Why become an “Autism Friendly” Business?

Over 79,000 people in Southwest Florida are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. The families of individuals with ASD often find themselves isolated from their communities and therefore unable to do the day-to-day tasks we all take for granted. By taking part in CARD-USF’s “Autism Friendly” Business Initiative, you can play a key role making these families feel welcome, while simultaneously improving your image in the community and expanding your customer base.

Your Piece of the Puzzle

CARD-USF’s goal is to build a more welcoming community for citizens of all abilities by partnering with businesses interested in making a difference in the lives of people diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and their families. We do this at no cost to you. So what can you do? The list below provides a variety of ways to work in conjunction with CARD-USF to enhance your business or organization’s outcomes.

Areas of Involvement

Consumers: To provide helpful services and amenities to better accommodate guests and customers with autism spectrum disorder. This includes basic awareness training in ASD and other developmental disabilities for staff and management.

Current Employees: Support employees who have a family member with ASD. This support includes having CARD-USF facilitate onsite workshops or guest speakers for topics of interests.

Future Employees: Receive additional staff training to host an intern or hire an employee who is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. This ensures that staff and management have received more comprehensive levels of training in ASD and are able to supervise an intern or employee.

Florida’s First Choice for Autism Support

The Center for Autism & Related Disabilities (CARD) provides support and assistance with the goal of optimizing the potential of people with autism spectrum disorder and related disabilities.

Join us in making a difference in the lives of those who are diagnosed with autism and related disabilities and their families. Be a piece of the solution!

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In Florida: 1-800-333-4530 or 813-974-2532
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A program of

Florida Center for Inclusive Communities

This is my piece.
What does it mean to be “Autism Friendly”?

The Center for Autism & Related Disabilities at the University of South Florida (CARD-USF) invites you to join the growing number of businesses in Southwest Florida who are part of our “Autism Friendly” Business Initiative. CARD-USF provides customized training, technical assistance and materials for your company — all at NO cost!

What does the “Autism Friendly” process involve?

**Technical Assistance.** Examining your business location, practices/procedures, and environment; suggesting no cost or low cost accommodations that may better serve an individual with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

**Training.** An overview of autism spectrum disorder and direct instruction for employees on how to approach and assist individuals with ASD.

**Employee Relations.** Comprehensive support to business owners and managers who may be in the position to hire and supervise an employee with ASD.

**Public Visibility.** The CARD-USF webpage maintains a directory of “Autism Friendly” businesses, where our constituent families can search for businesses that have a relationship with CARD-USF.

Your Current & Future Employees

As an employer, you can apply some simple solutions to your place of business that would enable current employees with a family member on the autism spectrum to be more productive and feel supported on the job. Additionally, applying customized employment strategies can assist you in hiring individuals with autism, feeling confident that you and the employee will experience long term positive outcomes. The Office of Disability Employment Policy’s (ODEP) Job Accommodation Network conducted an examination of the costs of providing accommodations to people with disabilities and the benefits those accommodations would offer employers. Among their findings:

- Over half (57%) of businesses reported the accommodations implemented cost absolutely nothing.
- Similarly, 45% experienced only a one-time cost.
- The typical one-time expenditure for employers was only $500.
- 73% reported that the accommodations implemented were either “very effective” or “extremely effective.”

Direct benefits of the accommodations included: retaining a valued employee (90%), increasing an employee’s productivity (71%) and eliminating costs associated with training a new employee (60%).

Creative Solutions for Increasing Your Customer Base:

Additional opportunities to increase the number of customers, guests, clients, and conferences to your business with CARD-USF assistance. A few examples from our “Autism Friendly” businesses:

- TradeWinds Island Resort: National Conferences for ASD.
- The Florida Aquarium: “Day of Discovery,” an annual event involving people with ASD.
- Great Explorations Children’s Museum: Sensory Friendly Sundays.

These events offer a chance to increase attendance to the business as well as benefitting people with ASD. Sometimes events are publicized by local media outlets.

Claim Your Piece Today!

In Florida: 1-800-333-4530 or 813-974-2532
http://card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu