

Preparing for adulthood: Parent and school personnel perspectives on the needs of transition-age youth with autism spectrum disorder

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Introduction: With increasing numbers, worldwide, of transition-age youth with autism entering adulthood, there is a need to understand how to support this population to successfully transition to adult life. School personnel and parents play a critical role in the planning process. OTs need to understand parents' and teachers' priorities for students.

Objective: The objective of this analysis is to describe the priorities of parents and school personnel in preparing students with autism to be successful for their life after school.

Method: Data for this qualitative study were collected through 6 focus groups and 3 individual interviews with 17 parents of youth with autism and 5 focus groups with 23 school personnel to understand their priorities for preparing high school students with autism for life after school. We focused on students with autism who are receiving a high school diploma; thus, the students generally had average to above intellectual ability. We coded interview and focus group data to identify parents' and school personnel's priorities.

Results: Parents expressed hopes and expectations for their youth's futures in 6 primary domains of adult life: social participation, employment, safety, post-secondary education, community mobility, and independent living. School personnel focused on the development of organizational skills, the ability to problem-solve life situations, emotional regulation, self-determination, and self-advocacy.

Conclusion: These results highlight the need for occupational therapists to design interventions to support the skill development necessary for the achievement of goals in the adult life domains identified by parents.