Fathers of children with autism are likely to experience mild to severe anxiety, according to a poster presented at the recent Association of University Centers on Disability (AUCD) conference. The poster, entitled “Perspectives of Fathers Whose Children Have an Autism Spectrum Disorder,” grew out of a leadership project at Utah State University’s Center for Persons with Disabilities (CPD). Barbara Fiechtl, a faculty member for the Center for Persons with Disabilities’ (CPD) Utah Regional Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (URLEND) project, and Gina A. Cook, a former URLEND trainee and a CPD research scientist, worked on the project, which looked at the perspectives of fathers who have children with autism.

The study looked at data gathered during the “ABCs of Autism” educational courses that have been presented around the state of Utah for parents of recently diagnosed children with autism. A small number of fathers responded to the 15-minute survey, so it also was distributed to autism listservs in Utah, Idaho, Wyoming and Montana, states which participate in URLEND.

Of the 29 respondents, four reported minimal to no anxiety, while 25 reported feelings of mild to severe anxiety. A correlation between anxiety and depression suggested that where anxiety was reported, depression was also reported.