AUTISM FRIENDLY

ORGANIZATION HANDBOOK







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Your organization has been selected to participate in the Autism Friendly Program. Our team believes you and your staff will excel in our training(s) and your commitment to being a part of our movement in creating an inclusive community. We look forward to naming your organization as a partner in our vibrant community.

The following pages will outline the next steps to complete the program. The assigned staff member from UM-NSU CARD will directly work with you to answer any questions to successfully create an inclusive environment.

On behalf of UM-NSU CARD, we congratulate you and your organization for embarking on this journey.

Together, we will make a difference!





Autism Friendly FUNDAMENTALS





OUR FUNDAMENTALS



MISSION

The mission of the Autism Friendly Program is to provide resources and collaborate with organizations to build a welcoming and compassionate non-judgmental environment for individuals with autism and/or related disabilities.



VISION

Communities that welcome individuals with autism and/or related disabilities to thrive in their social development, employment, and educational experiences.



GOALS

- To undergo a partnership with an organization that is genuinely invested in making a difference in the lives of individuals with autism and/or related disabilities.
- To deliver training tailored to the organization's needs.
- To break down goals that are attainable for the organization.
- To be welcomed back into the organization.



OUR COMMITMENT

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPAL:

To promote our shared expertise and experience through empowerment, education, and community engagement to create an inclusive organizational setting.



The staff at UM-NSU CARD work with community organizations such as museums, emergency rooms, sports stadiums, restaurants, and medical services.



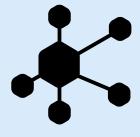
The UM-NSU CARD staff provides training(s) that are tailored to the organization staff's professional work as well as their environment.



UM-NSU CARD's Autism Friendly program is not a certification program, does not guarantee modifications, or guarantee a successful experience.



The Autism Friendly designation provides the opportunity to recognize the organization's strength in serving the autism and/or related disabilities community. As a result of UM-NSU CARD's consultation, organizations gain knowledge on how to provide helpful accommodations and modifications.



The community organizations also encounter opportunities to network with other organizations that serve individuals with autism and/or related disabilities that are invited to participate in UM-NSU CARD's community events.



The individualized plan may include an overview of ASD, inclusive settings, behavior strategies, and organization's use of visual supports. The remaining portion of the program is to conduct walkthroughs and offer hands-on assistance.



OUR VALUES



TEAMWORK

We work together to meet the UM-NSU CARD community's needs and help organizations create a neurodiverse environment successfully.



TIME

We work together to meet the UM-NSU CARD community's needs and help organizations create a neurodiverse environment successfully.



CRITICAL PARTNER.

We commit to providing direct and honest feedback and acknowledging the community organization's victories in its development and effort to build a friendly space for individuals with autism and/or related disabilities.



RECIPROCITY

We exchange knowledge and awareness with community organizations for the mutual purpose of creating a well-thought-out sensory-friendly space.



PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

We are personally accountable for delivering on our commitments.



RESPECT FOR DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

We value UM-NSU CARD families, organizations leaders and staff, and community members from all races and ethnicity, gender, thinking styles, experiences, skills, religions, and job levels.









BUSINESS AND INCLUSION

Business Best Practice

Autism Friendly Program



Become more competitive



Expand clientele and attract positive reputation for being inclusive



Reduce costs and become more efficient



May lead to better decision making results



Improve the skills of your workforce



Staff will improve their knowledge and skills when working with or serving individuals with autism and/or related disabilities



Use technology more effectively



Provide the opportunity to think and use technology creatively. To create an easily accessibly environment.



Reduce waste and improve quality (connecting potential funding)



Meets the requirements of ADA legislation and gain opportunity for advanced funding



