Autism: Life After High School

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EN202-01

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May 8, 2018

**Abstract**

Autism is a non developmental disorder in which an individual finds it difficult to communicate and maintain relationships with others. Autism is a mental condition, presented in early childhood and have difficulty communicating, socializing, and interacting with others.There are family successes and challenges in providing the best in adult education, employment experiences, independent living skills, or work based learning opportunities in becoming an independent, productive, and contributing citizen within our community. A successful transition will lead the individual with Autism Spectrum Disorder on the path to a fulfilling life that enables him or her to learn and grow. Do students with disabilities successfully transition into the workforce or postsecondary education? How is the CNMI doing in regards to IEP transition planning and implementations?

**Keywords:** Adult education, independent living skills, successful transition

**Introduction**

There are family successes and 21st Century challenges in providing the best in adult education, employment experiences, independent living skills, or work based learning opportunities in becoming an independent, productive, and contributing citizen for young adults within the Autism Spectrum Disorder [A.S.D] category within our Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands community.

Why is life after High School important for those with Autism Spectrum Disorder? It is important to explore this topic through research in identifying our CNMI schools practices, to find out whether in public, private, or homeschool education are provided to all individual young teens with Autism a proper transition action plan in place, service providers or agencies supportive outreach of identification, planning, and implementation. A child find methodology is being practiced by law, now we must consider a the same concept of identifying these individuals within the school setting, or community that are entitled to these opportunities and service programs.

Supporting schools and families with excellent transition planning and monitoring intervention needs towards a life long learning experience and sense of ownership and contribution will help strengthen family supports and services, most especially for the individual youth or young adults with ASD, becoming vitally important contributing partners within the local community, rather than staying at home or idling without “HOPE” of a better opportunity. Also, to avoid any signs of mistrust in supportive family advocacy groups or service providing agencies partnership breaks down.

The option that many families with a child(ren) with ASD consider is looking elsewhere to find a proactive advocacy system and specialized program options that work for them, due to families feeling that the community advocates or support groups and agencies aren’t maximizing its services or is unsatisfied with their child's success rate in provisions.

 *To big idea is, is to identify the worthiness of a Transition Plan and determine if it honestly working? T*his research is to provide some unanswered questions, and educate our readers to finding out more about family members that have gone through this transitioning process, tell of their personal experiences as advocates, parents/guardians, individuals with disabilities, family members, education professionals, and community agencies on how successful as this process been for each in the past, present time, and *what significant standards or directions have been practiced? What is working within our system to help all with Autism Spectrum Disorders? What plans do we have as a community to better advocate and improve identified loopholes, gaps, or articulation, networking with others for the common good and nature of our ASD youth? How can CNMI better improve the quality of life for all those with a disability to include all with Autism Spectrum Disorders?*

*Are the people of the CNMI satisfied, parent advocates as valuable stakeholders, and most especially their individual child with a disability comfortable where he/she is currently at in life? Is the CNMI prepared for all three types of post-secondary models or more? What CNMI agencies are available to assist with individuals with Autism: Life After High School? If so, how successful have these supports or services been?*

Is our CNMI society to serve those with a disability, most especially with severe needs meeting the Standards, aligned with its budgetary requests or grants provided. Is the individual child with ASD being properly represented, provided equal rights and opportunities, open to all promotional supports and services, or are we providing limitations for a majority and prioritizing the selective minority to meet a balanced quota when reporting to the federal system that grants the umbrella of funding under Public Health.

Are the Standards being identified and follow-throughs being implemented improvement need for our future young adults in providing the best in education & learning, accommodation, accessibility, proper training and certifications, and many more for the advancements that may be needed to increase popularity and partnership successes in funding programs for servicing all students with a disability.

