

Fact Sheet

The Project

Children's Specialized Hospital, one of New Jersey's largest providers of services for children with autism, with funding provided by Kohl's Department Stores, has created a community focused outreach project, Make Friends with Autism, to promote autism awareness. The bilingual (English/Spanish), multi-media initiative provides tools, guides, and resources for successful inclusion of people with autism and their families in the community.

- Provides useful information about Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Helps families prepare for safe and successful community outings
- Facilitates positive relationships between individuals with autism and businesses, recreation providers, and other community members

The Need

Autism is a complex neurobiological disorder characterized by a combination of challenges in communication, difficulty with social interactions, repetitive behavior(s), and restricted interest(s). Autism is found within every racial, ethnic, geographic and socioeconomic group. With a current prevalence estimate of approximately 1 in 100 children in the United States having an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)¹, more individuals with autism are likely to seek inclusive and encouraging community connections. Increased understanding of autism will help encourage positive, meaningful community involvement.

¹ Health Resources and Service Administration, "Prevalence of Parent-Reported Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder Among Children in US, 2007," Pediatrics 5 Oct. 2009.

Components

All of the *Make Friends with Autism* materials are available for free downloading online at www.makefriendswithautism.org.

- Streaming of the *Make Friends with Autism* film: To better support the needs of people on the spectrum and improve the ability of businesses to provide welcoming environments, this 20-minute documentary offers a glimpse of some challenges and successful experiences of families during community excursions.
- Print materials include:
 - Training resources for businesses and recreation providers
 - General information about autism, commonly used terms, frequently asked questions, and applicable laws
 - Parent and caregiver resources to help prepare for community outings
 - Personal and travel safety information
 - Visual aides to help with preparation for community experiences
 - A picture communication tool
 - Helpful organization resources and contacts
 - Coloring pages, games, puzzles, and more

For more information about this initiative
call 1-888-CHILDREN, ext. 5343

www.makefriendswithautism.org