Hammill Institute on Disabilities

Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals
1–10

DOI: 10.1177/2165143414528241
cdtei.sagepub.com
SAGE

An Exploratory Investigation Into Family Perspectives After the Family Employment Awareness Training

Grace L. Francis, PhD[1], Judith M. S. Gross, PhD[1], Ann P. Turnbull, EdD[1], and H. Rutherford Turnbull III, LIM[1]

Abstract

Competitive employment (i.e., employment in community settings among people without disabilities for minimum wage or higher) improves quality of life for people with disabilities who have individualized support needs (ISN). However, attaining competitive employment can be challenging for people with ISN. This study used a mixed methods design to evaluate the perspectives of 68 families who attended the Family Employment Awareness Training (*FEAT*). Findings indicated that families who attended *FEAT* (a) accessed competitive employment resources following *FEAT* and (b) reported competitive employment outcomes for their family members with ISN following *FEAT*. We discuss implications of these findings and recommendations for future research.

Keywords

competitive employment, training, outcomes, supported employment

Competitive employment (i.e., employment in community settings among people without disabilities for minimum wage or higher) results in numerous benefits for people with disabilities who have individualized support needs (ISN) and require services and supports in the workplace (Buntinx et al., 2008). People with ISN have various disabilities and "require services, supports, accommodations, or modifications over and above what is available to all employees in order to experience success at competitive jobs" (Francis, Gross, Turnbull, & Parent-Johnson, 2013, p. 1).

Benefits of competitive employment include enhanced self-esteem, independence, and quality of life (Boeltzig, Timmons, & Butterworth, 2008; Verdugo, Martin-Ingelmo, Jordán de Urríes, Vicent, & Sánchez, 2009). Despite these benefits and various policies (e.g., Impairment Related Work Expenses) and programs (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation) designed to facilitate competitive employment, individuals with disabilities continue to face higher unemployment rates than people without disabilities (Schmidt & Smith, 2007; Schur, Kruse, & Blanck, 2005). People with ISN are also frequently placed into segregated settings such as sheltered workshops or enclaves that offer few challenges or variety and sub-minimum wage pay (Carter et al., 2010; Migliore, Mank, Grossi, & Rogan, 2007; National Disability Rights Network, 2011).

While competitive employment rates for people with ISN are discouraging, high familial expectations for competitive employment and knowledge of available services and supports can increase the likelihood of people with ISN securing and maintaining competitive employment (Carter, Austin, & Trainor, 2011; Cimera, 2008). For instance, with high familial expectations for competitive employment, people with ISN are five times more likely to work (Carter et al., 2011). In addition, knowledge of employment resources (e.g., employment-related services and supports) can improve expectations for competitive employment by making competitive employment seem more realistic and obtainable (Hasnain & Balcazar, 2009).

Adult training programs are one way to improve expectations and knowledge (Deutschlander, 2010; Migliore, Butterworth, Nord, & Gelb, 2011; Sprague et al., 2012). The Family Employment Awareness Training (*FEAT*) is an example of an adult training program designed to raise employment expectations and knowledge among people with ISN, their families, and professionals to improve competitive employment outcomes. Consistent with Adult Learning Theory (Merriam, Caffarela, & Baumgartner, 2007), *FEAT* conducted face-to-face trainings that

[1]University of Kansas, Lawrence, USA

Corresponding Author:
Grace L. Francis, University of Kansas, Haworth Hall, 1200 Sunnyside Ave., Lawrence, KS 66045-7534, USA.
Email: glucyf@ku.edu

emphasized active learning and practical use of training materials and information. *FEAT* combined numerous effective instructional strategies and activities to raise participant expectations and knowledge, including lecture, positive examples, break-out sessions, networking opportunities, and individual/group activities (E. Hall, 2007; Ison et al., 2010; Kearney & De Young, 1995; Migliore et al., 2011; Shriner, Schlee, Hamil, & Libler, 2009). *FEAT* also offered follow-up technical assistance, a practice found to increase mastery of information and increase participant outcomes (Joyce & Showers, 2002). A pilot study on the immediate influence of *FEAT* indicated that participants experienced increased expectations for competitive employment and knowledge of employment-related services and supports following *FEAT* (Francis, Gross, Turnbull, & Parent-Johnson, 2013). Moreover, a follow-up study on the influence of *FEAT*, 1 to 2 years later, revealed participants rated their expectations as average and their knowledge as above average (Francis, Gross, Turnbull, & Turnbull, 2013). However, this study did not indicate if *FEAT* influenced participant behavior or employment outcomes.