*How successful have transition planning and implementations been for young teens with a specific disability under the classification of Autism Spectrum Disorder, in preparations for life beyond graduation? What is the definition of success? What does it look like? Who are the stakeholders involved? What is the common transition practices? Are we keeping tab or records after graduation? Where are these young adults and adults now? Are a majority living life as a contributing member of society? If so, then what? If not, then what needs to be fixed? Where to we start and end?*

It all begins with, planning the blueprint to success and this is through the important emphasis on the Individualized Education Programs [I.E.P] transition planning blueprint or framework process. To includes all stakeholders that works directly with an individual youth with ASD. *How successful is the planning?*  To making sure that all important contributing members are present at a meeting or informed of the recommendations planned, able to have an equal voice to be heard in the articulation process and provided input, recommendations, or suggestions when creating transition plan goals that are realistic and achievable for the individual with ASD.

To keep in mind, placement opportunities based on the youths strengths and interest, academic and functional abilities, adaptations and accommodations are considered, identified behavioral traits and work habits of a specific individual with ASD is vitally important as well in the process.

Importantly the advocating agencies, business, or college of parent and student choice options must have equal access and limitations to all. No specialized treatment! Transition plan organized and well managed with monitoring progress. Options to consider, interventions if needed, of the implementation process, that are well organized, planned successfully, with parental input and guidance in understanding their young teens individual strengths and interest, academic and functional abilities, and behavioral habits and traits so that a specially trained personnel can provide the best in transition and/or related services to help with guidance and safety the individual with ASD.

It is very crucial to ensure the proper people in the proper positions are knowledgeable, aware on how to handle or work with the individual with ASD in rapor of having a trusting and intimate bond with that specific young adult with ASD, he/she is able to help teach and train others of the proper way to handle situations and provisions of a specific adaptations, accommodations, supports and service needs that will help aid in the creating a map for what their child’s future might look like based on what will bring their child happiness.

In addition, to ensure the proper educational and vocational skills training and agencies are fully involved in the process. Then, actions are taken in the implementation process for a young ASD student to emerge themselves in an apprenticeship program training, university or community college transitions, workplace training, or community living centers program opportunities that ensure the success rate of completion and rate of service retainment is successful for the majority of societies young adults.

**Literature Review:**

*IEP’s Informative Transition Definition & Process*

Furthermore, to educate the importance of Autism: Life After High School, the forthcoming questions must be understood. *What is Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA] definition of Transition services?* The term `transition services' means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that--

(A) is designed to be a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;

(B) is based on the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests and includes instruction, related services, community experiences; the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills & provision of a functional vocational evaluation." (**Note:** the underlined words are new in IDEA 2004)

(Peter W. D. Wright and Pamela Darr Wright, 1998-2018)

*Why is Transition Planning Important?* The dropout rate for students with disabilities is approximately twice that of general education students (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). More Americans are graduating high school than ever before, but students with disabilities remain far behind their typically-developing peers (“Graduation Rates Fall Short for Students with Disabilities”- M. Diament ). Over 30% of children with learning disabilities drop out of high school (28th Annual Report to Congress on Implementation of IDEA, 2006). A high school diploma raises a worker’s average weekly earnings from $471 to $652.(National Center for Learning Disabilities). Only 13% of students with learning disabilities (compared to 53% of students in the general population) have attended a 4 year post-secondary school program within 2 years of leaving high school(National Longitudinal Transition Study, 1994). Graduating from high school opens the doors to college and career success. (National Center for Learning Disabilities). A diploma decreases average unemployment from 12.4 percent to 8.3 percent. (National Center for Learning Disabilities).

*What is Transition Planning?*  Transition planning is a mandated process of which IDEA 2004 provision under lawful regulations and statutes provide rule that all students who have an I.E.P in K-12 education, must have a transition plan in place when moving from school to post-school activities. This plan starts before the student turns 16 of age, be individualized, be based on individual student strengths & interest, preferences, include opportunities to develop functional skills for work and community life. Therefore, age appropriate transition assessment information must be assessed and documented in time, ensuring appropriate measurable postsecondary goals that cover education or training, employment, or if needed independent living skills. Activities within school or other locations be provided during the development of transition services activities to support a student with ASD’s movement towards annual IEP goal success. This will need to involve other agencies established with planning and appropriations to eventually determine the course of study based on ADS student interests, strengths, and preferences.

