

Case Example for Strategy 1: Interviewing Skills for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder

What does the research say?

Vocational rehabilitation (VR) clients with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) learn better interviewing skills by practicing interviewing and watching others model interview skills (Smith et al, 2015).¹

What's an example of this research-informed practice?

One way to help VR clients is with virtual job interview training. In the Smith et al. study, adults with autism conducted virtual job interviews online with a simulated employer. The training is a simulation application that is available for download from the [Internet](http://simmersion.com/Social-Conversation-Training.aspx) at a cost of \$89 as of this writing (<http://simmersion.com/Social-Conversation-Training.aspx>). The software is compatible with Mac and PC systems, and it does not require specialized glasses or headsets. Trainees simulated a job interview with a virtual human resources representative at a large department store. The character generates interview questions using an algorithm based on customizable features, such as identifying the need for accommodations as well as the types of responses provided by the trainee that influence rapport. Trainees took part in five training sessions during a 2-week period. At each session, they completed four 20-minute interviews. After receiving background about a job, participants were allowed to ask questions, then they filled out a practice job application and had a mock interview with a simulated employer. The simulation provides feedback on whether the responses were adequate. Participants started with five “easy” interviews before advancing to the “medium” level, and they completed five medium interviews to advance to the “hard” level. Interviews were rated on nine communication skills that contribute to successful job interviews on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest score and 10 being the highest score.

1. Comfort level
2. Negotiation skills (asking for Thursdays off)
3. Conveying oneself as a hard worker (dependable)
4. Showing that they are easy to work with (teamwork)
5. Sharing things in a positive way
6. Conveying that they are honest
7. Expressing interest in the position
8. Conveying that one behaves professionally
9. Establishing overall rapport with the interviewer

How can this be adapted to vocational rehabilitation settings?

This intervention improved the performance of interviews and self-reported ratings of confidence, but adjustments would need to be made for VR agencies as many VR counselors have limited time with any given client.

1. Meet with VR counselors to identify example applications clients could fill out.

¹ Smith, M. J., Fleming, M. F., Wright, M. A., Losh, M., Boteler Humm, L., Olsen, D., & Bell, M. D. (2015). Brief report: Vocational outcomes for young adults with autism spectrum disorders at six months after virtual reality job interview training. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 45(10), 3364–3369. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-015-2470-1>

- a. For clients with ASD who are capable of filling it out on their own, VR counselors could ask them to practice doing so on their own time, and a VR counselor could provide feedback.
 - b. For clients with ASD who are unable to fill out an application, meet with their family and provide guidance on filling one out. If family members do not have experience doing this, a VR counselor may provide important advice.
2. Identify a set of job opportunity examples and mock interview questions from the past to conduct mock interviews about.
 - a. VR counselors could use the examples and questions to conduct a mock interview with a client, providing feedback about the strengths and how to improve weaknesses.
 - b. In many cases, a VR counselor may not have the time to conduct more than one mock interview, but the research suggests that many mock interviews improve the skill. One potential option is to enlist family members or friends and suggest the client conduct 10 interviews with as many people as possible.

Resources Related to Interviewing

- Article (free): Smith, M. J., Fleming, M. F., Wright, M. A., Losh, M., Boteler Humm, L., Olsen, D., & Bell, M. D. (2015). Brief report: Vocational outcomes for young adults with autism spectrum disorders at six months after virtual reality job interview training. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 45(10), 3364–3369. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-015-2470-1>
- Simulated interview training (cost is \$89) that was used in the study: <http://simmersion.com/Job-Interview-Training.aspx>
- Additional simulated training to improve social communication skills for adults with autism (free): <http://simmersion.com/Social-Conversation-Training.aspx>
- The document [*The Job Interview*](#) by Autism Speaks provides guidance specific to individuals with ASD: https://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/docs/etk_job_interview.pdf
- Society for Human Resource Management provides [example questions](#) and considerations for a mock interview: <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/interview-questions/pages/default.aspx>