The purpose of this study was to investigate families' perspectives of *FEAT* 1 to 2 years after attendance because families are the most likely group to influence competitive employment outcomes for people with ISN (Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act [DD Act], 2000; Timmons, Hall, Bose, Wolfe, & Winsor, 2011). Specifically, we sought to gather their perspectives on accessing employment resources and competitive employment outcomes for their family members with ISN because these were targeted outcomes of *FEAT.* To do so, we used a mixed-method design (Creswell, 2009), distributing a *FEAT* Follow-Up Survey and using a *FEAT* Interview Protocol to investigate the following questions:

1. Do families report accessing resources related to competitive employment after attending *FEAT*?
2. Do families report that their family members with ISN gained competitive employment positions following *FEAT*?

Method

Participants

We originally recruited participants to attend *FEAT* through local schools and parent training and information centers. Between June 2010 and November 2011, 324 individuals attended *FEAT* (Francis, Gross, Turnbull, & Parent-Johnson, 2013). For this study, we distributed recruitment letters to *FEAT* attendees who provided contact information when registering for *FEAT* in 2010-2011, noting that attendees from a single family should "*collaborate* to complete a single survey for *each* family member with a disability for whom [they] attended the training." Because our unit of study was the family, we condensed the 324 *FEAT* attendees into family units (i.e., parents, siblings, and members with ISN) when the registration information and surname clearly indicated familial status. This and missing contact information resulted in 220 potential family units. Of that number, 114 (52%) responded. However, we excluded six family units from the final sample because they indicated that although they registered, they did not attend *FEAT*. One family unit in the final sample of 108 completed a Spanish version of the survey.

We report only on family data in this manuscript (surveys, $n = 68$; interviews, $n = 13$) for the following reasons: (a) families are the most likely group to influence competitive employment outcomes for people with ISN (DD Act, 2000; Timmons et al., 2011), (b) the *FEAT* program was designed for families, (c) families (including the member with ISN) constituted the largest participant group, and (d) all data reported in this manuscript related to families (e.g., professionals were not asked about competitive employment outcomes). Table 1 displays demographic information of the families who returned the *FEAT* Follow-Up Survey.

We offered family units the opportunity to participate in a semi-structured interview about their experiences seeking, obtaining, or maintaining employment for their family member with ISN. Twenty-six families volunteered to participate in follow-up interviews. We purposefully selected for maximum diversity (Merriam, 2009) across multiple characteristics and interviewed families until we reached saturation (we ceased to find new data; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) with 13 interviews. Table 2 displays demographic information for the family units interviewed.

Procedure

We administered the *FEAT* Follow-Up Survey and *FEAT* Interview Protocol to assess families' perspectives regarding resource use and competitive employment outcomes. The following section describes the *FEAT* program, instruments used in this study, and data analysis methods.

FEAT. *FEAT* was a product of collaboration between university researchers and state parent training and information center leaders, funded by Kansas' state Medicaid agency. The program was designed to increase expectations for competitive employment and knowledge about employment-related resources among families. However, professionals (e.g., teachers, transition specialists, case managers, job coaches) also attended the program. The *FEAT* team used design-based research methodology (Kelly, Lesh, & Baek, 2008) to design, develop, and pilot *FEAT.* Each *FEAT* training took place over two 8-hr days for 2 days, with Day 1 focusing on increasing expectations and Day 2 dedicated to enhancing knowledge.

Table 1. Demographic Information for Participants.

Demographic variables	Percent of families (n = 68)
Primary language use in home	
English	96.7
Spanish	1.7
American sign language	1.7
Race/ethnicity	
White/Caucasian	79.3
Hispanic/Latino	6.9
Multiple races/ethnicities	5.2
Asian/Asian American	3.4
Black/African American	5.2
Average annual income for household	
Below US$15, 000	1.9
US$15, 000–US$24,999	1.9
US$25,000–US$34, 999	7.7
US$35,000–US$44,999	15.4
US$45,000–US$54,999	3.8
US$55,000–US$64,999	5.8
US$65,000–US$74,999	19.2
US$75,000–US$84,999	3.8
US$85,000–US$94,999	5.8
US$95,000 and higher	34.6
Highest level of education obtained in household	
High school diploma	3.4
Trade school/technical degree	8.5
Some college	8.5
2-year college degree	10.2
4-year college degree	37.3
Graduate degree	32.2
Disability of family member	
Autism	32.8
Developmental disabilities	14.8
Multiple disabilities	23
Down syndrome	14.8
Cerebral Palsy	13.1
Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder	1.6
Level of support needed by family member	
None	1.8
Minimal	17.5
Moderate	29.8
Extensive	50.9

Source. Adapted from Francis, Gross, Turnbull, and Turnbull (2013). Copyright 2013 by IOS Press. Adapted with permission.