*Who develops the Transition plan?* The IEP team, including parents, student as a self-advocate, and other important stakeholders such as possible employers, college representatives, and student advocates.

*What is the Transition Planning Team’s job?* To identify the student’s vision for his or her life beyond high school, shared experiences with the student, provide student advocate or self-advocacy opportunities to address his/her strengths, interest, and personal preferences. Identify age, and measurable and attainable goals, establish services designed to strengthen and build lifelong learning skills, at the same token, provide adaptations, accommodations, or modifications if necessary. This process will identify who is the responsible individual, team, or agency for a specific goal or activity and timeline of when it will begin and end. Progress monitoring feedback will need to be graded and recorded, both academic and vocational skills based on student services and training.

*How can a student best prepare for Transition Planning?* The school should teach the student or peer advocate the purpose and benefit entitlements of an IEP. Proper purpose and procedures of an IEP, who is to attend and why. The proper planning for life after High School is an IEP that includes a Transition Plan. “I’m Determined” is a teaching and learning tool used to help provide self-advocacy for strengths and challenges both academic or non-academic that the student needs to be able with or without assistance explain or describe, this includes their own foresight of what they think is best for themself and future. Be able to self-advocate for the kinds of support they will need and participating in setting their own goals.

*What is “Transfer of Rights” within the timeline of Transition Planning?* IDEA 2004 states that when a student reaches what they call the “Age of Majority” and legally becomes an adult, and it may vary from state to state regulations, that a student is first (1) notified and alerted of their new, upcoming responsibilities, and secondly provided notices of upcoming meetings to the student as well as the parents, while all other notices will go only to the student. So, when the student reaches the “Age of Majority,” he or she will assume legal control over educational placement, educational records, eligibility, evaluations and programming, to include any/all due process needs or mediation needs if necessary.

*What is a “Summary of Performance (S.O.P)?* A summary of performance is a valuable reported document the school must provide it’s graduates from High School, this report will include academic and functional performance levels and transition needs at the time of student school year completion. This report must be meaningful, and written in student friendly language. It will provide recommendations about how to help the student meet his or her postsecondary goals. The SOP should be reviewed at the student’s final transition planning meeting.

Furthermore, *What is Indicator 13? What does it have to do with Transition Planning?*

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized on Dec. 3, 2004 with a provision that became effective on July 1, 2005 of which relates to transition service for students. The current age of 16 and above with IEP’s will include appropriate postsecondary measurable goals that are annually updated and based upon age appropriate transition assessments, transition services, including course of study, that will enable the student to being responsible in meeting postsecondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to students meeting transition service needs. This will include evidence to support IEP Team meeting, invitation of other agency representative if necessary, and parent or student who have reached the age of majority.

*Why do we have quarterly audits?* This is required by a privacy law and protection program that the system is 100% compliant with Certified Information Privacy Professional - CIPP Indicator 13. For monitoring IEP Transition Planning includes on site audit of the Transition component of the IEP with an audit sheet, with school inputs and compliance data and corrections if necessary. A State will earn its credential, which means you’ve gained a foundational understanding of broad global concepts of privacy and data protection law and practice, including jurisdictional laws, regulations and enforcement models, essential privacy concepts and principles, legal requirements for handling and transferring data and more.

*Do we have a successful Transition within our Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands for students with disabilities into the Workforce or Postsecondary Education?* The focus is to to better understand the students with disabilities and their transition and career planning for post secondary life, as the U.S. federal government has put into law, regulations, guidelines, and funding that require states and school districts to have a transition plan in place for all students with disabilities. Educators are in agreement that children with disabilities need to have a transition plan. Educators often have different ideas on what should be included in a transition plan. Many school districts believe that their school can improve on their transition and career plans. *What are best practices for transitioning and planning?*

