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DURHAM, N.H. – DURHAM, N.H. – A collaborative study from the universities of New Hampshire and Maine has found that youth with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) benefitted significantly from a family-centered transition services model, with 90 percent of participants finding employment after high school.

In a randomized experimental trial, researchers found that, during the first year, youth with ASD who received services through the Family-Centered Transition Project (FCTP) had significantly higher student expectations for the future, parent expectations for the future, self-determination, and vocational decision-making ability than a control group.

“FCTP’s process has been proven effective and results in good transition outcomes,” said David Hagner, project director with the UNH Institute on Disability (IOD). “About 90 percent of the students who participated in our first project have obtained employment since graduating from high school.”

Results of the study were published in the journal Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities and have been presented at seven national conferences since the project’s conclusion in August 2011.

The project’s first phase served a total of 47 students with ASD ages 16-18 and their families from New Hampshire and Maine. The study was funded by a two-year, $800,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Research Program to the IOD and the Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies at the University of Maine.

Thanks to an additional three-year, $600,000 grant from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, more students with ASD from New Hampshire and Maine will benefit from transition services proven effective during the first round of project activities.

In the second phase of the project, the Autism Society of Maine and the Strafford Learning Center (Somersworth) are working with schools, developmental service agencies, and vocational rehabilitation agencies to redirect and blend existing transition service funding to support FCTP’s process so more students and families can experience positive outcomes.

“We use grant funds to fill in gaps while we work on developing and marketing the service, with the expectation that it will be sustainable after the three-year project is over,” said Hagner.
Full text of the article, “Outcomes of a Family-Centered Transition Process for Students With Autism Spectrum Disorders,” is available here: http://foa.sagepub.com/content/27/1/42.full.pdf+html. For more information or to get involved with FCTP, visit www.iod.unh.edu/Projects/fctp.

The Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire was established in 1987 to provide a coherent university-based focus for the improvement of knowledge, policies, and practices related to the lives of persons with disabilities and their families. Its mission is to strengthen communities to ensure full access, equal opportunities, and participation for all persons.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

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