

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 68 children in the United States having an Autism Spectrum Disorder, more individuals with autism are likely to seek inclusive and encouraging community connections. Increased understanding of autism will help encourage positive, meaningful community involvement.

Components

All of the *Make Friends with Autism* materials are available for free downloading online at www.childrens-specialized.org/KohlsAutismAwareness

- 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

www.childrens-specialized.org/KohlsAutismAwareness

For more information about this program contact: KohlsAutismAwareness@childrens-specialized.org