**Academic Summary**

According to Sarris, the first step that an individual with autism must do first is begin with transition planning. That is the number one step to get that person to be very advance in setting themselves for their future. **“**The road to adulthood officially begins for many teens when they graduate from high school and move on to a first job or college, to paying bills and living on their own. But for people with autism, and their families, leaving high school is a more monumental step, one that will transform their relationship to services and supports.” Once in college, students with disabilities have to request the accommodations they need to be successful, and their schools need to only provide reasonable accommodations for them when they apply for future jobs, school, services, etc. Parents who consider themselves experts on their child's special needs may find themselves increasingly losing the process after high school because of privacy laws. Students who have experience making their needs known will have an even better self advocacy system. What can we do to get young people to help with ASD involve in the process? People should get involved in having to put together educational programs for ASD. Even being there guide to make better choices. Letting ASD experience the lifestyle of what it is like to be an adult in an adulthood is something that is a major change that ASD should prepare for. The start of their transition to adulthood (Sarris 2014).

**Research Question**

A successful transition will lead the child with ASD on the path to a fulfilling life that enables him or her to learn and grow. The purpose of this research is to find out how the topic of autism is being approached in various communities. As they become older, children with autism have to undergo acculturation and this is extremely difficult. The question then becomes: in what ways are parents with autistic children being helpful? It is a difficult path to begin with but that is why teachers exist who can start to assist in making transition plans that are targeted to assisting ASD students. When the time comes, the transition flows smoothly and with little to no obstacles present.

**Methodology**

The process of the data being collected is being done by surveys. The researcher’s list of questions included those regarding their profession and personality. How they are able to help children with disabilities succeed after high school and live a better life. Also as to what can they do to help with the program or provide for disability programs. The list of categories that the researcher has in survey are local professionals, parents, and students, residing in the Marianas Island, Tinian, Saipan, and Rota. At about 5-10 people can be surveyed for this research process. Before conducting a more specific interview, the researcher conducts a poll to get an idea of what kind of questions to ask. The researcher can conduct an Ad Hoc interview with a local professional about their work in the community. A depth interview in the form of qualitative questions will be given to local professionals as well.

**Findings**

According to Saipan Tribune, CNMI newspapers online article posted on October 14, 2016 by Erwin Encinares. CNMI-Public School System’s Special Education State Coordinator states statistical findings in comparison to previous years that drop out rates increased from SY 2014-15 at 0.45% more than target, and a 3% increase for SY15-16 drop out rate increase for High School students with a disability. The Special Education State Performance Plan is required to evaluate efforts of public agents to provide early interventions, special education, and related services to those in need.

CNMI disability related agencies include the following: University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). What purpose does this agency serve? The CNMI UCEDD program is part of the Pacific Basin University Centers for Excellence (PBUCE), that is based at the University of Hawaii. This includes American Samoa (AS) and Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). The site responsibility is to maintain the four (4) core functions by the “Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD). 1. Interdiscipline pre-service preparation and continuing education of students; 2. Community services; 3. Research; 4. Dissemination of Information. This program supports responsive approaches in understanding cultural differences and practices in serving and supporting individuals with disabilities and their families who are unserved and underserved within respective regions.

American Association on Health and Disability internet search provide valuable and resourceful links that is importantly helpful when planning and implementing a Transition plan, as cultural competency links provide a variety from A-Z disability organizations, resources, statistics, federal agencies, federal resources, alongside a health promoting curriculum. The one link I find useful is under services by Office of Disability Employment Policy [ODEP], U.S. Department of Labor, a website called “JAN” Job Accommodation Network that offers practical solutions for workplace success.

How helpful is this for Transition Planning? You can name the specific disability and it will specifically provide you a leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. It works towards effective solutions that benefit both employer and employee, JAN helps people with disabilities enhance their employability, and shows employers how to capitalize on the value and talent that people with disabilities add to the workplace. JAN’S a trusted consultants offer 1:1 guidance on workplace accommodations, with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). It has served customers across the U.S. and around the world for more than 25 years, and from Fortune 500 companies to entrepreneurs. They are the leaders and innovators on disability employment issues.

Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems, Inc. is a local agency that provides information, referral and/or technical assistance to individuals with disabilities, attorneys, government agencies, service providers, and other advocacy groups in helping protect the human, civil, and legal rights of individuals with disabilities. This agency is a local invite for direct client support and service representative on investigations, negotiating, and/or mediating problems presented by individuals with disabilities who are eligible for P&A and CAP services. This group of advocates can provide education and training for staff, government boards, advisory councils, volunteers, service delivery professionals, constituency groups, and other members of the community. If needed, the will provide legal counsel and litigation services to persons or groups who are eligible for services. One key member of CNMI’s disabilities organization that will be helpful if needed in an IEP Team meeting with regards to the Transition Planning and implementation process.

The C.N.M.I Council on Developmental Disabilities is another explored finding that can be a contributing service provider with an invite to support an individual student with a disability supports with developmental needs in achieving independence, productivity, integration and equal inclusion in the community. DD Council is currently conducting a community survey for its State Improvement Plan: Self-Advocates/Family Member(s) input for action plan 2017 to 2021. This survey will provide feedback in helping develop priorities for improving services in the CNMI for the next five (5) years.

**Analysis**

 In reflection of the findings, what is the best way to guide students into life after high school? Educators are faced with these challenging questions everyday. Students with disabilities need support from their IEP team during the middle school and high school to succeed after high school. Teachers need to understand that a they play a vital role in the participation and implementation success of the transition and career planning process.

The following is testimonial data from people being surveyed that will help identify similarities and differences in experiences, to compare and contrast statements as evidence to support finding options and a healthy argument in debate of *what are best practices for transitioning and planning?* *What may be the root causes & effects in the Transition Planning process? Pros or cons to consider with personal opinions to consider when making changes or planned improvements?*

In analyzing the surveys from Special Education Teachers or Professionals we have knowledgeable experiences of 1, 3, 10, to 16 years in the field of Advanced Special Ed, Special Education in Primary and Secondary grades, and Classroom and Special Ed teacher point of views. The ability to provide students with a good education in transition out of high school/college included these statements: Yes, I believe I did my best. We worked on understanding money, how to tell time, basic mathematics, and learning how to advocate for themselves.

My first year I had a student with Autism Spectrum Disorder and I felt that I didn't have enough time with him to focus on transition skills. There is currently only one type of diploma that PSS offers and once a student has completed the required amount of credits to graduate, then we have to let the student graduate. If there were a modified diploma or an alternate certificate, I feel like I would have had more time to really focus on the life skills the student needed to be successful in the community. Last school year and this school year, I taught a class called Transition Advocacy to my students. This year I focused on seniors and juniors. In this course, we focus on the skills needed for postsecondary options as well as advocacy skills like understanding special education and the laws that protect individuals with disabilities. I think this definitely prepared them for college or a job because they had to do research on colleges and learn how to write business letters to advocate for their needs. In terms of my students with more severe cognitive disabilities, I am able to focus on skills such as traffic signs, car parts, and important contact information during pull out sessions on Fridays; I mainly work with 7th-9th grade students. So I believe this question does not apply to me; At the Elementary School we did have students with AUTISM that needed Specially Designed Instructions, Accommodations, and Modifications to accomplish academic success in learning, self-care needs, coping skills - entering a new unknown environment, or change in routine. All worked with a student with a disability. Fifty percent stated able to succeed in high school/college, 25% disagree, 25% neutral of student successes.

*What were the challenges of working with a student with disability?* Comments included: Finding their motivation and keeping their attention; I wouldn't say I had challenges working with the students in particular, but some challenges I had to overcome are finding good resources for my students (worksheets, materials, etc) and scheduling with teachers to work on these skills; Not enough support from family; Challenges may include exploring his/her personality, characteristics in what makes the child smile, laugh, sadness, cry, or temperament. Once you've identified these qualities, then practice instructional techniques, strategies, and personal skills in caring, teaching, and learning. Understanding the unique learning styles of children with ASD, creating meaningful and individualized schedules to meet a child's learning needs. Exploring behavioral intervention strategies and techniques to apply when confronted with a child's behavior and problem solving approaches to reduce behavioral difficulties.