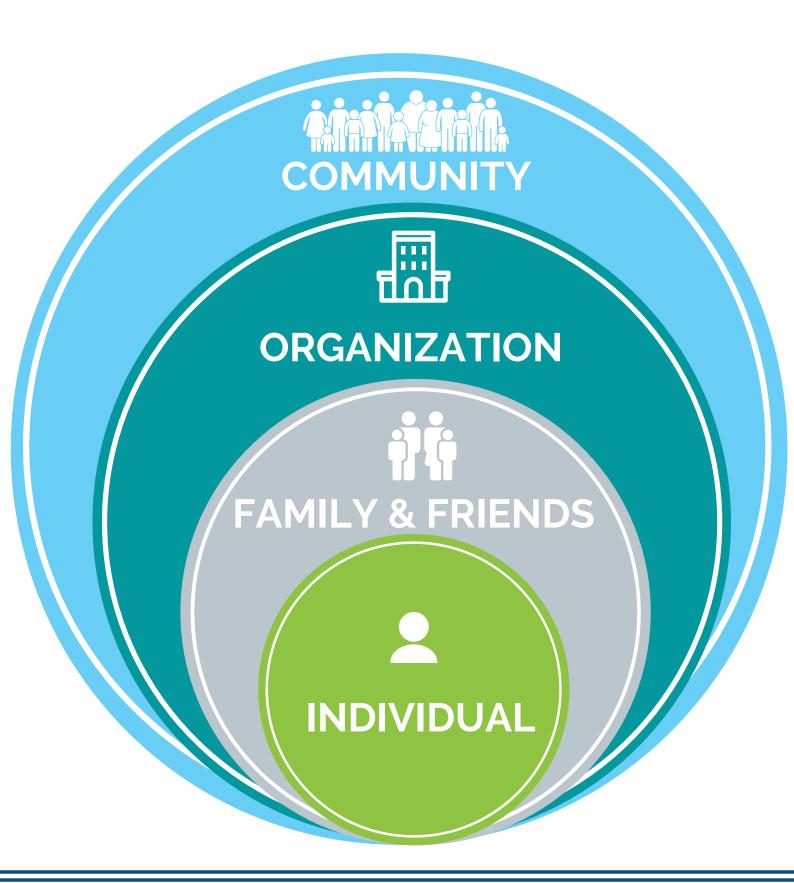
Respond more quickly to innovations in your sector



With reasonable modifications/ accommodations, staff will gain greater job satisfaction through working with a diverse clientele



IMPACT AND VISION







INDIVIDUAL



Social opportunities/ making new friends



Ability to be integrated into the community with appropriate accommodations and supports



Exposure/ desensitizing to new environments



Employment opportunities by creating a neurodiverse workplace



FAMILY & FRIENDS



Ability to experience social outings as a whole family unit



Ability to have access to tools that can create a positive experience for your loved ones



Assist the individual on the spectrum to generalize skills learned at home, therapy, and school



Reduce stress and anxiety caused by past negative experiences





ORGANIZATION



employing individuals on the spectrum can contribute new potential and capacities to a company.



Expand your customer base Nationwide, close to 12 million people each day are impacted by autism and/or related disabilities will engage businesses



Play a key role in making these families feel welcome, while simultaneously improving your image in the community





COMMUNITY



Building independence



Providing community members public awareness and education



Individuals on the spectrum create positive contributions to their community volunteering/employment



Through inclusive opportunities, community members have a greater sense of empathy, compassion, and acceptance

"We launched our Autism Friendly initiative because we have learned over these past three decades of nurturing the growth of UM-NSU CARD that it takes a whole community working together to build a truly loving and welcoming community for those with autism and related disabilities. Every stakeholder must be a partner in the process. We are proud to be doing our part to change the landscape of acceptance and inclusion for neurodiverse citizens in our community."

-Dr. Michael Alessandri









GOALS FOR OUR PARTNERS



ACCEPTANCE & INCLUSION







CELEBRATING DIVERSITY & INDIVIDUALITY



EMPATHY, TOLERANCE, & COMPASSION



SUCCESSFUL PARTNER



CREATIVITY

Transforming empty spaces into Quiet Rooms and modifying showtimes, waiting rooms, menus, etc. are just some examples of our partners applied our training(s) in creative ways.



TIME

Scheduling the training(s), coordinating with staff to attend and complete surveys, etc. are a few examples of time invested by the organization.



EXTERNAL FUNDING

Although no cost is required to make sensory-friendly changes, many partners successfully secured funding to help cover expenses such as subsidized admissions, sensory toys, staff's time to attend training(s), etc.



INTERNAL COMMITMENT

Internal communication with everyone (including executives, staff, custodians, volunteers, etc.) is essential to make a real impact in creating a neurodiverse space and open dialogue to be successful in the program.



MARKETING

All our partners involve their Marketing and Production teams to promote and advertise their work with UM-NSU CARD.



