Literature Review Executive Summary
Transition Programs for People with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities
Areas for Improvement and Strategies for Success

Executive Summary

A key finding of this review was that most of the research available on the transition from PSE to decent work focuses on people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD). There are multiple benefits of hiring employees with IDD, including higher work retention rate, improved workplace safety, increased awareness of IDD, elevated positivity in workplaces, stronger interpersonal environments and cooperative cultures, and more inclusivity in workplace practices (Readhead & Owen, 2020). Yet, people with IDD tend to have the lowest job outcomes among people with disabilities in North America. For example, in Canada, the rate of employment for people with IDD was 26% compared to a 52% employment rate for people with other disabilities (Crawford, 2011). Continuing this research and further improving transition programs for people with IDD is important. Our review identified different types of programs available for people with IDD and outlined both the positives and the negative aspects of the programs currently available.

Some of the key areas for improvement for the transition programs we outlined were issues with siloed/independent support services, need for enhanced wrap-around services, and unclear measures of success. We also found a lack of transparency about outcome measures in employment issues. Following Ryan et al (2019), we recommend more transparency from transition program facilitators to provide people with IDD with the information they need to choose the best programs which cater to their interests and abilities. (Ryan et al., 2019). We realize that transition programs can also be expensive and resource intensive—as such, programs should be consistently evaluating their progress to ensure they are effective by meeting the needs of the people they support. Finally, but perhaps most importantly, there is a research gap in accounting for the perspectives of people with IDD in the literature on employment outcomes for people with IDD.

This review outlines the lack of perspectives of people with disabilities, and this is especially true for people with IDD. Very few authors in our review   consulted people with IDD directly about their experiences; instead, most authors engage with their family members, case managers, and support staff. The lived experience of people with IDD should be prioritized in research and future studies should engage meaningfully with this group through methods such as interviews and focus groups. Further research may also balance the perspectives of people with IDD and the perspectives from support workers and families.

Currently, supported education and supported employment are separate services that often do not communicate well with each other. This leads to uncoordinated care and an inability to adapt to the changing goals and priorities of people with IDD (Maru et al., 2018). More collaboration and integration between these services could reduce strain on the individuals involved. One study, in fact, found that collaboration between service providers can lead to better mental health, more self-efficacy, and increased engagement with people with IDD (Maru et al., 2018)

While self-determination is important for successful transition from PSE to decent work, it is often the only measure used when evaluating transition programs. Many authors in our review uncritically used the concept of self-determination as the *only* measure of success in their studies without considering its effectiveness. While self-determination is an important predictor of success, more research should consider it alongside other important measures, including, knowledge of workplace rights, high expectations from stakeholders, and multicultural competency (Wlczenski et al., 2017).

Some key strategies for success for transition programs for people with IDD are peer mentorship, resources and support, consistent and long-term planning, support from employers, and

increased support for neurodiversity. Mentorship has been noted as a key strategy in transition from PSE to decent work more broadly, and our review found that peer support can be especially useful for people with IDD. Peer mentors can ease the transition to PSE, help develop soft and social skills, and may help with PSE completion rates (Sullivan, 2016; Thompson et al., 2018). Social skills and soft skills are also a significant predictor of both academic and employment success (Nasamran et al., 2017).

Ensuring that people with IDD have the resources and support they need to succeed is one of the most basic ways to help with the transition from PSE to decent work. Support services are often underfunded and lack the capacity for individualized support (Lindsay et al., 2017). One article from the US found that higher spending on vocational rehabilitation (VR) services lead to higher likelihood of employment for people with IDD (Sannicandro et al., 2018). Further, support from family and friends who have high expectations of people with IDD and the supports they receive have been shown to impact successful transitions (Kelley & Prohn, 2019).

Many articles stressed the importance of transition planning starting early in life, as early as elementary school. Since many predictors of success are linked to opportunities early in life, such as early work opportunities, it can be beneficial to start planning from a young age (Lindsay et al., 2017; Wilczenski et al., 2017). Further, employers can provide support through internships, apprenticeships, and placement opportunities for students with IDD. To enhance transition success, employers may ensure that these opportunities are accessible for people with IDD and that the appropriate accommodations are in place to make their workplaces are safe environments for all people with disabilities.

Finally, more research should consider the neurodiversity movement (NDM) when engaging with people with IDD. While many articles focused on IDD, very few used the language used by neurodivergent or neurodiverse communities. These terms align with the social model of disability because the concept of neurodiversity suggests that there are different neurotypes resulting in behavioral and communicative differences that are often considered "disorders" by the mainstream (Singer, 1999). Future research should consider the NDM, and workplaces should work on accommodating different neurotypes to make their workspaces more inclusive (Mellifont, 2021).

These findings are drawn from research Eviance recently completed in collaboration with its partners at Toronto Metropolitan University, OCADU, St. Francis Xavier University, and ARCH Disability Law Centre.

Recommendations
- Future research should:
    - Prioritize the lived experience of people with IDD
    - Use multiple tested methods when evaluating the efficacy of transition programs
    - Consider using language that doesn't rely on the medical model of disability, specifically the terms neurodivergence and neurodiversity
- Programs should work to better serve people with IDD, including:
    - Collaboration between support education and supported employment units
    - Provide transparent information about their success rates and efficacy
    - Collaboration with employers to provide accessible internship and placement opportunities
    - Ensure people with IDD have the support and resources they need to succeed and help provide long-term sustainable transition planning

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4

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