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Expanding Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

Philanthropy Miami's 2014 Shark Tank

Project Partners

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Description of Collaboration

There are too many tragic stories in the news that demonstrate the lack of understanding between law enforcement and the ASD population that lead to disastrous situations that could have been easily prevented. We have developed a unique partnership between the Coral Gables Police Department (CGPD), Disability Independence Group, Inc. (DIG) and the University of Miami Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (UM-CARD) to create an inexpensive, low tech, effective way to minimize this problem.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a social-communication disability that significantly deteriorates in stressful circumstances hence, creating potentially dangerous situations for both the individual with ASD as well as the person in authority. This unique proactive collaboration between CGPD, UM-CARD, and DIG will prevent this problem by creating a **wallet card** for the individual with ASD and a two pronged training. This is a simple solution for what could escalate into a life threatening situation. Currently, in Miami-Dade County UM-CARD has 2981 clients over the age of 15 that could benefit from this collaboration and this project can be expanded to reach the entire county.

This wallet card is small, waterproof, and customizable for the person's specific needs. It explains to first responders that the person has ASD and might have trouble communicating. It further goes on to list specific triggers for the individual such as loud noises or flashing lights and then lists the emergency contact information so that someone can be contacted on behalf of the individual.

This solution allows first responders the ability to take a step back and evaluate a situation with the correct information. The goal is to not have the person's actions misinterpreted so that they are wrongly arrested or worse.

Two trainings will be developed in conjunction with the wallet card. The first training will be for the people with ASD. They will be taught how to use the wallet card and how to correctly interact with police officers and first responders. The second training will be for law enforcement and first responders. This training will explain the purpose of the wallet card and will focus on the nuances and unique behaviors of people with ASD and how misunderstandings can be avoided in crisis situations. The wallet card will give both sides a necessary "time out" to reevaluate the situation from the beginning.

The \$5,000.00 would be utilized: 1) to perfect the design of the wallet card; 2) to purchase the laminating paper and machine; 3) to develop a training for people with ASD on how to successfully interact with first responders, police officers and persons in authority and when it is appropriate to use the wallet card; 4) to create a train the trainer program for first responders.

Results will be measured by number of individuals with ASD and their families that receive training, number of first responders that receive trainings, responses on the UM-CARD training evaluation forms, and the number of wallet cards created for users.