



# Supporting Employment Success in Adults with FASD

AAMENA KAPASI, MA

MARNIE MAKELA, PHD

KATHERINE FLANNIGAN, PHD

JACQUELINE PEI, PHD

# Employment

- u Employment provides many things, including an income, opportunities to connect with others, develop oneself and feel useful, as well as can increase self-esteem and quality of life
- u Employment offers a socially valued role, and can contribute to personal identity

# FASD and Employment

- u Employment can be a protective factor against adverse outcomes, and can reduce poverty and dependency
- u Strengths of individuals with FASD: curiosity, creativity, gregariousness, tenacity, friendliness, helpfulness, generosity, artistic, good with structure and routine
- u However, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural difficulties can make it difficult to obtain and maintain employment

# Making Sense of Brain Function

- u Memory

- u hard to remember instructions or remember where items belong

- u Attention

- u trouble maintaining focus for long periods of time or on two things at once; tire easily from having to think and concentrate harder

- u Language

- u agree to things that are not fully understood

- u Impulse Control

- u may make mistakes or leave tasks incomplete; lose interest easily

# Making Sense of Brain Function

- u Processing Speed
  - u slow performing duties
- u Academics
  - u poor reading comprehension; difficulty with money or time
- u Motor
  - u clumsy, unclear handwriting
- u Social skills
  - u misread situations; poor communication with coworkers, boss, or customers



# Other Factors to Consider

- u Mental health
- u Physical health
- u Support environment (e.g., family, spouses, friends)
- u Complexity factors: criminal history, system involvement, addictions
- u Childcare responsibilities
- u Employment role models and understanding of work ethics/rules

# FASD and Employment Report

CanFASD in partnership with Lakeland Centre for FASD and Alberta Human Services

1. Review of the literature on FASD and employment
2. Survey of 9 employment programs in Canada serving clients with FASD about their processes, capacity, approach, success indicators, strategies, challenges, and funding models

What types of approaches and models are currently employed and what kinds of successes and challenges are these programs experiencing?

# Key Findings

- u Relationship building between support staff and clients, and between employer and organizations were critical
  - u Support worker + client: Strength-based approach (person-centered) was most effective, but also resource-intensive in terms of staff time and flexibility
  - u Support worker + employer: Education, awareness, and support were significant contributors to the overall success of the employment opportunity

Agencies need to educate prospective employers about FASD and work collaboratively to support these clients.



# Supported Employment Model

- u Creating a good fit between the employee's abilities and the work environment
- u Individualized guidance
- u Integration into the workplace

# Overall Landscape

- u Many adults with FASD are not able to pursue competitive employment and qualify for assured income supports
- u Others may be able to experience success in volunteer or work experience situations
- u For many, stabilization of housing, mental health, or addictions takes priority over employment
- u Still, others are gainfully and successfully employed...

We asked for their stories so we can learn from their successes

# Employment Success Study

WHAT CAN  
EMPLOYMENT  
SUCCESS LOOK  
LIKE FOR  
INDIVIDUALS WITH  
FASD?

# Employment Success Study

- u Survey based on CanFASD employment report and feedback from the CanFASD Family Advisory Committee
- u 32 surveys completed
- u Optional 3 question video interview for individuals near Vancouver or Edmonton
- u 4 videos completed by employed adults with FASD

# Demographics

- u 20 adults
- u 12 caregivers or support person
- u Age
  - u Average = 31.15 years; Range = 14-64
- u Countries
  - u Canada, USA, South Africa



