Who & What is TACT?

T.A.C.T is a 501(c)(3) organization with a mission to encourage and empower the full spectrum of individuals with autism through education and employment in skilled trades.

Who & What is TACT?

TACT was founded in 2016 by parents inspired by both the strengths and challenges in their children that are on the autism spectrum. It was founded with a belief that the first five years of anyone’s life are foundational and that every child, including those with autism, can learn and develop. The first few years were up and down, but as they pressed on, their son started to develop in ways they had not anticipated. They began to focus on early speech development and continued to work with their son. As they looked more into the future, they realized they needed to continue to work on sensory developments. They turned to TACT.

As parents, Danny and Claire started looking into programs to build upon their son’s strengths to help him build confidence and social and emotional awareness. They couldn’t find anything outside of the doctor’s office. So, they founded T.A.C.T.

TACT is the FIRST & ONLY trade program in the entire country developed exclusively for individuals with autism.

The Future of Autism

Studies analyzing services of K–8 students found that rates of service were: highest in 3rd and 4th grades and lowest in 8th grade.
IDEA requires students with ASD to have a transition plan by age 14.

Only 58% of high school students had one; even fewer implement them.

Studies found that rates of service were lowest in 8th grade.

IDEA requires students to have a transition plan at 14.

How old are most students in 8th grade? 14

In the next decade alone, nearly 500,000 children with ASD will age out of the special education system - more if prevalence continues to increase - leaving parents and children asking what's next?

"When you get to be 18 or 21, it's like falling off a cliff. We don't do a great job of educating parents about what's going to happen after school ends."

Zosia Zaks, a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor for adults with ASD

What Happens After Highschool?

More than half of youth with ASD had no job and no postsecondary education in the two years after leaving high school.

Unsurprisingly, these same individuals had significantly higher rates of complete social isolation than people with other disabilities.

The autism community has a 90% underemployment rate.
The lack of available employment and/or training for adults with autism puts the cost for services and day programs back on the families and taxpayers.

The Cost of Autism

The cost of raising a neurotypical child today – excluding the cost of college.

$233,610

The lifetime cost for an individual with autism.

$1,400,000

The lifetime cost for an individual with autism and an intellectual disability.

$2,400,000

Of those with autism 40% have an accompanying intellectual disability.

The current costs of ASD are more than double the combined costs of stroke and hypertension, and are equivalent to the costs of diabetes.

Autism Costs in Relation to Other Diagnoses
$300,000,000,000
The annual cost of autism.

$200,000,000,000
The annual cost of adults with autism.

Leonard Abbeduto: Director of the UC Davis MIND Institute

“The staggering costs identified in this study should serve as a call to action. We need to ensure that all children have access to intensive early intervention; that school-based interventions to support academics, as well as social and language skills, are adequately funded; and that supports are put in place to ensure better postsecondary and vocational options for adults. Investing in these areas, I believe, will actually reduce the costs to society.”

If not college, than what?

Among young adults with ASD in the general population, the rates of postsecondary education did not improve statistically from late 1990s to late 2000s.

The Skilled Trades

“Schools have taken out the skilled trades classes, as you know, so these kids aren’t getting exposed to the skilled trades. Of the autism population, I’d guess 25% could be placed in a skilled trade.”
Skilled Trade Careers are presently among the fastest growing and most difficult to fill careers.

By the end of 2025, the amount of baby boomers retiring will leave 31 MILLION trade positions unfilled.

In Colorado, the unemployment rate sits at an especially tight 2.8% and analysts are projecting job creation to slow because companies can’t find enough employees to keep growing.

“The economy is still strong here. We just don’t have enough labor,”

Richard Wobbekind, executive director of the business research division at the University of Colorado in Boulder, told the Denver Post.

Colorado Trade Workers.

Eric Graybill – Electrician: “You get on one job, you get one done and then two more come in.”

“We’re not getting the young guys coming into the trade. If we don’t get these guys coming in to learn the trade, it’s going to get even worse,” Graybill said.

It’s the same issue for general contractors like Nate Latimer.

