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ASM – A Friend for Life: A Training Manual and Guide for Parents, Providers, and Individuals

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Abstract:

In collaboration with the NH – ME LEND Program, the Autism Society of Maine (ASM) has set forth the goal of providing an up-to-date, accurate, relevant, and easy to follow manual that highlights nearly every aspect of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). From initial questions and concerns, to resources for independent living as adults, this nine module “How to” manual will provide guidance throughout the lifetime to individuals and families facing the challenges associated with ASD.

Background:

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a unique and often challenging developmental disorder with a broad range of symptoms and presentations. Resources to help individuals and their families who discover a diagnosis of ASD are critical to lifelong care and successful outcomes of day to day living. Agencies such as the Autism Society of Maine (ASM) help to promote access to these varied resources, and ultimately to assist in navigating opportunities that are available to all individuals on the autism spectrum. Through advocacy, education, awareness and support, ASM seeks to build the bridge between initial diagnosis and eventual participation as active members of the community for individuals with ASD.



ASM – A Friend for Life: A Training Manual and Guide for Parents, Providers, and Individuals

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Description:

Building off the prior version of the ASM Manual, some strategic organizational changes have been made for this edition. We have modified content to match that of current information about ASD, including updated: statistics, diagnostic definitions, valuable tips and resources, and perspectives from individuals living with autism. The manual is comprehensive, yet user friendly and voiced in an informative and caring manner. The nine modules are presented as follows:

- Module 1: What is Autism?
- Module 2: What can families with an autism diagnosis expect?
- Module 3: Acquiring social services for your child
- Module 4: Autism and Strategies for Healthy Living
- Module 5: Self-Advocacy
- Module 6: Autism and the Education System
- Module 7: Getting Older
- Module 8: Public Services for Autistic Adults
- Module 9: Useful Resources



Summary:

This work is a collaborative effort with members of the society, and strongly supports the ASM options policy, which is: "The ASM promotes the active and informed involvement of family members and individuals with autism in the planning of individual appropriate services and supports." In order to access supports for each individual, the information has to be obtainable, clear, and current, and successful completion of this comprehensive manual serves to accomplish this need. In being actively engaged throughout this project, LEND and ASM will produce a working document that can be easily referenced by individuals, families, and professionals, while also being amenable to any future changes in policy and resources as they develop.

Conclusions:

The final product of this manual is a reflection on the mission and purpose statements of ASM. It is an invaluable educational tool to support the valued lives of individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. With the help of this manual, it will be easier for families to navigate complex systems in ways that will ultimately benefit both the families and their children with ASD. Along the way, there will be a reliable resource and a welcoming family of new friends through ASM. For further information, please visit the ASM website at: <https://www.asmonline.org>