FOCUS GROUP

A few partners involve their staff's close relatives and friends with autism and related disabilities (typically 3-5 members) to contribute reactions, views, and conduct soft openings.



PROGRAM COMPLIANCE



START WITH TRUST

Partners are independent, and their actions may impact and reflect upon UM-NSU CARD and Autism Community. Partners should understand and comply with this Code and be accountable for their compliance through their own administrative process.



MAINTAIN LEGAL AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

In our Partners' work, they will conduct Sensory and Inclusive services in full compliance with applicable laws and regulations in all jurisdictions in which they operate.



ADVERTISE HONESTLY

Partners that advertise or solicit Autism Friendly Partnership or any support from UM-NSU CARD should ensure all Autism Friendly-related comply with UM-NSU CARD related to solicitations and sponsorship.



SAFEGUARD DATA AND PRIVACY

Partners should ensure the security and confidentiality of any collected personal information collected from individuals with autism and/or related disabilities and their families.



EMBODY INTEGRITY

Partners should demonstrate a strong commitment to ethical practices in their organization's conduct and performance of services and endeavors on behalf of Autism Friendly's partnership.



MAINTAIN AUTISM FRIENDLY'S COMMITMENT

Autism Friendly program trusts and places confidence in organizations to accomplish our mission, vision, and goals to create a neurodiverse community.



Autism

MEET THE TEAM





COMMUNITY ADVISORS

UM-NSU CARD is a non-profit organization that values the input from our community members. We work closely with autistic self-advocates and UM-NSU CARD families to enrich our Autism Friendly Program. Our community advisors are driven and committed to helping create a supportive neurodiverse community.



HALEY MOSS, J.D.



JAIRO ARANA



JOSE ROMAN



KATIE SANTORO



UM-NSU CARD CONSTITUENCY BOARD MEMBERS CONSULT ON THIS PROGRAM



Autism Friendly NEXT STEPS





TYPES OF SUPPORT

SENSITIVITY & CUSTOMER SERVICE



(STEPS 1-6)

The organization does not provide direct services and/or has limited interaction with individuals on the spectrum. The organization will benefit from having technical support from UM-NSU CARD staff and training that is focused on autism sensitivity and customer service.

For example: hotels or city hall employees



PROGRAM INCLUSION

(STEPS 6-9)

The organization provides inclusion of programs, services, classes, etc. with individuals with autism and/or related disabilities, which requires strategy-based training(s). The organization requires training on autism sensitivity, customer service as well as be provided with an organization-specific strategy: inclusion, behavior, and utilizing visual supports.

For example: recreation centers, museums, dentists, or doctors' offices



EMPLOYMENT



(STEPS 10-12)

Individuals with autism experience substantial challenges in attaining competitive integrated employment opportunities that match their interests, gifts, and talents (U.S. Department of Labor, 2021). Organizations in our program can help address this social problem with additional employment training(s) and directly working with a staff member from the Transition & Adult team. The team will provide awareness and support to create employment opportunities for adults with autism and/or other related disabilities.

PROJECT STEPS INITIATING CONTACT





1. CARD CONTACTS ORGANIZATION

- Receive Welcome Email and Organization Handbook
- Task: Schedule Action Plan meeting with assigned CARD Staff



2. SEND FOLLOW-UP EMAIL Task: Confirm Action Plan mod

• Task: Confirm Action Plan meeting date & time



3. ACTION PLAN MEETING

 Assigned CARD Staff will determine type of support, complete an action plan and schedule initial training



SENSITIVITY & CUSTOMER SERVICE STEPS





4. TRAINING

- Attend What is ASD Overview & Customer Service training
- Complete Training evaluation Link



5. WALKTHROUGH & SUPPORTS

 Schedule walkthrough with assigned CARD Staff, participate in the walkthrough, and review email of recommendations



PROGRAM INCLUSION STEPS

STEP



6. TRAINING

- Attend Inclusion & Program Supports training
- Complete training evaluation link



STEP



7. ACCOMMODATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS

- · Review email of accommodations examples of supports
- Work with assigned CARD staff to develop visual supports

8. IMPLEMENTATION & CHECK-IN

- Send assigned CARD Staff finalized visuals & supports for review
- Assigned CARD Staff will schedule check-in



EMPLOYMENT STEPS

COLLABORATE WITH TRANSITION & ADULT TEAM



10. ACCOMMODATIONS & **MODIFICATIONS**

- · Review email of accommodations examples of supports
- · Work with assigned CARD staff to develop visual supports