The *FEAT* curriculum addressed expectations for competitive employment by encouraging participants to "build the dream of employment" by (a) presenting real-life stories of successful competitive employment from Kansas and across the nation; (b) conducting a break-out session for family members with ISN targeting identifying interests, strengths, needs, and job development; and (c) facilitating rotating discussion groups of local competitively employed people with ISN, employers, and entrepreneurs with ISN. The curriculum also addressed knowledge of employment resources by (a) presenting information about job supports, funding sources, benefits, programs, and organizations; (b) conducting a break-out session for family members with ISN on disability disclosure and self-advocacy; (c) facilitating rotating discussion groups of local service programs, agencies, and organizations (e.g., workforce centers, rehabilitation services); and (d) guiding participants to create employment action plans.

The training and materials were also offered in Spanish. All participants were encouraged to sign up for follow-up technical assistance services provided by *FEAT* staff. Although several trainers conducted the 11 *FEAT* trainings held around the state of Kansas from 2010 to 2011, the *FEAT* development team used a train-the-trainer model, provided a scripted training manual, and assisted with delivery of the training curriculum at each site. A repeated-measures ANOVA indicated that the variances between trainings did not significantly influence knowledge levels (Francis, Gross, Turnbull, & Parent-Johnson, 2013).

Instrumentation and design. We used two instruments, a *FEAT* Follow-Up Survey and a *FEAT* Interview Protocol to measure participant perspectives.

FEAT Follow-Up Survey. We developed and distributed a *FEAT* Follow-Up Survey (Francis, 2013) using research-based guidelines recommended by Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2009) to measure *FEAT*'s longer-term influence. Two native Spanish speakers, both professionals in the field of developmental disabilities and presenters of *FEAT* in Spanish, worked independently and then collaborated to translate all survey materials into a "neutral" or "universal" form (Eremenco, Cella, & Arnold, 2005). This ensured Spanish translations accurately represented all survey concepts (Dillman et al., 2009). Because all participants had the option to complete a paper or electronic version of the survey in English or Spanish, we assigned participants individual identification numbers to prevent duplication of responses.

FEAT Interview Protocol. We used the *FEAT* Interview Protocol (Francis, 2013) to conduct 13 semi-structured interviews with family units (i.e., parents and their children with ISN) in person (n = 7) or via telephone (n = 6). Two interviewers conducted each interview. One acted as the primary interviewer, and the second handled logistical issues (e.g., consent forms, recording devices) and took notes, similar to an assistant moderator role in focus group research (Shank, 2006). We began each interview by introducing the study and ourselves, explaining confidentiality measures, and encouraging interviewees to discuss their experiences fully and honestly. We audio-recorded the

Table 2. Demographic Information and Selection Criteria for Interview Participants.

Family	Average annual household income	Highest level of education obtained in home	Primary language(s) spoken in home	Race/ethnicity/(ies) of family members	Level of support needed by family member	Current employment status of family member
1	65,000–74,900	Graduate degree	English	White/Caucasian	Moderate	Competitive employment
2	85,000–94,900	4-year college degree	English	White/Caucasian	Minimal	Competitive employment
3	35,000–44,900	Some college	English	White/Caucasian Hispanic/Latino	Minimal	Competitive employment
4	95,000+	Graduate degree	English	White/Caucasian multiple races/ethnicities	Minimal	Competitive employment
5	95,000+	Graduate degree	English	Hispanic/Latino	Extensive/Minimal	Unemployed/ volunteer
6	35,000–44,900	Some college	English	White/Caucasian	Extensive	Internship
7	95,000+	4-year college degree	English	White/Caucasian multiple races/ethnicities	Moderate	Gained, but lost job
8	Not reported	4-year college degree	English	Black/African American	Extensive	Sheltered workshop
9	65, 00–74,900	4-year college degree	English	White/Caucasian	Extensive	Sheltered workshop
10	25,000–34,900	Some college	English	White/Caucasian	Minimal	Sheltered workshop
11	95,000+	Graduate degree	English	White/Caucasian	Extensive	Sheltered workshop
12	25,000–34,900	2-year college degree	English/ American sign language	White/Caucasian Hispanic/ Latino	Extensive/Minimal	Not sought
13	Not reported	Graduate degree	English	White/Caucasian	Extensive	Not sought

Source. Adapted from Francis, Gross, Turnbull, and Turnbull (2013). Copyright 2013 by IOS Press. Adapted with permission.
Note. Participant information organized by criteria for selection.

interviews with participants' consent and transcribed the interviews to ensure thick descriptions and accurate representation of data. The mean length was 74 min, with interviews lasting between 48 and 116 min. During interviews, participants described their families and then answered several open-ended questions about *FEAT* and their employment-related experiences (e.g., tell me about your child's job, tell me about your experiences helping your child gain employment, did attending *FEAT* impact your child's road to employment). The interviewers debriefed after each interview by discussing key themes, information obtained (or not obtained), compelling findings, and potential changes to the protocol.

