1. *Project Description: Describe the purpose of the research, the methods to be used including data collection procedures and any features of the research design that may involve special conditions or procedures for the subjects. Identify any risks to which subjects may be exposed. Interview guide or copies of survey must be included.*

The purpose of this study being conducted is to examine the factors that contribute to parental stress of raising a child living with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and the ability to cope with this life changing event. These questionnaires and surveys will be given to the parents who have children aged eighteen months to eight years old through online parent support groups and attempt to get approval for data collection from parents attending therapy and receiving services at Good Samaritan and Mary Bridge hospital children’s therapy units. In addition, these questionnaires will be delivered to parent support groups of parents raising children with ASD to get more diversity in the population and demographics within the study.

This research projects purpose is to see how such things as social development, aggressive behavior, sleep problems, GI troubles, acceptance by peers, family and parents stress relating to future plans for the child when they reach adult ages. While many studies focusing on parental stress have been conducted, few have took into account the correlation between the symptoms and experiences of raising a child with autism along with how parents cope with raising a child with ASD. This will be done to discover the effect on parents relating to autism characteristics and how it correlates to heightened parental stress using self-report measures that are given by parents. In addition they will also submit a survey on their current coping methods that are being used since discovering this life changing diagnosis for their young children.

1. *Subject Recruitment:*
2. *Identify the number of subjects to be recruited for the research. Identify how and where subjects are recruited and the criteria used to select and exclude subjects.*

The sample of parents having a child diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder aged eighteen months to eight years of age, recruited through online parent support groups and with approval locations that give services to children with this diagnosis. The questionnaire will also be submitted to online advocacy groups with approval to try and get as broad demographics as possible. The criteria for this study consist of having a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder only, not including others such as cerebral palsy or Down syndrome. This is necessary because the study intends to discover the contributing factors linked to heightened parental stress of parents raising children with this specific diagnosis and how parents cope with this.

1. *Describe the characteristics of the subjects with regard to age, sex, race, special affiliations which cause them to be included in the study population, institution status and their general state of physical and mental health. Explain why it is necessary to use any particular population subgroups or special populations.*

The subjects are parents of children living with autism and their characteristics are going to be of all ages, sex, race and religion. They will be asked to contribute to this study because they are parents, which in many previous studies have showed elevated parental stress however coping has not been studied extensively. The need to have the parents fill out the questionnaires is done with the intention to discover what symptoms, activities and challenging behaviors contribute to the heightened stress of raising a child with autism spectrum disorder.

1. *There is no incentive, cost or payment to the subject, or reimbursement for related expenses.*

There is no funding needed to carry out this study with parents raising children with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

*C) Confidentiality of Data:*

The names of participants will not appear on any materials containing their responses. All identifying materials such as the consent forms will be kept in a locked file in the BSW Department at Saint Martins University.

1. *Risks to subjects: Describe in detail any immediate or long-range risks to subjects that may arise from the procedures used in the study. (Risks may be physical, psychological, social, legal or economic.) Describe the precautions taken to minimize the risk.*

There is no, to minimal risk for the subjects completing the questionnaires on parental stress and contributing factors associated with raising a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The children will not be involved in this process and have no risk to them as well.

1. *Benefits: Describe the anticipated benefits to subjects, science, and or society which may occur as a result of this study.*

The anticipated benefits of this study consist of discovering which can contribute to this elevated stress for parents such as intensive therapy time needed, challenging behavior, finances, unknowns of diagnosis, anxiety of child, health concerns and the lifelong caregiving for families often associated with this diagnosis. This study could help parents discover what is contributing to their elevated stress and help the healthcare community to better understand how to assist these parents raising children with autism. Furthermore, discovering the different characteristics that influence heightened stress can help therapeutic communities find new and improved methods to combat this including the child’s therapy and mental well-being of parents. Through this research it is anticipated to discover the ways parents cope with this lifelong disability through adulthood, in a more comprehensive manner while finding better methods to help alleviate this stress in the future.

*Note: This project does not involve the use or handling of body fluids*.

*5. Qualifications of investigator:* The primary investigator is a SW 499 student, graduating in May of 2016 with a degree of Bachelors in Social Work.

*6. Literature Cited*: N/A

*7. This project does not involve the use of medications, dietary supplements, or any substances that will be introduced into the body.*