# Gender



1



20



11

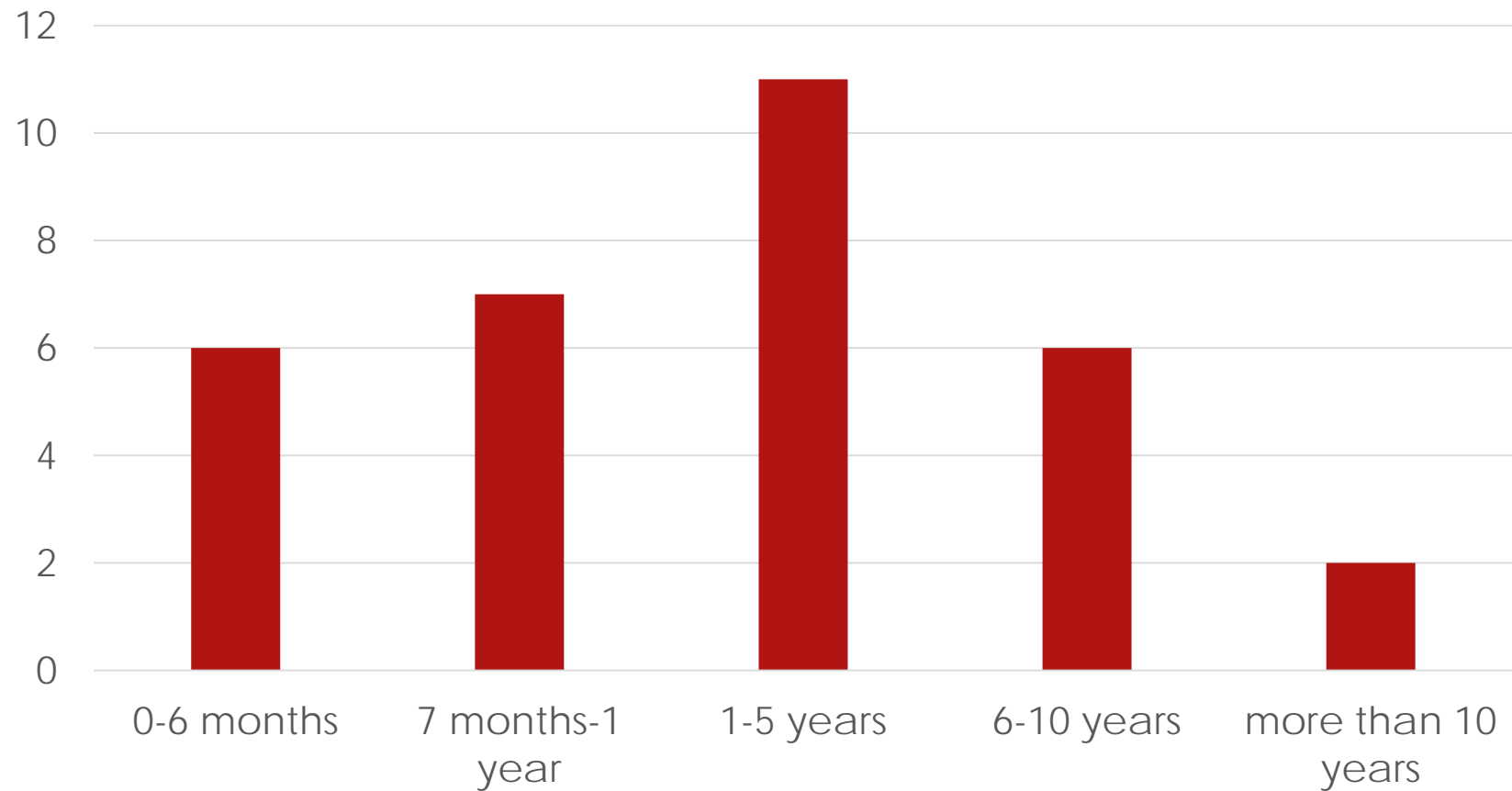
# Places of Employment

- u Restaurants and Cafes
- u Support services
- u Government
- u Transit
- u Deliveries
- u Hotel
- u News company
- u Gymnastics club
- u Repair shop
- u Home business
- u Events planner
- u Retail
- u Manufacturing
- u Recreation
- u Construction