*What type of skills/techniques did you use to help your students with autism?* Positive reinforcements, scaffolding, chunking, pictorial representations, project-based assignments, and lots of repetition; Token boards helped with behavior management; colored prompts along with verbal prompts; real life experiences (some teachers offered trainings to my student -- like food and nutrition); I do not have any students with autism; I've been exposed to University of North Carolina's TEACCH - Training and Education of Autistic and Related CommuniCation for Handicapped Children. Autism Program: social skills training, parent training, classroom training, and more. Program teaches: Communication, Independence, Social and Leisure, Vocational, Relaxation, and Coping intervention strategies.

*How do you encourage students with autism to learn?* Positive reinforcements, differentiating instruction, motivational incentives; Token boards; Set learning objectives that provide specially designed instructional teaching and learning strategies & techniques; visual videos, pictures, hands-on (TEACCH Box Task Items for Specific Learning Objective) task activities, modified resource materials, and use of educational technology, assistive technology is necessary, to create a fun and engaging learning experience for a child.

*How do you guarantee that students are receiving the right type of support system?* Continuous conversations with the student's service providers; I look at the IEP and the input from parents and staff; I also consult with related service providers; You can't really guarantee that a student will be successful with planned task or activity, you will need to do a "Trial Task" analysis to determine continuation, or if it doesn't work for the child, then provide another way of introducing a learning skill. Differentiating activities with a variety of learning styles and techniques to find what works best for this individual child, granting progress and a successful learning outcome. *Do you as Special Education teacher, help manage them to successfully finish their education?* 100% yes! *Do you think that a program should be provided for people with disabilities after they graduate out of high school?* 100% yes!

*What type of programs would you consider for disability students after they transition from high school into the real world?* There are programs already in place on Saipan that aide with transition- OVR, CGC, CLI. These agencies have made contact with my students upon their visit to Rota; Saipan definitely offers more programs and services and this is the struggle that I find working on Tinian. I always have to advocate a little harder for my students since they aren't aware of the opportunities that are offered for students on Saipan. On Saipan, there is the Center for Living Independently where students are able to learn those life skills. It would be nice for something similar to happen here on Tinian. Although I try my best to assist my students with filling out applications (for scholarships, jobs, colleges, financial aid, food stamps) I'm sure that they soon forget how to fill the out properly. I think it would also be cool to have someone help them with the interview process for jobs. Another program that would benefit individuals with disabilities would be like an internship program with local businesses. This would (1)help IWDs earn experience, (2) help other businesses realize that IWDs can be hired and can help them be successful. I would also like to see a respite care program for the older IWDs -- many families that have IWDs often are low income and have to stay home to care for their family members; High School Transition Opportunities & Options - Apprenticeship, University or Community College Life, Workplace, Community Living.

*Do you have any advice for teachers who are working with students with a disability?*  Be patient and if you believe that they could, they would. Also, expect them to succeed and they will in their own way. No student is alike so don't treat them as if they are. And finally show them that you care because they don't feel they are good enough. Be the change in their life; If you aren't truly 100% invested or committed to working with IWDs, you're not in the right field and it's a disservice to the students with disabilities. A lot of the times, IWDs aren't successful because the teachers aren't invested enough; Unfortunately, I do not have any students with autism in my caseload; The wise saying, "Together Let's Ensure That Every Child Completes a Quality Inclusive Education, Without Discrimination or Exclusion!" Think Ability First!

