

Mental Health Accessibility for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Needs Assessment and Comparison of Services in Iowa and Puerto Rico

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Background

Adults who have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have historically had difficulty with accessing mental health services. The purposes of this project are to gather information regarding the availability of mental health services in both Iowa and Puerto Rico, and outline some of the barriers that exist for accessing services.

Objectives

- A. Trainees will be able to discuss the need for mental health services for adults who have an ASD diagnosis.
- B. Trainees will be able to discuss the availability of mental health services for adults who identify as having ASD who participate in the research project.
 - a. In Iowa
 - b. In Puerto Rico
- C. Trainees will be able to discuss barriers that exist, both in Iowa and Puerto Rico, for adults who have ASD to obtain mental health services.
- D. Trainees will design a survey that is built to be easily understood and accessible in a way that is best for people with ASD.
- E. Trainees will organize and analyze data collected from participant surveys using appropriate methods,

Introduction

- Most research has been on children & adolescents.
- As of 2017, the rate of ASD was at 0.9% and has increased by .32% every year in Puerto Rico and is estimated to be around 2.28% in Iowa.
- Awareness of social challenges as compared to peers and appear to be at greater risk for developing depression, low self-esteem, and anxiety when faced with peer rejection or bullying.
- Adults with ASD were thought to be at increased risk for comorbid mental health conditions (anxiety & depression being more prominent).
- Increased rates of suicidal thoughts & behaviors.
- Complex & disconnected systems with multiple service points that are not always well connected.

Survey Access

Please only look through the survey. We plan to send this out and collect data after LEND and IRB Approval. Thank you!



Method

- An instrument was developed to assess the perceived availability and barriers for adults with ASD to access mental health services by using a literature review and qualitative methodology.
- Semi-structured interviews were conducted in both Iowa and Puerto Rico:
 - 6 adults with ASD & 4 caregivers
 - ZOOM and in person
 - 20-30 min in length
- Literature Review search terms included ASD, Mental Health & Adults
- Survey was developed in English and translated into Spanish
- Distributed via REDCap pending University of Iowa IRB approval
- Survey results will be used to inform policy makers

Results

- The survey has a total of 26 questions, including demographic questions, and takes approximately 10 minutes or less to complete/answer.
- Not a Likert Scale (participant preference).
- Ability to include comments.
- Has the ability to increase or decrease the font size
- The language can change between English and Spanish by answering the first question, "Preferred Language."