# Frequency Data

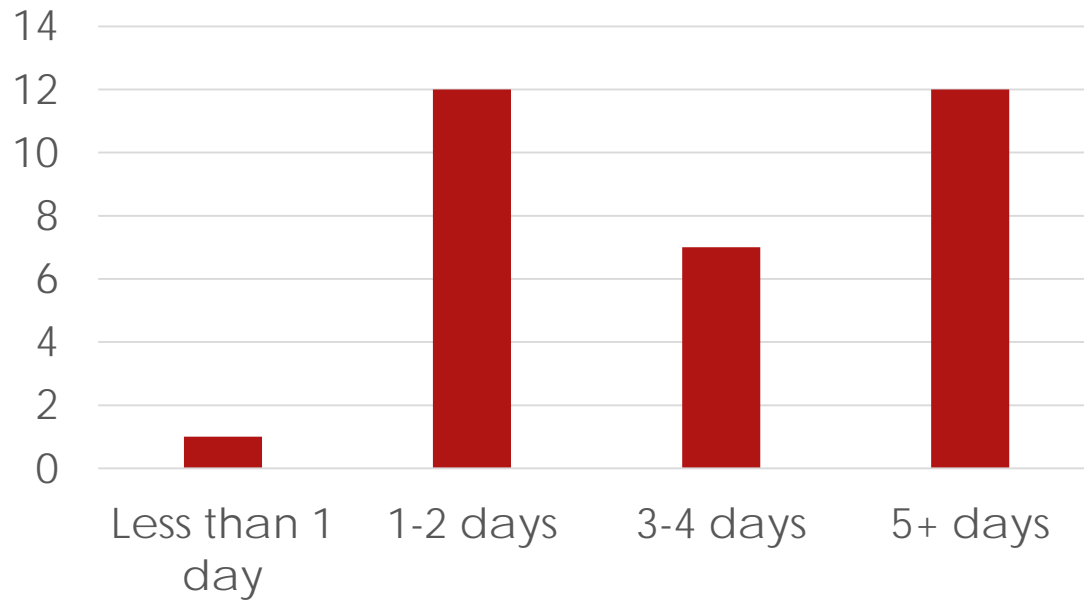
UNDERSTANDING WHAT  
EMPLOYMENT LOOKS LIKE  
FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH FASD

# Length of Employment

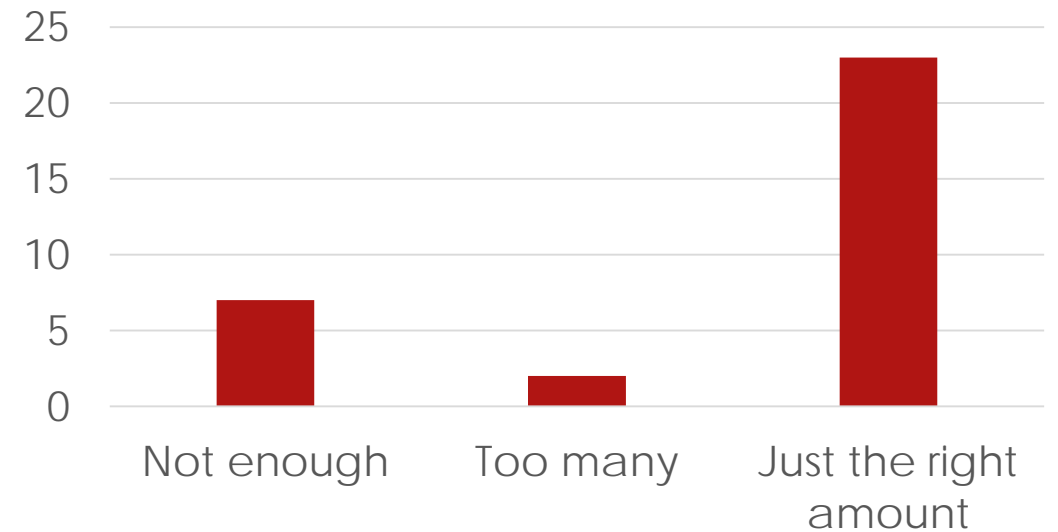


# Days Spent at Work

Days spent at work per week



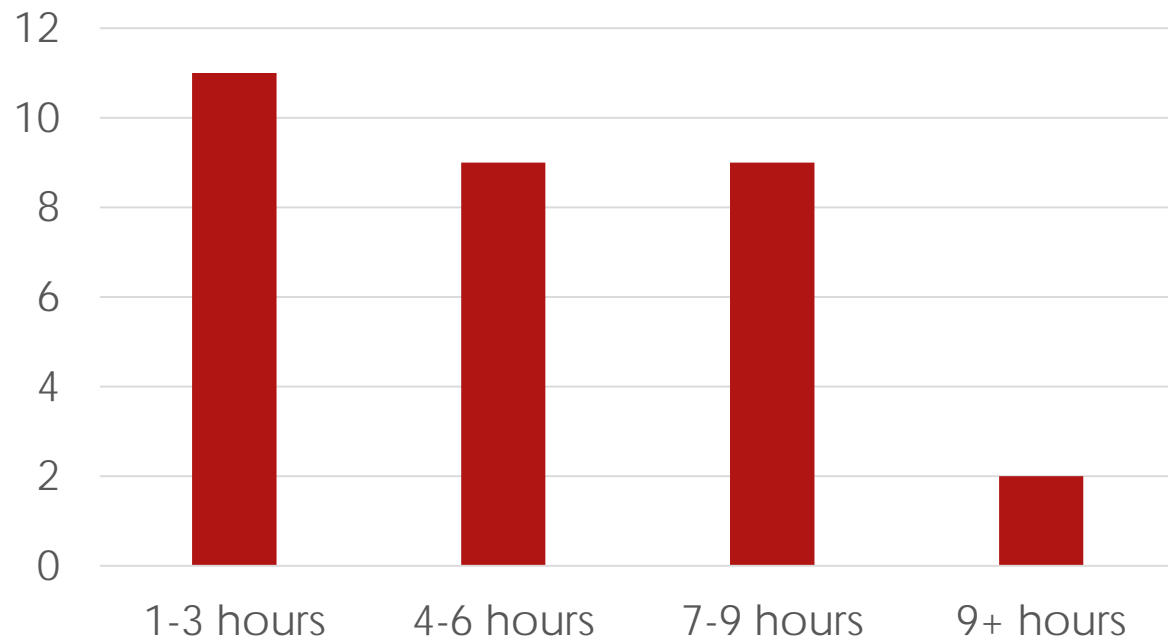
The number of days spent at work is...



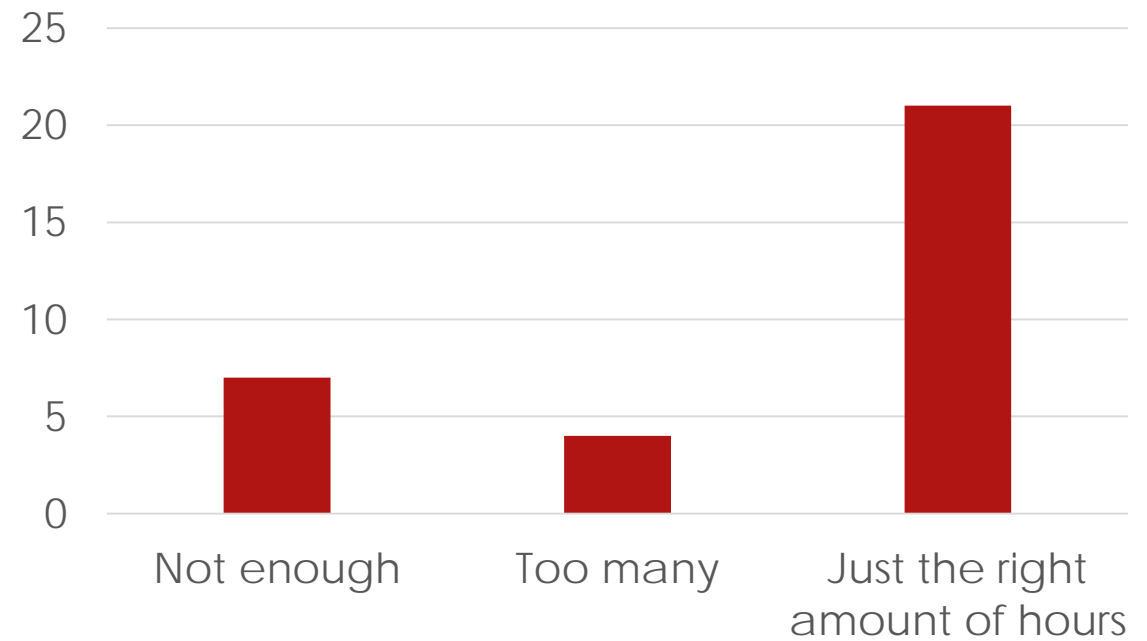


# Hours Spent at Work

How many hours do you work each day?

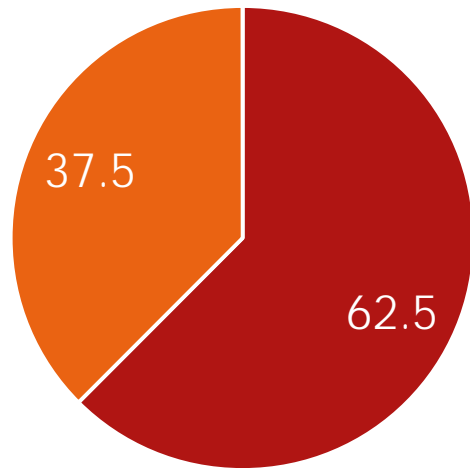


The number of hours spent at work is...