Data Analysis

We used SPSS statistical software (Version 20.0) to calculate data frequencies for the Follow-Up Survey on accessing resources, employment outcomes, and *FEAT*'s influence.

We used NVivo qualitative software (Version 10) to manage the analysis of the interview data. Using basic interpretative qualitative analysis (Merriam, 2002), we (a) identified general themes found among and across responses, (b) coded the data into categories, (c) revisited codes to determine accuracy and appropriateness, and (d) recoded data as necessary (Creswell, 2009). During this process, the *FEAT* team collaborated to discuss the codes and ensure a common understanding of the categories and themes. We also used several methods to ensure trustworthiness of the qualitative analysis (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005) such as (a) transcript checks (comparing written transcripts with original interview recordings), (b) peer debriefing (reviewing and questioning interpretations of qualitative data with colleagues), and (c) comparison (comparing data from contrasting cases of participants).

Results

The purpose of this study was to determine the perspectives of families who attended *FEAT* in 2010 and 2011. We combined the quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interview) data in these results to address our research questions. In this section, we report percentages, frequencies, and qualitative themes that emerged from the interviews.

Research Question 1: Resources Accessed

Survey data. We used survey data to determine (a) the percentage of families who used *FEAT* information/materials and how they used it, (b) the number of services and supports accessed/used by families since attending *FEAT*, and (c) the percentage of families that used *FEAT* technical assistance and how they rated it. We used interview data to derive information on behavior related to competitive employment.

FEAT information/materials. In all, 65% ($n = 41$) of families indicated they used *FEAT* information/materials (e.g., web resources, information packet, resource CD) after attending the program. Families reported using the information/materials several ways: (a) sharing information with friends ($n = 29$, 44.1%), (b) sharing information with family ($n = 26$, 38.2%), (c) sharing information with professionals ($n = 23$, 33.8%), (d) looking at or using web resources ($n = 22$, 32.4%), and (e) sharing information with colleagues ($n = 15$, 22.1%).

Services and supports. Families accessed/used an average of five employment-related services and supports after attending *FEAT*. The minimum number of services and supports accessed/used was zero ($n = 6$) and the maximum was 10 ($n = 1$). Those most frequently accessed/used were as follows: (a) case management ($n = 22$, 32.4%), (b) Community Developmental Disability Organization (regional, single points of entry for obtaining services through the developmental disabilities system in Kansas; $n = 16$, 23.5%), (c) Home and Community-Based Services Waivers ($n = 15$, 22.1%), (d) Vocational Rehabilitation ($n = 10$, 14.7%), and (e) job coaching ($n = 9$, 13.2%)/assistive technology ($n = 9$, 13.2%).

FEAT technical assistance. A total of 41% ($n = 26$) of families indicated they used *FEAT* technical assistance. Of those, 42.9% ($n = 12$) indicated they strongly agreed that the assistance they received was helpful, 35.7% ($n = 10$) agreed, 14.3% ($n = 4$) neither agreed nor disagreed, 3.6% ($n = 1$) disagreed, and 3.6 % ($n = 1$) strongly disagreed.

Interview data. Participants reported accessing resources by (a) networking and connecting with community resources, and (b) seeking and/or obtaining employment services and supports.

Networking and connecting with community resources. First, families reported networking and connecting with members of the community to help their family members with ISN gain competitive employment. Many families contacted community employers to inquire about employment or volunteer opportunities. One family, discouraged by several fruitless application submissions, described how they contacted a manager at Wal-Mart to ask for "tips" on getting through the application process:

> So, [the store manager] had kind of given my husband a hint anytime you fill one of those [online applications] out you either strongly agree or strongly disagree, don't do a whole lot in the middle. So, that's what my husband advised [her son] to do, and so he did that this time and actually did get an interview.

In addition to contacting community employers, families also networked with other families or community organizations to find employment, service providers, or general day-to-day support. Families networked with individuals online through support groups, at parent trainings and conferences (including *FEAT*), and through organizations such as Special Olympics and Partners in Policymaking. Parents outlined numerous benefits to networking in this way, including (a) learning "different techniques" to assist their family members with ISN, (b) obtaining social and emotional support for all family members, (c) gaining advocacy and empowerment skills, (d) finding job leads, and (e) acquiring quality service providers for their family members with ISN. Several families also reported sharing materials and information learned at *FEAT* with other families, and school and employment professionals.

