

TITLE: Impact of Workplace Policies on Employment Outcomes for Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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STUDENT SUBMISSION: No

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Topic is employment outcomes for parents of youth with Autism spectrum disorders. The audience is health policy makers and researchers.

ABSTRACT: Maintaining employment and work productivity can be challenging for parents of youth with exceptional health care needs such as autism spectrum disorders (ASD). This study examined the impact of workplace policies on negative employment outcomes for parents of children with ASD and two comparison groups. Data come from the r-Kids study, which enrolled 1,461 families (n=564 ASD, 468 Asthma, 429 Control). Youth were aged 3-16.5, predominantly male (79%; due to matching with ASD youth), and over 50% of the sample is from racial or ethnic minority groups. Employment outcomes included hours missed from work, negative job changes (e.g., fired) and workplace productivity. We used structural equation modeling (SEM) with direct maximum likelihood estimation to examine whether workplace policies were directly and indirectly associated with employment outcomes. SEM showed that having better management support was associated with lower parenting stress and better work outcome. For example, better work environment reduced parenting stress ($\hat{\beta} = -0.088$, $p = .042$), and was directly associated with less time missed from work ($\hat{\beta} = -0.152$, $p = .001$) and was the strongest predictor of better employment outcomes. Results suggest that encouraging employers to provide flexibility and a supportive workplace could help parents of children with exceptional needs to succeed at work.

OBJECTIVE(S): Describe whether workplace policies improve employment outcomes for parents of children with Autism or parents of children in comparison groups.
