

My name is Kit Hastings-Kort. I work for United Services, Inc. in Willimantic, CT. I am the Program Coordinator of one of the transitional living houses that is part of Young Adult Services in the state of Connecticut. I came here today to speak as a service provider for young adults on the spectrum.

The population of young adults that I serve are 18 to 25 years old. Through our services we provide social activities, therapeutic groups, clinical support, vocational support, case management and help with housing. These are services that do not all continue after our consumers age out or leave the program. There is a need to have life time wrap around services made available to this population.

The young adults that I work with are involved with a number of organizations. Some of them work with a very strong educational program called STAAR that is connected with E. O Smith High School and the University of Connecticut. The STAAR program gives vocational and educational opportunities but for a limited time. Project Genesis also does mentoring and gives vocational support to young adults who are still in school. A number of the young adults that I work with have work assessments done through BRS. Most of them fail those assessments and then no longer receive any kind of work related support from anyone.

My studies about autism stress the need to create work environments that incorporate more breaks, prompts, vocational aides, mentoring, etc. so that these individuals can gain some independence working and gain opportunities to live independently. Young adults may need VNA services so that they consistently take their medication. Individuals on the spectrum can be easily taken advantage of by their peers and others in their local communities and online. They may find themselves homeless because of their desire to live with other people who may in turn steal from them and compromise their housing.

Many times, individuals on the spectrum, are unable to live with their families due to their difficulties communicating with and relating to loved ones. Communication partners are needed as resources to help with interpersonal conflicts. Clinical and therapeutic groups are need for individuals and their families.

In summary, if we are to live in a just society, individuals with all kinds of special needs and talents need to have the services available to them and their families so that they can live productive lives throughout which they feel valuable with an important place in the lives they most care about and in their communities. Thank you.