9. TRAINING

- Attend Employment & Autism: Strategies for Success training
- Complete training evaluation link





11. IMPLEMENTATION & CHECK-IN

- Send assigned CARD Staff finalized visuals & supports for review
- Assigned CARD Staff will schedule check-in



STEP

AUTISM FRIENDLY DESGINATION





12. AUTISM FRIENDLY PROJECT COMPLETED

 The organization has completed all the assigned trainings, accommodations, and/or modifications determined in the Action Plan



13. SCHEDULE DESGINATION EVENT

- Coordinate date, time, and location with assigned CARD Staff
- Determine the number of plaques and decals needed with assigned CARD Staff



14. SEND UP TO DATE LOGO AND WEBSITE INFORMATION

 Send information to UM-NSU CARD Communications and Community Events Manager, Michelle Costa at mke@miami.edu and copy assigned CARD Staff



STEP



15. DESGINATION MEDIA AND PRESS

 Email information and details to UM-NSU CARD Communications and Community Events Manager, Michelle Costa at

mke@miami.edu and copy assigned CARD Staff





Autism **PROGRAM LINGO**





PROGRAM LINGO

Accommodation

Support designed to minimize obstacles to learning or participating in the activity or setting.

Americans with **Disabilities Act** (ADA)

A law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in several areas, including employment, transportation, public accommodations, communications, and access to state and local government programs and services.

Choice Board

Visual support that includes photos, icons, or text that can be used to help an individual communicate what activity, item, or task they would like.

Communication **Board**

A visual board that displays photos, icons, or text to help individuals with limited language skills express themselves. The user can gesture or point to images to communicate with others.

First/Then

A visual board used to help individuals with language and/or behavior needs complete specific tasks. This strategy displays two pictures. The "first" is usually a picture of a non-preferred activity and the "then" is a picture of a preferred activity.

Inclusion

The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or mental disabilities.

Modification

A change or alteration to the setting that creates a more accessible environment for all to use.

Personal Care Companion

A professional that a family has hired to help support and monitor the individual with autism and/or related disability in the community.

Sensory **Event/Day**

An event or specific day and time that the organization offers a modified sensory-friendly environment to support and accommodate an individual's sensory needs.

Sensory **Items**

Items are designed to stimulate an individual's five senses: sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. This can be used to help with calming the individual.

Sensory Map

A map of the area/venue that visually indicates areas that can cause overstimulation. This is used to inform an individual to help prepare and plan their visit.

Social Narrative

A social narrative is a learning tool designed to prepare individuals for something new. It is referred to as a story or a written explanation that tells the individual what to do and what to expect in a new situation.

Task **Analysis**

A task analysis breaks a skill/activity down into smaller, more manageable components. A visual is created using photos, icons, and text to explain each step.

Visual Rules

A visual of a written set of explicit expectations that guide an individual for an activity or service.

Visual Schedule

A series of pictures, icons, or text used to depict a sequence of events. Environmental support that accommodates the need for predictability and decreases anxiety about the unknown.

Visual Signs

A visual can provide instruction or indicate a probable presence or occurrence.



