

## On-the-job training failing employees with intellectual disability

While many people with intellectual or learning disabilities want to work, some employees are missing out on developing their skillsets due to poor training programs and procedures.

In Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) outcomes for people with intellectual disability are poor because they are not being provided with opportunities to develop new skills, despite reporting that they are eager to learn.

Many strategies are shown to increase technical skills and improve changes in behaviour for people with intellectual disability such as Gold's "Try Another Way" approach, however research shows staff are not implementing the training they have learned.

From the multiple different strategies staff are taught to train people with intellectual disability, only two strategies were utilised by all staff regularly. They mostly relied on the "show-and-tell" method, where the trainer shows and tells the employee what to do, then watches and corrects by repeating the showing, telling, and correcting until the task is learnt.

In [\*Nature and extent of on-the-job training for employees with an intellectual disability: a pilot study, Research and Practice in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities\*](#), June Alexander, Jerry Ford, Parimala Raghavendra and Julie Clark say ADE staff reported several reasons for not using the recommended training strategies:

- There was a lack of instruction and opportunity to practise utilising the strategies
- Positive behaviour support was seen as being too difficult to implement
- The use of pictures or storyboards weren't used because pictures get damaged in the workplace environment
- Funding was not given to buy iPads to be utilised for the pictures or storyboards
- Video modelling was not being used because of the perceived time and effort it took to make a video; staff being unfamiliar with the strategy; and technical problems with the equipment
- Self-instruction was not used because not all the employees with disabilities could use natural speech.

In [\*Commentary on "Nature and extent of on-the-job training for employees with an intellectual disability: A pilot study"\*](#) Neil Kirby says more research should take place to determine whether workplace trainers are being taught the correct methods of teaching and are being given enough time to practice implementing these specialised techniques.

He also says there needs to be more research to determine if people with intellectual disabilities have lower workplace achievements and quality of life within their community due to the lack of proper training in ADE settings.

When employment training for people with intellectual disabilities is customised to the individual, it is shown to be effective, and that people with significant disabilities can learn the necessary skills if they're given relevant support and time to learn the new skills.

But people with intellectual disabilities say their training time is too short, and they don't have enough time to learn what is being taught.

With both trainers and employees being shown the right techniques and given an appropriate amount of support and time to learn these techniques, everyone will benefit.

Further reading:

[Nature and extent of on-the-job training for employees with an intellectual disability: a pilot study, Research and Practice in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#)

[Commentary on "Nature and extent of on-the-job training for employees with an intellectual disability: A pilot study"](#)

The Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability (ASID) is a peak body in intellectual disability which promotes research to inform and influence good practice and policy to achieve a society where people with intellectual disability are afforded the same rights and opportunities as everyone. Information and membership details can be found on the ASID website <https://www.asid.asn.au/>

ASID owns two international academic journals published through Taylor & Francis: *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability* (JIDD) and *Research and Practice in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* (RAPIDD). ASID members have access to these journals as part of their membership.

To increase the accessibility of research, this article synthesises the key messages from an article and commentary piece published in 2018 in RAPIDD related to employment of people with intellectual disability.