business (hospital, large bank center, university, government center, military base, etc.)
- Rotate through three 10-12 month internships
- Learn marketable job skills

#### Plus ASD Supports

- Behavioral Consultation
- Consistent Structure
- Behaviorally Defining Social Skills, and Work Expectations
- Visual Supports
- Self Monitoring Checklists and Reinforcement Programs
- Ongoing Intensive Instruction and Monitoring



### Internships: Q and A:

1. Are unpaid internships legal under the fair labor standards act?
  - Yes! (See Department of Labor [Fact Sheet #71](#))
2. Why are people with disabilities doing unpaid internships when people without disabilities do not?
  - Doctors, Nurses, Lawyers, Teachers, Psychologists, OT, PT, Speech Therapists, Accountants and many other professions require unpaid internships prior to certification of competence
3. What is an unpaid internship?
  - A **time limited educational experience** where the intern **learns real skills** in a business



### Project SEARCH Plus ASD Supports (Schall, Wehman, McDonough, 2012)

- Video of Stephanie



(VCU-RRTC, 2016)

### Stephanie's Mom

"I spent all yesterday afternoon alternating between weepy and a big smile on my face...there aren't words to say how much I appreciate what all of you have done to get us to one of the proudest days in our lives...once Stephanie figured out that I was crying because I was so happy she became so excited to understand that she HAS A JOB! And each time she told someone it got louder and prouder-I GOT A JOB!

We all want to be around people that value us for who we are and appreciate the work we do..thank you for pushing for this particular internship and then sending Stephanie, I believe she has truly found people who see her just as I do- an incredibly hard worker whose very presence does indeed make it a happier place to be...again there are no words for how that feels."



## Meet Dave

- Classic ASD
- DARS - "Unemployable!"
- Behaviors
  - Wouldn't do anything without prompts
  - Running and hiding in locked spaces (bathroom, mom's car)
  - If no locked space, keeps running
  - Hitting when stopped, told "no", interrupted, or corrected
  - "Blows through" people if they are in his way
  - VERY low verbal abilities



## Strengths

- Could read (Splinter skill, had very low comprehension!)
- Excellent memory for long sequences of steps
- LOVES routine, will do things the same way every time!
- Calmed by videos of Godzilla destroying cities (REALLY!)



By increasing Independence...

**We decrease the  
main triggers for  
Problem Behavior!**

## How to Increase Independence

1. Create a consistent routine
2. Develop a visual schedule
3. TEACH Dave to follow schedule
4. Build positive reinforcement into his day and all relationships!



## Dave's Internships

1. Custodian: Radiology
2. Custodian: Hospital lobbies and elevators
3. Durable Medical Equipment Management: Pulse Oxygen monitors



## Dave's Schedule at Work as a Custodian for Radiology

- Day 1a: Review Schedule with Dave
- Day 1b: Walk with Dave and model schedule. Have Dave repeat each step in schedule after model
- Day 2- Till independent: Walk with Dave and use LEAST TO MOST PROMPTS to decrease use of verbal prompts



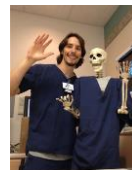
### Positive Reinforcement in Work Environment...

- High fives (Dave loved these)
- Minimal talking (Dave hated conversations)
- Watch Godzilla videos on break
- Take home the Godzilla report (for mom)



### Beyond Dave...

- Because of Dave's thoroughness in cleaning railings, rooms, and radiological cassettes beginning in September through December, the unit's employee absentee rate during the height of cold and flu season was reduced by about 50%!



### More Visual Supports for Dave

**Vacuuming a large area by zones**



**Preventing pushing people out of the way to get to push elevator buttons**



VCU Floor Zoning Chart

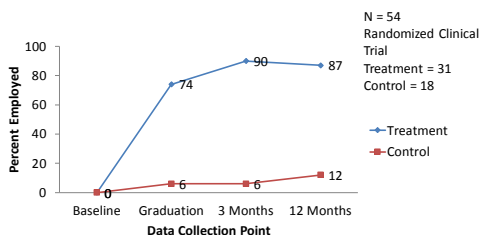
Elevator Etiquette Pocket Card

### Dave Today

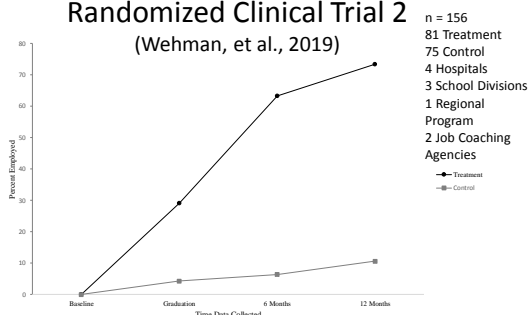
- Video of Dave



### Employment Outcomes In Community Based Integrated Employment (Wehman et al., 2017)



### Replication and Expansion Study Randomized Clinical Trial 2 (Wehman, et al., 2019)

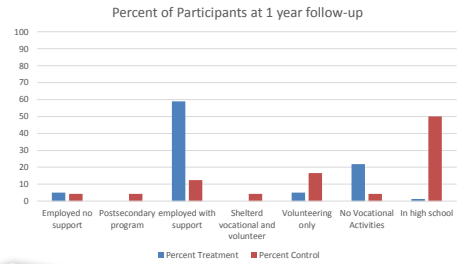


## Employment Outcomes (Wehman et al., 2019)

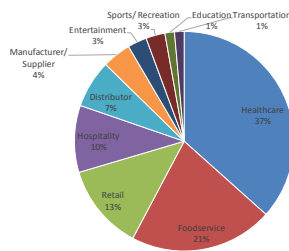
- Wage Earned: \$9.61 per hour (range: \$7.25 – \$11.83 per hour)
- Hours worked weekly: 21.2 (range: 4 – 40)
- Weeks from graduation to hire date: 18.8