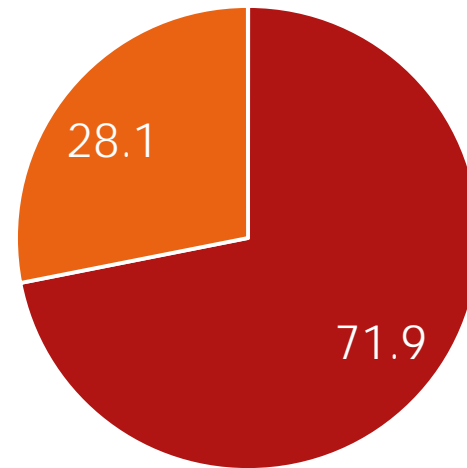
# Finding and Keeping Employment

Was it hard to find a job?



■ Yes ■ No

Have you ever lost a job?



■ Yes ■ No

# Help getting ready for work

- Waking up

11



- Getting dressed

5



- Eating breakfast

6



- Packing a lunch

8



Other: 13

# Help at Work

- u Lists – 17
- u Reminders – 12
- u Someone who explains things to you – 23
- u Someone who helps with paperwork/filling out forms – 15
- u Routine – 23
- u Other – 6

# People who Help with Work

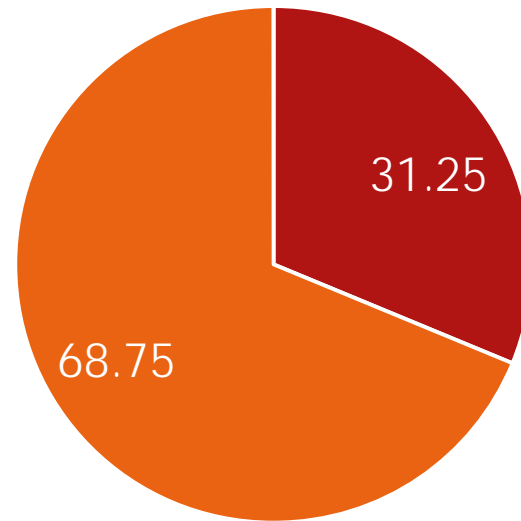
- u Family – 13
- u Friends – 9
- u Support Workers/Job Coach – 15
- u Role Model – 18
- u Other – 5



# Disclosure

Talk about FASD diagnosis at work?

“don't want to be seen as different”

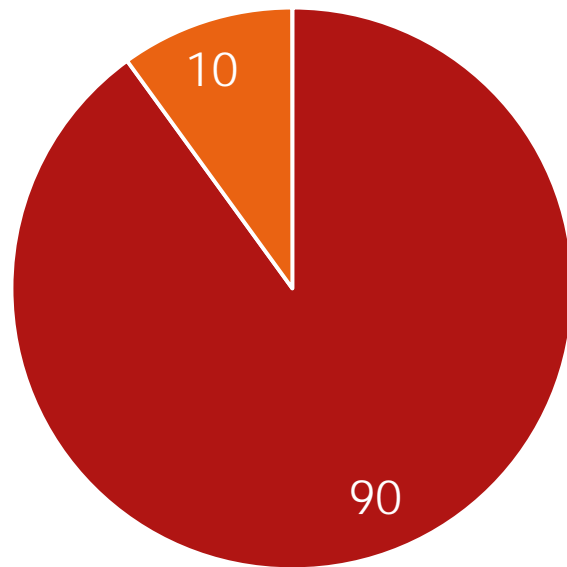


“helps people understand me”

