

**Autism and the Workforce: Balancing Employment, Daily Life, and Well-Being**  
**Maria O. Mendez PhD, NCSP., NCC**  
**Allison M. Salazar, BA**

**Session Description:**

Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often face unique challenges in the workforce, including navigating social dynamics, managing sensory sensitivities, and meeting job expectations, which can impact their well-being. Strategies for job coaching, structured environments, and workplace support will be provided. Executive functioning difficulties further complicate daily tasks, finances, and independent living. Stress management techniques, along with employment resources like vocational rehabilitation and job coaching, will be highlighted. Attendees will gain practical insights and access to resources that promote employment success and overall well-being for adults with ASD.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Understand workplace challenges for adults with ASD, including job expectations, social interactions, and sensory issues, and how they impact well-being.
2. Learn how executive functioning affects daily tasks, finances, and independence, and explore strategies for support and skill-building.
3. Discover effective strategies, workplace accommodations, and resources to help adults with ASD manage jobs and daily responsibilities while reducing stress.

**Maria O. Mendez (She/Her), PhD, MEd**, is a nationally certified counselor and school psychologist. She is currently a senior program therapist/coordinator for the University of New Mexico's START Program. Maria earned her doctorate in School Psychology from Loyola University Chicago. She has clinical experience providing therapeutic support and diagnosis to individuals with mental health needs in a variety of settings, including schools, communities, and hospitals. Maria has worked with diverse populations and ages facing emotional and behavioral challenges, including those with diagnoses such as Autism and other Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities.

**Allison M. Salazar, BA**, is a Senior Program Therapist/Coordinator with the University of New Mexico NM START Program. She has over 10 years of experience in behavioral health, including practice management and working with New Mexico waiver services. Allison holds a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts from the University of New Mexico, with a focus on healthcare communication, health education, and a minor in psychology. Dedicated to supporting individuals with autism spectrum disorder, medical complexities, and intellectual disabilities, she has worked extensively in systemic intervention and developmental disability services. She is also an elected member to Mi Via Advisory Council, where she advocates for individuals and families on the New Mexico Mi Via Waiver.