## Where did these guys work? (Wehman, 2019)

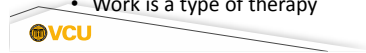


## Where did these guys work, Part 2 (Wehman et al., 2019)



## What is the impact of work on individuals with ASD? (Schall, In Development)

- Statistically Significant Improvement in **All Domains** on the Support Intensity Scale (Schall, et al., In Development) including:
  - Employment Activities
  - Community Living Activities
  - Home Living Activities
  - Health and Safety Activities
  - Lifelong Learning Activities
  - Social Activities
- Work is a type of therapy



## What was the impact of persons with ASD on employers and co-workers

- Increased morale among co-workers
- Increased sense of mission among staff
- Increased productivity in unit
- Managers learn management skills that help them with all staff
- Opens the minds of co-workers and managers to ability versus disability



Two randomized clinical trials with highly significant results:

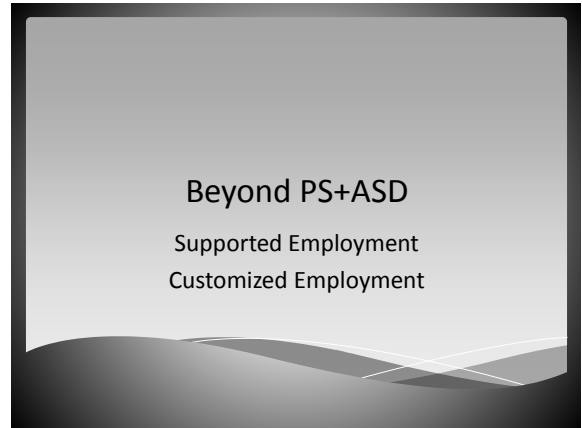
**Project SEARCH plus ASD Supports is an Evidence Based Practice**



## Why does PS+ASD Work?

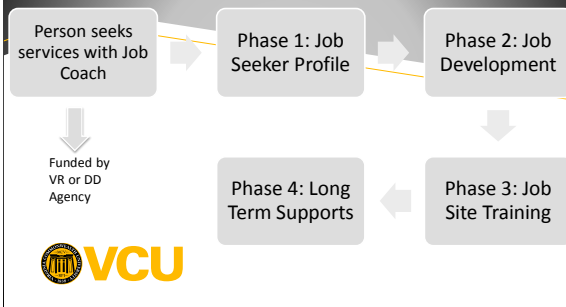
### 6 Keys to Success

- Real work experience while in high school
- Instruction using ABA
- Personalized vocational assessment and training
- Seamless transition to adulthood
- Leaving high school with a resume
- Focus on business needs



## Supported Employment

(Schall, et al., 2015)



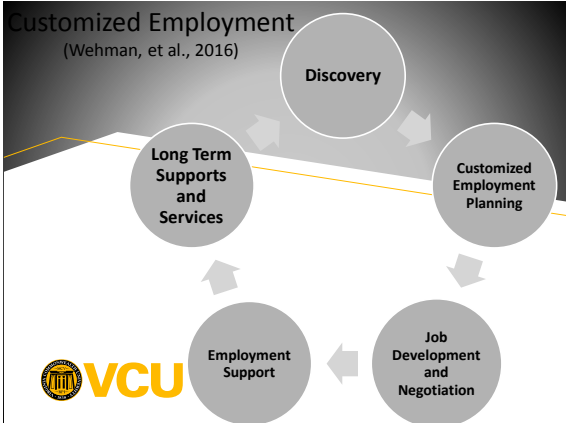
## Additional Training for Job Coaches

- Understand ASD
- Learn EBPs
  - Behavior Support and Access to Regular Consultation
  - Reinforcement
  - Systematic Instruction
  - Data Based Decision Making
  - Visual Supports
  - Antecedent Interventions
  - Functions of Behavior
- Understand Business
  - Work not School
  - Building trust
  - Understand business needs
  - Provide training to co-workers and supervisors
  - Building relationships
  - Understanding the work culture
  - Assessing the environment for Match



## Customized Employment

(Wehman, et al., 2016)



## 10 Years of Research Conclusions

- People with ASD across the spectrum of abilities can work in competitive integrated employment
- Adult service providers need support and training to gain these skills
- Employers need these workers!



## What should I do if I don't have access to PS+ASD?

- Seek internships or part time employment while in high school
- Provide job supports and training using ABA
- Seek a personalized vocational assessment and training
- Engage and get services from adult services agencies EARLY adulthood
- Leave high school with a resume
- Focus on current business needs in your area
- Seek marketable skills



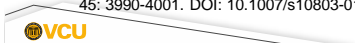
### This Presentation is Based Upon the Following Research

- Wehman, P., Schall, C., McDonough, J., Sima, A., Brooke, A., Ham, W., Whittenburg, H., Brooke, V., Avellone, L., & Reihle, E. (2019). Competitive employment for transition-aged youth with significant impact from autism: A multi-site randomized clinical trial. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1007/s10803-019-03940-2
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- Wehman, P., Schall, C., McDonough, J., Molinelli, A., et al. (2014). Project SEARCH for youth with autism spectrum disorders: Increasing competitive employment on transition from high school. *Journal of Positive Behavior Intervention*, 15, 144-155
- Schall, C. M., Wehman, P., & McDonough, J. (2012). Transition from school to work for students with ASD: Understanding the process and achieving better outcomes. *Pediatric Clinics of North America*. 29, 189-202.