■ Yes ■ No

# Pay and Benefits

Paid work



■ Yes ■ No

## Benefits:

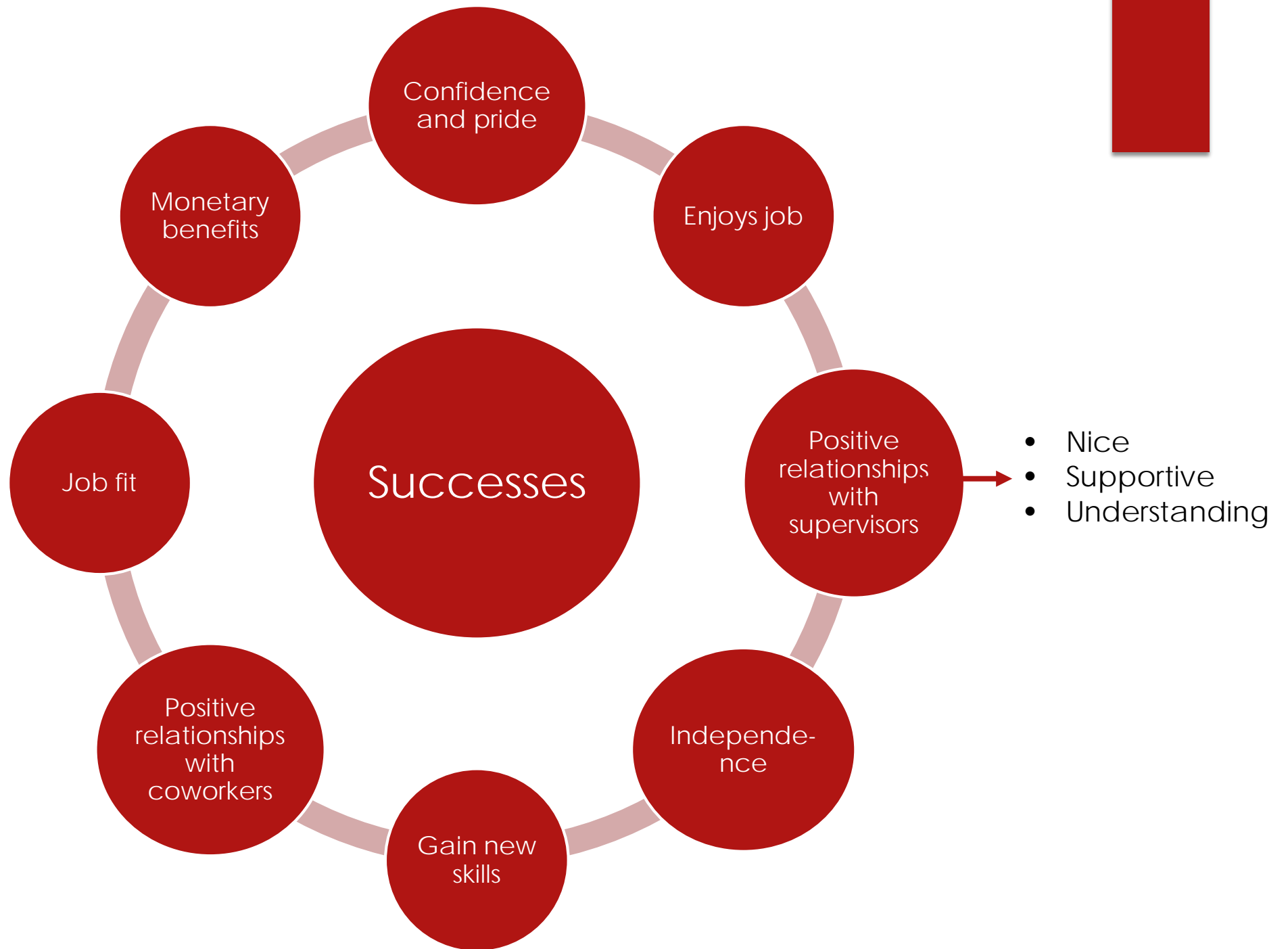
- u Vacation time – 8
- u Health coverage – 3
- u Dental coverage – 4
- u Don't know – 5
- u Other – 10

# Content Analysis

EXPLORING SUCCESSES,  
CHALLENGES, SUPPORTS,  
AND STRATEGIES

# Content Analysis

- u A content analysis was conducted on the open ended survey answers
- u Used NVivo software to analyze content
- u Create themes and categories
- u Inter-rater reliability was completed





