



Findings from the National Autism Data Center at the Life Course Outcomes Research Program

This study used data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 conducted in 2009 when young adults were 21-25 years old. We explored the characteristics and services experiences of young adults on the autism spectrum who attended postsecondary education within eight years after high school, focusing on those who attended a 2-year college only.

The Life Course Outcomes Research Program is building a base of knowledge about the things other than clinical interventions that promote positive outcomes for people on the autism spectrum and their families and communities.

Two-Year College Experiences of Students with Autism



About one-third of youth with autism in the U.S. will attend college in the early years after high school.¹ We understand little, though, about who these students are, their educational experiences, and whether they receive the supports they may need to succeed in college.

Stepping stone to the future

Students with autism attended 2-year colleges more often than they attended any other type of college experience, making these programs a frequent stepping stone to future employment and/or continued education. Of those who attended college, 86% attended a 2-year college at some point in their postsecondary education experiences. They may also have attended a 4-year college. But, for over half (56%), the 2-year college was their sole college experience.

College attendance

The role of two-year college in young adults with autism



32%

of young adults on the autism spectrum ever attended some type of college in their early 20s.



of those



86%

attended a 2-year college at some point in their college experience.

Some accessed supports available for all students on campus.

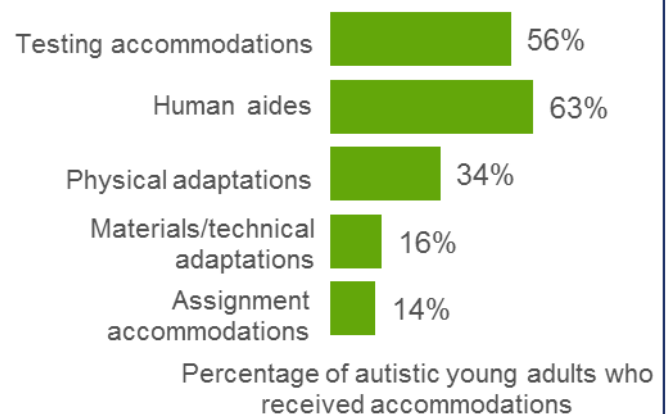
Approximately 43% of 2-year college students accessed help that was available to all students at the college, such as assistance through a writing center or tutoring available to all students.

Before they began 2-year college, only 61% of the parents expected their youth with autism would attend postsecondary education.

Half received disability support services.

In order to receive formal disability support services during college, students must recognize their disability and disclose it to the school. Of the students who did choose to disclose their disability, 49% received help, accommodations, or services to support their education. Of the students who received any type of supports (either based on their disability status or available to all students) at their 2-year college, 87% felt they received enough help, services or accommodations between their in-school and private supports. However, only 68% of 2-year college students with autism felt the services and accommodations they received were helpful.

Top 5 accommodations students with autism received at the 2-year college



Source: National Longitudinal Transition Study-2

Higher parent expectations, better functional skills

Functional Skills

More 2-year college attenders (65%) were able to count change pretty well compared to youth who never attended postsecondary education (37%).

Extracurriculars

Nearly all 2-year college attenders (94%) participated in at least one extracurricular activity in high school than youth who never attended postsecondary education (59%).

Conversation Ability

Fewer (39%) of those who attended 2-year college had a lot of trouble conversing, compared to 64% of those who never attended postsecondary education.

Navigation

Many (86%) 2-year college attenders were able to get to places outside the home pretty well, compared to 44% of those who never attended postsecondary education.

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References

†Shattuck PT, Narendorf SC, Cooper BP, Sterzing PR, Wagner M, and Taylor JL. (2012). Postsecondary Education and Employment among Youth with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Pediatrics* 129(6): 1042–1049.