Seeking and/or obtaining employment services and supports. Second, families discussed actively and sometimes "aggressively" searching for, advocating among, and/or securing services and supports designed to help their family members with ISN to obtain, learn, or maintain employment. Many families described "looking into information" about a certain program or "setting up an appointment" with an agency (e.g., supported employment provider, assistive technology). In addition, families sought support from community organizations indirectly related to employment. For instance, one family reported applying for services and supports such as "reduced rates for the bus system" to support their family member's transportation to and from work. Families also enrolled their members in vocational and community college classes to expand and hone their skills. Regardless of the type of organization, agency, or program they approached, families reported frequently having to advocate for appropriate services and supports for their family members. Several families recounted contacting potential support sources "on so many different occasions" and asking employment agencies "questions until I'm out of them."

Research Question 2: Competitive Employment Outcomes

Survey data. We examined competitive employment by measuring a range of employment outcomes on the *FEAT*

Follow-Up Survey, from "not yet sought employment" to "competitively employed." We also included a 5-point Likert-type scale question on the Follow-Up Survey to measure families' perceptions of *FEAT*'s influence on how they help their family members with ISN gain and/or maintain competitive employment.

Competitive employment outcomes. At the time of the survey, 15 families (22.1%) reported that their family member with ISN gained a competitive employment outcome (i.e., a competitive job or an internship/volunteer position) after attending *FEAT*. Of these families, 7 (46.7%) reported that their family member gained competitive employment, and 8 (53.3%) reported that their family member gained an internship or volunteer position.

A majority (n = 8, 57.1%) reported that their family member worked between 0 and 10 hr a week, 21.4% (n = 3) worked between 11 and 15 hr, 14.3% (n = 2) worked between 26 and 30 hr, and 7.1% (n = 1) worked between 31 and 35 hr a week (one participant did not respond to this question).

Perceived influence of FEAT. Almost 67% of families responded that they "strongly agreed" (n = 14, 31.1%) or "agreed" (n = 16, 35.6%) that *FEAT* positively influenced the way they help their family members with ISN gain and/or maintain competitive employment. In all, 22% (n = 10) responded that they "neither agreed nor disagreed," and 11.1% indicated that they disagreed (n = 2, 4.4%) or strongly disagreed (n = 3, 6.7%) that *FEAT* positively influenced how they help their family members.

Interview data. Interview participants described their family member with ISN's job status and job preferences. They also reported that *FEAT* influenced how they (a) sought out employment opportunities for their family members with ISN, (b) shared information/materials with others, and (c) "reached out to" services, supports, and resources.

We interviewed four people with ISN who were competitively employed and two who were interning or volunteering at competitive jobsites. Two of the competitively employed individuals worked at different Wal-Mart stores, one worked at a local bakery, and the last individual worked at a hotel. One individual interned at a coffee shop, and another volunteered at a hospital. Although the employer did not pay the individual interning at the coffee shop, he earned customers' tips. Of these six, five had gained their positions after *FEAT*. The length of employment ranged from approximately 3 weeks (Wal-Mart) to 7 years (hospital). Job descriptions and tasks varied, but general tasks included (by position) (a) customer service, retrieving carts, and cleaning (Wal-Mart); (b) customer service and cashier work (Wal-Mart); (c) cleaning and washing dishes (bakery); (d) cleaning (hotel); (e) clerical work (hospital); and (f) making drinks, cleaning, and stocking materials (coffee shop). Overall, the people with ISN reported feeling grateful for their positions, and two families indicated that their children enjoyed their jobs.

Employment preferences. Although families expressed gratitude for the current positions, four of the six also expressed dissatisfaction and articulated preferences for different jobs, responsibilities, pay rates, or hours. For example, a family described their son's attitude toward his current job pushing carts at Wal-Mart: "He still [would] rather probably be inside [the store], but it's at least that's a step in." The other individual with ISN working at Wal-Mart also noted he did not "want to have this job forever." He and his family went on to describe preferred employment "where the bar is higher and the income is higher" that aligned with his interest in video games. Similarly, the individual working at the bakery expressed his desire to work more hours and do more baking instead of cleaning. He also suggested he would be great at customer service if given the chance. Last, the mother of the individual volunteering at a hospital questioned why her daughter, who had volunteered for 7 years and done "a very good job," had not been offered a paid position.

Perceived influence of FEAT. Families reported taking action as a result of attending *FEAT*, which included seeking employment opportunities: "We started looking for employment and volunteer opportunities because of the reasons that you made us aware of. So we really appreciate the training you gave us very, very much." Families also shared information with others. Many families reported sharing information/materials with friends, professionals, and people with whom they worked. One mother shared information with her colleagues; together, they provided *FEAT* information/materials to military families at a local Army base: "We're sharing some of the information, like gosh, this is what you can do if your child doesn't want to just clean." Families also "reached out to" services, supports, and resources they learned about at *FEAT*. Families sought out formal support from agencies and programs (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation) and sought informal support from their communities (e.g., churches). One mother, who worked as a case manager, explained how *FEAT* influenced her behavior in both her roles: "I think [the *FEAT* program] is something that I really need to be a part of as a case manager, as well as a parent of a child that is transitioning."