# Successes

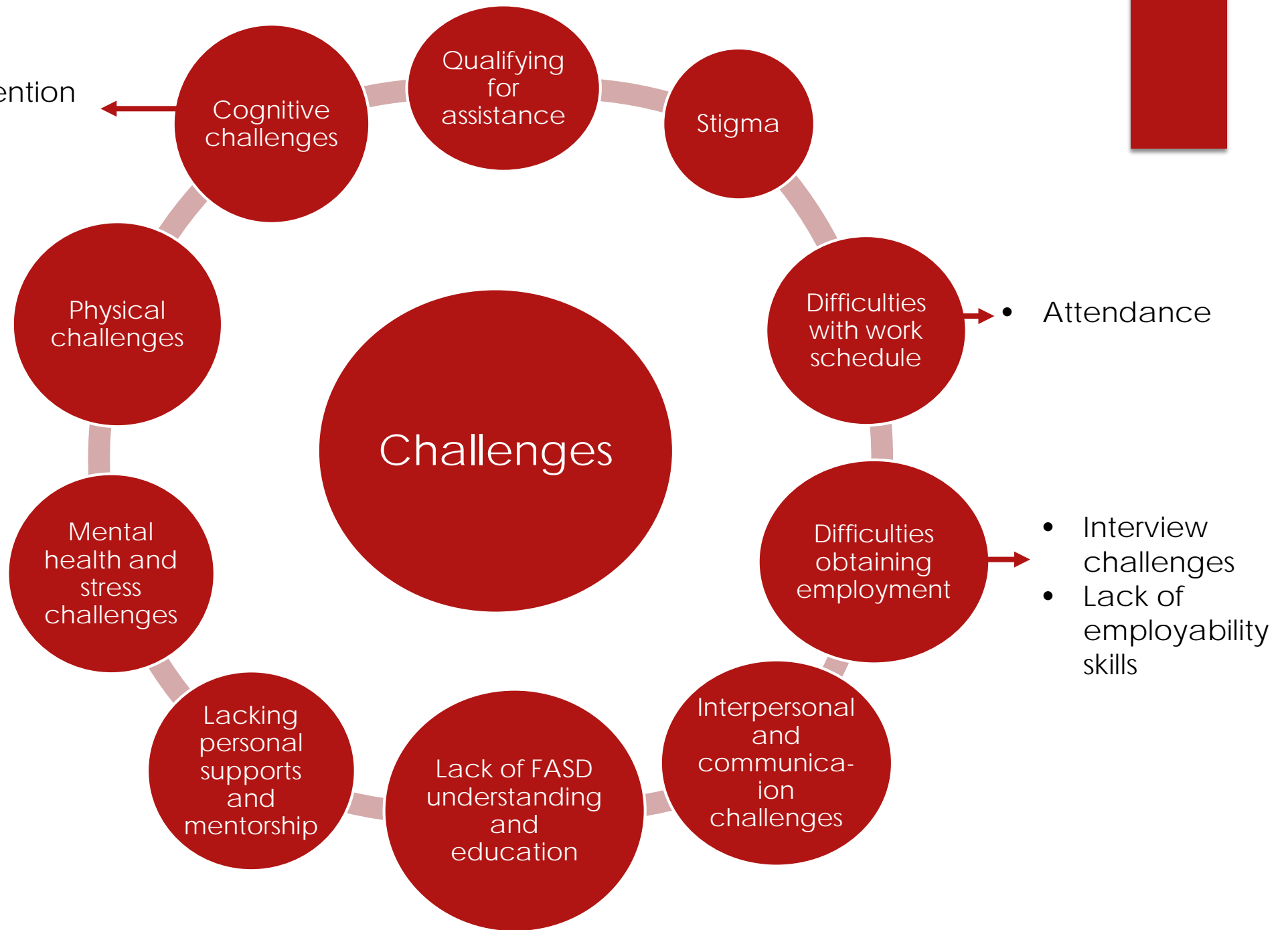
"I took the time to learn about myself; what's the strongest part of my brain and I focus on that"

"I am 45 but my brain isn't so it helps me relate to youth [who I work with]"

"...accepted there are times when I need to ask for help and my co-workers understand"

"I learned to communicate better with people and to be patient. I have also learned that things change and I have to be flexible"