Autism Friendly APPENDIX

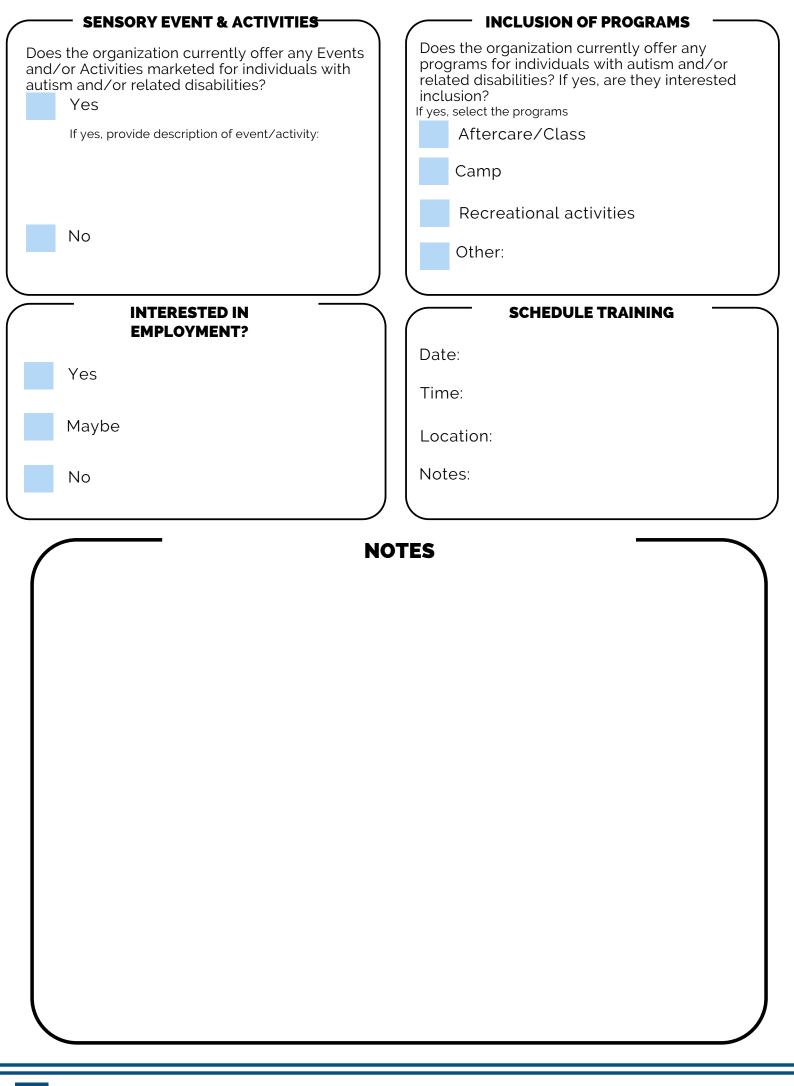




ACTION PLAN COPY OF PLAN

Name of Organization

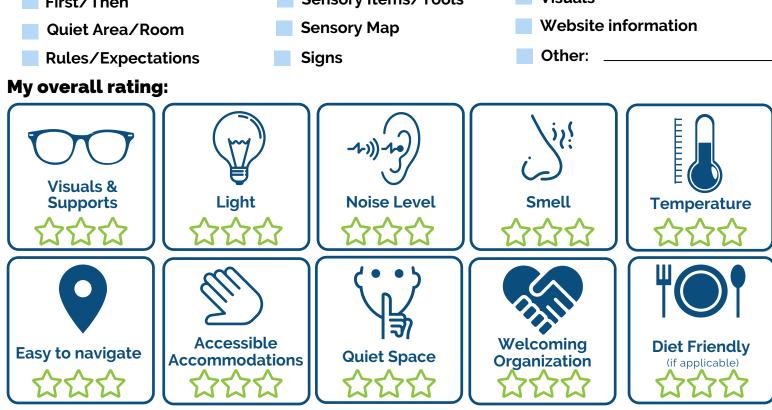
Contact Person	Website
Broward Miami-Dade Mc	onroe Other:
Street, City, S	State Zip Code
ADDITIONAL Number of locations:	LOCATIONS
Broward Miami-Dade Mo	onroe Other:
Street, City, State Zip Code	Street, City, State Zip Code
Street, City, State Zip Code	Street, City, State Zip Code
TYPE OF ORGANIZATION Park/Recreation Sports/Stadium/Arena Museum/Theater Medical Service/Emergency Room Restaurant/Retail/Mall Other: TRAININGS Overview of ASD & Customer Service Inclusion & Program Supports Employment & Autism: Strategies for Supportive Employment Other: Other:	TYPE OF SUPPORT Sensitivity & Customer Service Program Inclusion Employment BUDGET Yes If yes: No If no, are they interested in externa funding? NOTES





WALKTHROUGH FORM COPY OF FORM

Person Conducting Walkthrough		Date of Walkthrough
	Name of Organization	
Location		Room/Area (if applicable)
at I saw or used during :	my visit (check all that ap	ply)
Choice Board	Schedule	Social Narrative
Communication Board	Sensory Event/Day	Task Analysis/Check List
First/Then	Sensory Items/Tools	Visuals
Quiet Area/Room	Sensory Map	Website information
		Other





1 Star Rating

Not present or available during the walkthrough. Organization will need an example and guidance creating the support.



2 Star Rating

Present during the walkthrough, organization needs to change or restructure support. Organization will need an example and guidance creating the support.



3 Star Rating

Present or available during the walkthrough and support is clear and appropriate as is.

FEEDBACK

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Florida Autism License Plate Grant

"Each year, the Florida Support Autism Programs Specialty License Plate generates funds that support nonprofit organizations providing direct services for individuals with autism and related disabilities in Florida. The Autism License Plate Fund and the Autism Services Grant Council are administered by Arc Broward, a nationally accredited, Florida, non-profit, Section 501(c)(3) exempt organization."

-Autism License Plate Website

For more information visit

www.autismlicenseplate.com/grants

Autism Speaks Grants

"Autism Speaks funds research and services. Our science funding seeks to be a catalyst for research breakthroughs that improve lives today and deliver a spectrum of solutions in the years ahead. Our funding to service providers focuses on programs that provide people with autism with social and educational experiences. We also provided limited funding for individuals and families in financial need due to a catastrophic life event or natural disaster."

-Autism Speaks Website

For more information visit

www.autismspeaks.org/autism-speaks-grants





FAQ





What is a social story?

It is designed to guide individuals with ASD for appropriate social behaviors, sensory comfort, and reasonable expections for the visit.

Are dietary restrictions an accommodation for organizations to consider?

Each organization will determine which modifications are safe and reasonable including dietary accommodations. There is no requirement for accommodating this need. However, organizations may suggest to review any restaurants, café, or food options when adults with ASD or caregivers inquire.

A guest is having difficulty with crowds?

Organizations may post on the website and discuss the best day and time to attend with fewer crowds.

Are organizations accept caregivers dropping of children alone or expectation of childcare services?

Unless the entity specifically offers childcare services, Autism Friendly organizations are not responsible for directly supervising, caregiving, or parenting a child. UM-NSU CARD strongly encourages caregivers to attend and participate with their children during their visits.

All individuals will have to comply with the policies and rules of the entity. Unsafe behaviors will be addressed as policies dictates.

Does the organization have to bypass height or age requirements for an adult, young adults, teenager with ASD? For example, accessing exhibits for young children.

Typically, height and age requirement are set for safety purposes. However, it is understood that some more mature individuals with ASD may have a preference for activities that are typically accessed by younger patrons. An organization may choose to make exceptions if safety permits and the comfort of other guests is not disturbed. In all cases, safety standards will not be compromised.

Are visual supports including the social story available prior to the patron's visit?

Many organizations offers the visual supports on their website under the customer service section. UM-NSU CARD may also post a link to organization's visual supports page.

Note: Not all organizations require visual supports (please, consult with UM-NSU CARD staff).



Do organizations pay an initiation or donate fee to become Autism Friendly?

No, it is a free service though UM-NSU CARD.

Does it require a legally bond contract to achieve **Autism Friendly** designation?

The Autism Friendly designation is attained when the admitted organization completes the consultation and training process with UM-NSU CARD and is recognized on UM-NSU CARD's website. To maintain Autism Friendly designation, **UM-NSU CARD offers** ongoing technical assistance and training as the business requires.

Are the organizations expected and guarantee provide accommodation and modifications?

Each organization will determine which modifications are safe and reasonable. Safety requirements will remain the same for all guests or customers regardless of abilities.

Is there a difference between Autism Friendly and "Sensory Friendly?"

Yes, Autism Friendly is an initiative to create a more inclusive community through consultation, training, and ongoing technical assistance to our organizations partners. We develop visual supports for the activities of the organization, discuss possible modifications to accommodate the sensory needs of patrons with ASD and collaborate to provide internships or employment opportunities for people with ASD.

"Sensory Friendly" describes specific events by a business that may include sensory moditications for individuals with ASD.

What does it mean to be autism friendly?

Organizations want to make the effort to understand, welcome and include individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their caregivers. UM-NSU ČARD trains organization's staff for awareness about ASD and specific strategies to help people with ASD be comfortable and successful during their visits. Visual supports may be created if needed. Employment or internship opportunities for individuals with ASD are encouraged but not required.

Does this mean an organization is certified by the State of Florida or meet county regulations?

No, there is no state or local certifications for the organization or staff. Nonetheless, the completion of the **Autism Friendly** program will equip organizations to better understand the patron's needs and make reasonable adjustments if possible.