Discussion

Results of this study indicated many families who attended *FEAT* in 2010-2011 (a) accessed resources related to competitive employment following *FEAT*, (b) reported competitive employment outcomes for their family members

with ISN following *FEAT*, and (c) indicated *FEAT* positively influenced how they help their family members with ISN gain and/or maintain competitive employment. In addition to accessing resources to benefit their own family members with ISN, families reported disseminating *FEAT* information/materials. This finding is encouraging because it supports the idea that *FEAT*'s benefits extended beyond participants as they shared information and materials with others.

While one cannot attribute the competitive employment outcomes families reported to *FEAT* alone, it is encouraging that close to 70% of families believed or strongly believed that *FEAT* positively influenced how they help their family members with ISN get or maintain competitive jobs. However, many interviewees with competitive employment outcomes expressed dissatisfaction with their current positions or worked well below part-time.

These findings reflect national data on employment of people with ISN. People with ISN who are competitively employed typically do not work full-time (Hendricks & Wehman, 2009; Mank, 2007). As evidenced by the woman with ISN volunteering for 7 years, these findings also reflect the exploitation that people with ISN experience (Abbas, 2012). Although *FEAT* improved employment outcomes for many participants, the majority of participant outcomes are not ideal. Ideally, we would prefer full or part-time competitive employment outcomes for 75% or more participants. Emphasizing available *FEAT* technical assistance may improve outcomes.

Limitations

Although the results from this study are promising, it has several limitations that can be addressed in future research. For example, we provided all survey materials in both English and "neutral" or "universal" Spanish (Eremenco et al., 2005). However, we received only one completed Spanish survey (we received 12 Pre-/Post-Questionnaires in Spanish; Francis, Gross, Turnbull, & Turnbull, 2013). Therefore, the Spanish-speaking population that attended *FEAT* appears to be underrepresented in our follow-up data. Moreover, the education and income levels of participants do not reflect the greater population of Kansas. Nearly 90% of survey participants and 100% of interviewees reported attending college (only one potential interviewee did not report attending college, but we were unable to interview her). These percentages are substantially greater than the 61.1% of the general population of Kansans who reported attending college (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Although the percentage of participants reporting annual household incomes of US$75,000 or more is comparable with statistics for Kansan families (44.2% compared with 41.7%), this study has an underrepresentation of families reporting incomes of US$24,999 or lower (3.8% compared with 14.7%). These data on education attainment and income may indicate a skewed population of "joiners," a more motivated group of families who are more likely to attend and take action.

Implications for Future Research

Future research should investigate outcomes of other participants, including professionals and people with ISN (apart from their families). This includes exploring the efficacy of *FEAT* as a professional development program designed for school staff. Researchers should also continue targeting culturally and linguistically diverse participants, participants from varied socioeconomic groups (i.e., low income), participants without a college education, as well as people with ISN.

Although pre- and post-*FEAT* comparison data would strengthen this study, the Pre-/Post-Questionnaires did not request that participants provide information about resource use or competitive employment. We also thought it unethical to deny access to potential participants who wanted to attend *FEAT*. Consequently, this study did not include a control group. Using the *FEAT* Follow-Up Survey to develop a more comprehensive Pre-/Post-*FEAT* Survey would allow researchers to measure the same constructs (e.g., access of resources) before and after *FEAT*, thus strengthening future research. Future research should include wait-list control groups or a quasi-experimental design to assess the impact of a program on participant outcomes.

In addition, this study did not consider mediating or confounding variables (e.g., type of disability, number of family members with ISN, transportation, socioeconomic status (SES); E. Hall, 2007; Hessing, Arcand, & Frost, 2004; Ison et al., 2010). An analysis of multivariate regression of mediating or confounding variables on outcomes such as behavioral change and competitive employment would contribute to the literature.

To gather stronger evidence of behavioral change due to *FEAT*, future research should investigate steps participants took toward competitive employment before and after attendance (e.g., developing an employment goal on a Person-Centered Plan) along with employment outcomes. This information would add to knowledge on how *FEAT* influenced behavior and would also provide information about differences in behavior (e.g., steps taken) between people who did and did not obtain competitive employment. Families, professionals, and people with ISN could use the information as guidance while seeking competitive employment.

Implications for Improving Practice

Low expectations and poor knowledge levels among school and agency staff (Schmidt & Smith, 2007; Schur et al.,

2005), poor transition plans or services from schools (National Council on Disability, 2010; Timmons et al., 2011), and a breakdown in collaboration between families, school staff, and employment service providers (J. P. Hall & Fox, 2004; Timmons et al., 2011) are three major contributing factors to the unemployment rates of people with ISN. These factors result in confusion, misinformation, low expectations, and poor knowledge across families, people with ISN, and school/agency professionals. However, trainings such as *FEAT*, designed specially for professionals, could mitigate many of these barriers.

We designed the current *FEAT* program to help families and their members with ISN to develop high expectations for employment and gain knowledge about competitive employment resources (Francis, 2013). Practitioners would likely benefit from a reconfiguration of the existing *FEAT* program that places an emphasis on appropriate and effective Individualized Education Program goals, high school work experiences, fostering self-determination, transition to adult life, collaborating with families, and networking among various professionals and community employers. Expanding *FEAT* from a family-focused program to a professional development program could improve the ways professionals (a) provide services to people with ISN, (b) provide information and materials to families and people with ISN, and (c) collaborate with families and other professionals. These improvements could ultimately reduce the advocacy efforts families often must engage in to find or obtain appropriate services and supports for their family members and increase competitive employment rates.

Two limitations of this study included the underrepresentation of Spanish-speaking participants and the overrepresentation of participants from higher SES groups. As a result, researchers, educators, and employment professionals must strategically consider how to recruit diverse families using a variety of methods over and above informational flyers and emails. Some methods found to bolster family participation in trainings such as *FEAT* include calling families personally (Quezada, Díaz, & Sánchez, 2003), visiting families in their homes, spreading information through parent-to-parent connections/support groups, and collaborating with schools and community groups (Hepburn, 2004).

Additionally, participants citied numerous barriers related to accessing employment-related services and supports, and only 22% of participants reported competitive employment outcomes. However, a majority of participants indicated that they perceived that *FEAT* had a positive influence. In light of these findings, it is interesting that less than half of participants reported accessing *FEAT* technical assistance. These findings imply that simply providing trainings and making technical assistance available is not enough to improve competitive employment outcomes. Although technical assistance is essential to mastering and enhancing knowledge and increasing participant outcomes (Joyce & Showers, 2002), families of individuals with ISN require more practical and comprehensive hands-on support, which may include following up with families personally and offering assistance instead of waiting for families to make a phone call. Considering the number of participants who described networking with and sharing materials with other families, this may also include harnessing and facilitating family-to-family support as a more organic and lasting form of technical assistance.

Conclusion

Results of this study indicated that families who attended *FEAT* accessed employment resources after attending the program. Some families also reported competitive employment outcomes for their family members with ISN. Further, most families believed or strongly believed that *FEAT* positively influenced how they help their family members with ISN gain and/or maintain competitive employment. These findings contribute to literature on employment training programs and support the notion that *FEAT* changed families' behaviors and enhanced competitive employment outcomes for people with ISN.

Authors' Note

The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the Office of Special Education Services or the U.S. Department of Education. The survey and interview protocol can be obtained from the lead author upon request.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The research reported here was supported by the Office of Special Education Services, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant H133B031133 to the University of Kansas.

References

Abbas, J. (2012). A legacy of exploitation: Intellectual disability, unpaid labor, & disability services. *New Politics, 14*. Retrieved from http://newpol.org/content/legacy-exploitation-intellectual-disability-unpaid-labor-disability-services

Boeltzig, H., Timmons, J. C., & Butterworth, J. (2008). Entering work: Employment outcomes of people with developmental disabilities. *International Journal of Rehabilitation Research*, *31*, 217–223.

Buntinx, W., Cobigo, V., McLaughlin, C., Morin, D., Tassé, M. J., & Thompson, J. R. (2008). *Psychometric properties of the Supports Intensity Scale*. Washington, DC: American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

Carter, E. W., Austin, D., & Trainor, A. A. (2011). Predictors of postschool employment outcomes for young adults with severe disabilities. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, *23*, 50–63.

Carter, E. W., Dutchman, N., Ye, S., Trainor, A. A., Swedeen, B., & Owens, L. (2010). Summer employment and community experiences of transition-age youth with severe disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, *76*, 194–212.

Cimera, R. E. (2008). The cost-trends of supported employment versus sheltered employment. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, *28*, 15–20.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Deutschlander, S. (2010). An analysis of training effects on school personnel's knowledge, attitudes, comfort, and confidence levels toward educating students about HIV/AIDS. *International Journal of Mental Health Addiction*, *8*, 444–452.

Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) of 2000, Pub. L. *No*. 106-402, 42.

Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2009). *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (3rd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.

Eremenco, S. L., Cella, D., & Arnold, B. J. (2005). A comprehensive method for the translation of cross-cultural validation of health status questionnaires. *Evaluation and the Health Professions*, *28*, 212–232.

Francis, G. L. (2013). *Evaluating the effectiveness of the Family Employment Awareness Training program: Expectations, knowledge, barriers, and employment outcomes for people with disabilities who have individualized support needs* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest. (3557525)

Francis, G. L., Gross, J. M. S., Turnbull, A., & Turnbull, R. (2013). The Family Employment Awareness Training (FEAT) Program in Kansas: A mixed-method follow-up. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, *39*, 167-181.