- Memory and attention
- Speed

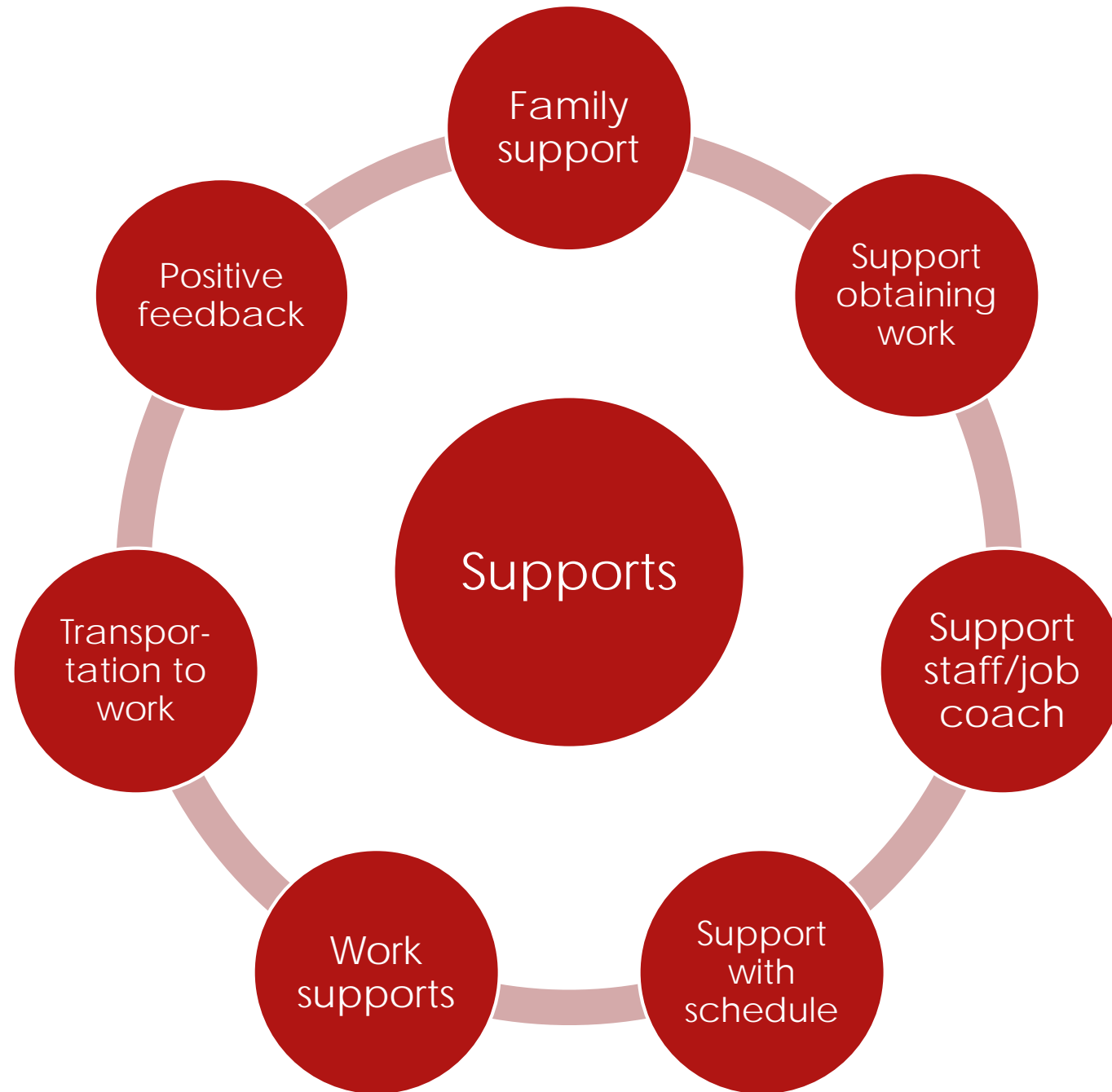


# Challenges

"People don't want to hire people with disabilities"

"...most folks don't understand FASD and one day things could be good, next day can be all falling apart"

"It took a long time to build the skills I need to get employed"



# Supports

"Help me with reading and math, work as a team"

"I feel good doing the job, boss told me I was doing a good job"

"That it can be an invisible limitation and that even though an employee presents himself well, he needs to have certain accommodations and supports to be successful "





# Strategies

"Helps my co-workers know what goes on with me. Know that some days are good days and some days are bad days. Some days I get things and some days I don't get things"

"Keep fidgety toys, a snug vest, an ADHD chair handy so what then you need it, it is there"

"Setting alarm, reminder to go to bed early enough to get enough sleep, reminder to leave early enough to be on time"

# Take Home Message

- u Individuals with FASD can find employment success
- u It is not about *if*, it is about *how*
  - u Finding the right fit for the individual
- u Shared responsibility of the individual with FASD, the organizations, and the community

# THANK YOU!

And a special thank you to all the families and individuals with FASD who contributed. We learn best with you!

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR FUNDERS AND EVERYONE WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS RESEARCH STUDY

