

What does it mean to be designated as an **Autism Friendly** business?



Education and Awareness

Staff who are involved with the public will receive training about the characteristics and needs of an individual with ASD. They learn about communication strategies and special sensitivities as well as reasonable modifications that might be made to address a person's needs for safety, comfort, and belonging.

A welcoming, compassionate and nonjudgmental environment

Staff education creates awareness about some of the challenges that people with ASD and their families face and how to help make their visits to their establishment one that will be as successful and enjoyable as possible. Being nonjudgmental also means that if a visit ends prematurely or a family encounters difficulties, the staff are understanding, supportive, and encouraging.

Resources

Assisting families and individuals to be prepared for a visit to a new location by providing a social experience story is an easy way to help them understand what will be expected of them before they arrive. Access to resources such as social experience stories and other visual aids can be provided on site as well as on the internet through a business website or a link in the CARD-USF Autism Friendly Business webpage. CARD-USF can facilitate the creation and use of these social experience stories and other visual aids. Some Autism Friendly businesses take it to a higher level and partner with CARD-USF to provide mentoring, internship opportunities or employment for individuals on the autism spectrum. This is a highly regarded practice, but not essential to becoming an Autism Friendly business.

A handy CARD-USF "Distract Pak" can be kept at the business for use by individuals with ASD. These are containers full of sensory toys, comforting items, and activities for youngsters who may need to have something to help them manage difficult situations.

WHAT DESIGNATION AS AN "AUTISM FRIENDLY" BUSINESS IS NOT:

It is NOT a certification program

or a legally binding contract. Staff receive overview training as a part of the process of becoming Autism Friendly. It is the responsibility of the business to integrate this content into their practices to create a welcoming environment for all people. CARD-USF can provide technical assistance to help a business implement this.

It is NOT a guarantee of accommodations or modifications

beyond what is safe and reasonable as defined by the business. Safety requirements will remain the same for all guests or customers regardless of ability. Requirements by the business for levels of independence for a given activity (i.e. toilet training, feeding oneself, personal hygiene etc.) may limit a person's ability to fully participate unless the individual has help from a family member or third party to meet their needs.

It is NOT a substitute for a family's supervising, caregiving or parenting a child

All individuals will still have to comply with the policies and rules of the business or organization. Unsafe behaviors will be addressed as policies dictate.