

Safe Neurodivergent Spaces in Libraries

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Summary

The Neurodivergent and Intellectually Disabled Communities are a prevalent and often underserved population. We saw an opportunity for libraries to provide safe and welcoming spaces for this population and their families, caregivers, and friends.



Neurodivergent & Intellectually Disabled Communities

Neurodivergence can include the following:

- Autism
- ADHD
- Learning disabilities (like dyslexia)
- Tourette's syndrome
- Synthesia
- Other intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Some mental health illnesses are considered neurodivergent due to how it can change the way a person thinks, acts, and feels (Villines, 2022).



Approach

- Neurodivergent and Intellectually Disabled communities
- A look into what libraries are doing
- Community Needs Assessment
- Library Services Assessment
- Assessment Tool
- Resources



ASSESSMENT TOOL

Smartsheet Tip → Mark your progress for each of the categories

PROJECT Making my library a Safe Space for Neurodivergent Users

LIBRARY NAME [Library's name]

PROJECT LEAD [Project Lead's name]

DATE 5/31/22

Smartsheet Tip

CATEGORIES	ADDITIONAL INFO	WHERE ARE WE AT NOW?			IF YOU DON'T HAVE IT, IS IT FEASIBLE? WHAT CONSTRAINTS DO YOU HAVE?		
		WE DON'T HAVE/DO IT	WE COULD IMPROVE IT	DONE!	YES (no constraints)	MAYBE (some constraints)	NO (too many constraints)
Technology/Equipment							
Communication devices for non-verbal patrons	Details here						
Software for Computers - ADA	Details here						
Web Accessibility	Web accessibility means that websites, tools, and technologies are designed and developed so that people with disabilities can use them.						
Accessibility of documents and photos	Details here						
AAC Devices	augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device, is a tablet or laptop that helps someone with a speech or language impairment to communicate						
Computer hardware	Do you have accessibility features on your computers and equipment (i.e. keyboard, mouse, headphones)? Details here						

The Assessment Tool

[LINK TO ASSESSMENT TOOL](#)

Assessment Tool Categories

- Technology/Equipment
- Spaces
- Services/Programs
- Collections
- Staffing/Training
- Partnerships
- Policies
- Evaluations



RESOURCE GUIDE

RESOURCE NAME	DESCRIPTION	MORE INFORMATION
Technology/Equipment		
Bionic Reading	With Bionic Reading, we aim to promote reading and comprehension of textual content in a hectic and noisy world.	https://bionic-reading.com/
Making Electronic Resources Accessible in Libraries by Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology (DO-IT)	This publication focuses on how libraries can ensure that everyone has access to their electronic resources. It discusses access, legal, and policy issues and presents recommendations for practice. The field of universal design provides a framework for this discussion.	https://www.washington.edu/doit/making-electronic-resources-accessible/
Spaces		
Sensory Rooms 101 by Edutopia	After we published a video about a special room designed to help autistic kids calm and focus themselves, you had questions. Here's what it takes to create this kind of space.	https://www.edutopia.org/article/sensory-room-101-betty-ray/
Fun & Function	We create sensory rooms worldwide – in schools, universities, airports, stadiums, hotels, workplaces and homes. Benefit from our exceptional quality, safety record, complimentary design and consulting services.	https://funandfunction.com/sensory-space
DIY Sensory Rooms on a Budget! by Parenting Special Needs Magazine	We know that sensory rooms have a huge calming effect on our children, so, we challenged a couple of moms (and two behavior therapists) to come up with some DIY, low-cost solutions for creating a sensory room that helped children and provided a high-quality experience.	https://www.parentingspecialneeds.org/article/diy-sensory-rooms-on-a-budget/
How to create a sensory room on a budget by Jason Hinklin-Lauderdale	Creating an effective sensory space doesn't have to be expensive or require an entire room of your house. Just take a look at the following tips we've compiled to help you build a sensory area that fits your budget.	https://www.especialneeds.com/blog/budget-sensory-room-build/
ENABLING SPACES NEURODIVERSITY-FRIENDLY LIVING SPACES AND WORK PLACES by NeurodiversityHub	This community of practice aims to inform how the design of environments, whether it be homes, urbanised places or office spaces, should consider the neurodiversity community and how minor adjustments in the workplace can allow them to thrive. This set of resources is organised through the following themes around design and neurodiversity (more specifically autism): Practitioner, Research and Practical Applications.	https://www.neurodiversityhub.org/enabling-spaces

Resource Guide

[LINK TO RESOURCE GUIDE](#)

Next Steps

- More research, leading to additional assessment tool categories and resources

Suggestions:

- Create a list of grant opportunities for libraries to implement some of the services from the assessment categories
- Connect libraries to training opportunities to better serve these communities
- Adding content to MLIS and Library Tech courses related to these communities

Community Quotes

- “We are all human. We are not broken, we don't need to be cured. We just need a bit of extra support and understanding to be able to thrive in our communities. We should be appreciated and valued as we are.”
- “I would love to know about anything that we can do for these communities! Our biggest problem is money and staffing - so some of the offerings that we have seen we just cannot do right now. I am always on the lookout for ideas and then trying to work those ideas into our budget/timeline.”
- “More trainings! I have attended many and some are more helpful than others. It has been tough for us to find a training for frontline staff that covers very basic interaction type stuff. I have had quite a few trainings involving collections/programs/services/etc. but have not seen many trainings that get down to the very basic Circ staff questions like, how do I handle it if I can't understand them? I don't want to be rude, so what is appropriate to say?”

Thank you!

Questions?



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