 Furthermore, in the Autism parent survey, I received to valuable survey inputs that include the following questions and comments as noted: *What is the disability and how long have you known that your child has a disability?* The identified disability at age 4 years of age under Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD or AUT); Unknown as an infant until she started to walk and talk as a toddler as both parents started to notice distinct characteristics in repetitive behaviors and expressive communication abilities; I learned about my child’s autism ever since she was three years old. *How did you feel when you first found out about your child’s disability?*

Us as parents felt very concerned and questioning ourselves on the possibilities of: Why us? How could this have happened? What is Autism? We needed a deeper understanding of this Spectrum and be able to relate a variety of characteristics in her repetitive behaviors, amplified senses (sound, smell, taste, touch), interaction within her environment, self-play vs. social interaction with others and playfulness, and expressing her wants, needs, and feelings clearly. Father's feelings & emotions were of acceptance and desire to better understand this disability. Mother's feelings were much more deeply involved, as guilt & self-blame (something I must have done wrong from womb to delivery) first struck her, alongside difficulties with acceptance of this type of condition in knowing your child is different than others, not normal as all parents would want and wish for for a child; Appalled!

*What is the most challenging part of being a parent of a child with a disability?* The most challenging part of being a parent is the "Experiential Learning Process" as our child continues to grow older in age, behaviors in routine changes in many ways. As we as parents go through a process of "Trial & Error" when trying to better understand her most intimate needs, wants, and desires. In addition to educating our family, friends, and community through direct contact, or indirect experiential learning when encountering a child with Autism, and the unknown techniques and strategies on how to handle a given situation in the best ways possible without disturbing the child or making a scene or scenario escalade or worsen, meaning our child at a younger age had aggressive behaviors that we needed be able to identify those triggers and immediately know what to do to calm her aggression or temper; Communication.

*What is the most rewarding part of being a parent to a child with a disability?* The most important things through time is learning to identify her specific spectrum disorders, such as communication, sensory integration, gifts, OCD, anxiety, ODD, and specific learning difficulties; Little changes and developments mentally and physically. *How do you cope with raising a child with a disability?* You must posses or in time learn to acquire special parenting traits such a understanding differences, patience, tolerance, love & care, have courage, be responsible, loyalty, resourceful, self-discipline, peace maker, trustworthy, be able to multitask, teach social interaction skills, educate siblings to become sister advocates, parent advocates, and educating our community of this type of disability. Think Positive, Positive Actions, & Be Optimistic as through time, your child will become more independent with the help of many stakeholders - teamwork! Think Ability First & Let Not Attitude Become a Disability! With the help of my son and husband’s every small ways of assistance.

*What services are being provided to your child and on a scale of 1 - 5, how would you rate these services? (1 being 'disappointing' and 5 being 'excellent')*  HeadStart = 5, Elementary = 5, Jr. High = 5, High = 4 (-1 Transition After High School Jobs & Careers); 5.

*What advice would you give teachers who are working with children with disabilities?* Do Your Homework in Previewing an Individuals Education Program (IEP), or In Service Family Plan (ISFP), Understand the Diagnosis, Evaluation Records, Medical Records, Achievements, Behavior Traits & Work Habits, Dietary Habits, Goals in Place, Accommodation, Supplemental Aide, or Modifications and many more internal or external makeup of the child, teen, or adult. Then plan, if needed receive professional development training for instruction, care, safety alongside educational learning techniques and strategies, or programs needed; Lots of patience in their academics and behavior.

*What other comments or information would you like to share about raising a child with a disability?* It is vitally important to understand how individuals with ASD Communicate, Strengths/Interests, & Abilities; Just enjoy every moment with them. *Would you ever consider having programs provided for children with disability after they graduate out of high school?* 100% Yes!

**Conclusion**

People who are their in need to help create a brighter future for children with disability. The researcher wants to see what people can do to change their life for children with ASD? Are educators able to do what it takes to bring people to this transition? The researcher wants the CNMI to do what is best for our people with ASD. To stay educated and live life to the fullest. Based on this overall research, the agenda is to emphasis the importance of a High School Transition Plan that is well organized, planned successfully, with parental input and guidance in understanding their young teens individual interests, strengths, weaknesses, and functional abilities. With specific adaptations, accommodations, supports and service needs that will help aid in the creating a map for what their child’s future might look like based on what will bring their child happiness.

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