Francis, G. L., Gross, J. M. S., Turnbull, H. R., & Parent-Johnson, W. (2013). Evaluating the effectiveness of the Family Employment Awareness Training in Kansas: A pilot study. *Research and Practice for Persons With Severe Disabilities*, *38*, 1–14.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Hall, E. (2007). The effects of disability awareness trainings with career and technical educators teaching in high need rural schools. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, *26*, 16–24.

Hall, J. P., & Fox, M. H. (2004). What providers and Medicaid policymakers need to know about barriers to employment for people with disabilities. *Journal of Health and Social Policy*, *19*, 37–50.

Hasnain, R., & Balcazar, F. (2009). Predicting community- versus facility-based employment for transition-aged young adults with disabilities: The role of race, ethnicity, and support systems. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, *31*, 175–188.

Hendricks, D. R., & Wehman, P. (2009). Transition from school to adulthood for youth with autism spectrum disorders. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, *24*, 77–88.

Hepburn, K. S. (2004). *Families as primary partners in their child's development and school readiness*. Retrieved from http://www.aecf.org/upload/publicationfiles/families.pdf

Hessing, R. E., Arcand, L. L., & Frost, M. H. (2004). The effects of an educational intervention on oncology nurses' attitude, perceived knowledge, and self-reported application of complementary therapies. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, *31*, 71–78.

Ison, N., McIntyre, S., Rothery, S., Smithers-Sheedy, H., Goldsmith, S., Parsonage, S., & Foy, L. (2010). "Just like you": A disability awareness programme for children that enhanced knowledge, attitudes and acceptance: Pilot study findings. *Developmental Neurorehabilitation*, *13*, 360–368.

Joyce, B. R., & Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement through staff development*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Kearney, A. R., & De Young, R. (1995). A knowledge-based intervention for promoting carpooling. *Environment and Behavior*, *27*, 650–678.

Kelly, A. E., Lesh, R. A., & Baek, J. Y. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of design research methods in education: Innovations in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics learning and teaching*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Mank, D. (2007). Employment. In S. L. Odom, R. H. Horner, M. E. Snell, & J. Blacher (Eds.), *Handbook of developmental disabilities* (pp. 390–409). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analyses*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Migliore, A., Butterworth, J., Nord, D., & Gelb, A. (2011). *Improving job development through training and mentorship* (Research to Practice Brief, Issue No. 51). Boston: Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston.

Migliore, A., Mank, D., Grossi, T., & Rogan, P. (2007). Integrated employment or sheltered workshops: Preferences of adults with intellectual disabilities, their families, and staff. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, *26*, 5–19.

National Council on Disability. (2010). *Workforce infrastructure in support of people with disabilities: Matching human resources to service needs*. Retrieved from http://www.ncd.gov/publications/2010/Jan202010

National Disability Rights Network. (2011). *Segregated and exploited: A call to action*. Retrieved from http://www.ndrn.org/images/Documents/Resources/Publications/Reports/Segregated-and-Exploited.pdf

Quezada, R. L., Díaz, D. M., & Sánchez, M. (2003). Involving Latino parents. *Leadership*, *33*, 32–34.

Schmidt, M. A., & Smith, D. L. (2007). Individuals with disabilities perceptions on preparedness for the workforce and factors that limit employment. *Work*, *28*, 13–21.

Schur, L., Kruse, D., & Blanck, P. (2005). Corporate culture and the employment of persons with disabilities. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, *23*, 3–20.

Shank, G. D. (2006). *Qualitative research: A personal skills approach* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Shriner, M., Schlee, B., Hamil, M., & Libler, R. (2009). Creating teachers' perceptual, behavioral, and attitudinal change using professional development workshops. *Teacher Development*, *12*, 125–134.

Sprague, S., Pozdniakova, P., Kaempffer, E., Saccone, M., Schemitsch, E. H., & Bhandari, M. (2012). Principles and practice of clinical research course for surgeons: An evaluation of knowledge transfer and perceptions. *Canadian Journal of Surgery*, *55*, 46–52.

Timmons, J. C., Hall, A. C., Bose, J., Wolfe, A., & Winsor, J. (2011). Choosing employment: Factors that impact employment decisions for individuals with intellectual disability. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, *49*, 285–299.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). *2007-2011 American Community Survey*. Retrieved from http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

Verdugo, M. A., Martin-Ingelmo, R., Jordán de Urríes, F. B., Vicent, C., & Sánchez, M. S. (2009). Impact on quality of life and self-determination of a national program for increasing supported employment in Europe. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, *31*, 55–64.