“All my work is 100 percent referral work,” Latimer said. “And I’m actually having to turn down referrals.”
Here at TACT, we envision a world where neuro-diversity is not only embraced but inherently valued; a world where the full spectrum of the autism community can contribute their talents and gifts and find personal fulfillment.

**What Skills Can YOU Gain at TACT?**

- Career exploration
- Job skills training - specific to trades of interest
- Hands on learning
- Sensory adaptive environment
- Individualized curriculum
- Motor Skills (fine and gross)
- Developmentally Appropriate Designed Curriculum
- Executive functioning skills
  - e.g., organizing, prioritizing, time management, regulating
- Social and communication skill development
- Independent living skills
- Resume/interviewing skills
- Personal financial management
- Support with post-secondary options; vocational/trade school, college, and competitive employment.

**TACT Programming**

- Exposure to create a track record of interest and discover a career!
- Holistic approach teaches math, communication, soft skills, technical skills, etc together rather than in isolation
  - Most autism groups break down and teach everything one at a time
- Trades as a vessel for developing work skills
- Fun, engaging, projects with the right staff
  - Use the tools right away - safely (learn through doing)
  - 6 students per class with 2 teachers
  - Deception without deceit
    - Example - chair or box with same materials, cuts, measurements, etc
    - Each student is achieving the desired skill with the illusion of picking their own project
  - Permanent products
- Environment set up for success
  - iPads with TAs, color coding, personal tool boxes, videos and written instructions

- Night and weekend classes, 90 minutes of hands on learning
  - The right staff!
    - Make it about the students
    - Can balance control with support
    - Real choice over illusion of choice in job selection
    - Strengths based
    - Assessment and tracking
TACT’s Transition program is designed to educate transition age students (ages 14-30) to develop interests and skills for life.

- See what employers need – train for the job
- Train at TACT for the job
  - Training is real and authentic
  - Lower employment costs for training for employers
    - The sales pitch
      - Higher retention rate and on task performance
      - Showcase of talent and skill
    - Saves companies money from turnover and training
    - Hands on training/teaching
    - Job coach when at the job
    - Portfolio over resume
    - Train employers
    - No time limit on training
      - Not broken out in auto 101, auto 102, etc like a traditional school

Success in the Trades

- Most employers have already embraced language barriers
- Color coding and visually based
- Repetitive
- Career level income over entry level job placement
- Room for growth and advancement
- Trades are set up to work in isolation or in groups
- Rewards talent and performance

Asset Based Approach vs Deficit Based Approach

Recent studies have proposed that implementing strength-based programs that prepare adolescents with ASD for the workforce could improve their employment outcomes in adulthood.

So what does an asset based approach look like?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison Between the Approaches</th>
<th>Asset Based</th>
<th>Deficit Based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengths Driven</td>
<td>Needs Driven</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity Yes</td>
<td>Problems Solved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internally Focused</td>
<td>Externally Focused</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is present that we can build upon?</td>
<td>What is missing that we must go find?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Environment

To accommodate our students, our garage - where carpentry, auto mechanics, and welding classes take place - space is equipped with specific ventilation that can be easily turned on/off to reduce prolonged exposure to loud noises as well as noise cancelling headphones, tinted safety glasses for those sensitive to light, even weighted vests for comfort.
Environment

Spaces are organized with both written and visual labels for students of varying abilities— and where applicable have also been color coated.

Environment

In addition to specific changes in our garage, we have created a space for students to escape when over-stimulated. This sensory room includes large mats for big body movement and gross motor input, special lighting fixtures, a trampoline, swivel chairs, weighted animals/ lap pads/ vests, as well as a variety of fidgets and strengtheners. In our larger open area, there are a few swings as well.

Takeaway

- Large pool of extremely talented people that are unemployed
- They are more reliable, have better time on task on and less turnover
- They are more engaged and dependable
- TACT provides all training and skills so each candidate is "job ready" specific to each job an employer is hiring for
- TACT is working to be Denver employer’s to funnel qualified candidates.
- Joint marketing - so your community knows the good work you do
- Incredible on-task time and reliability