Libraries and Autism

We’re connected.

NY State Department of Health
Bureau of Early Intervention
March 28, 2012
Welcoming people with all needs and all abilities within the scope of our Library services.
Libraries as Community Inclusion Opportunities

“Being in the community is not the same as being part of the community.”

- Bill Gaventa & Sue Hapshaw

• community crossroads
• connections with people, activities, and information
• offering services across the life span
What is autism?
Autism...

... is a developmental disability, which appears in a child’s life before the age of 3, characterized by deficits or impairments in language, social interactions and communication, and by difficulties with behavior.
Autism was initially misdiagnosed and treated as a mental disease or a psychological disorder mistakenly thought to be brought upon by "cold" parenting style, parental neglect or abuse.

Autism is a broad spectrum neurological disorder.
• Approximately 1 out of 110 people in the U.S. population is currently diagnosed with autism. (for boys, it’s 1 in 70).*

• In New Jersey, prevalence of autism is 1 out of 94.

• Your town is not excluded from this statistic.

• While we may not think we have seen individuals with autism in our library, it does not mean that they aren’t already customers.

* October 2009 (Revised from the 2007 level of 1 in 150)
Local Numbers

Students ages 5 – 21 diagnosed with autism in NY schools:

1996 – 3,416
2010 – 22,284

From the NYSED 2012
Variations in Autism

- repetitive behaviors
- physical overactivity
- echolalic
- no fear of real dangers
- oversensitive to pain
- not cuddly
- resist changes in routine
- inappropriate attachment to objects
- oversensitive to noise
- sustained by odd play
- difficulty reading social cues
- difficulty mixing in with other people
- inappropriate laughter
- spin objects
- apparent insensitivity to noise
- poor eye contact
- uneven skill level across areas
- extreme passivity
- apparent insensitivity to pain
- difficulty transitioning from one activity to another
Did you know that all Behavior is a form of Communication?

Behavior is communicating the need for:

- attention
- help
- escape from demands
- sensory stimulation
- tangible object
  - a toy, a book, a computer session
Autism is a lifelong disability, although a small percentage of children will lose their diagnostic label with intense early intervention.

Many persons show improvements in functioning over time.

An individual with autism is expected to live a typical life span.

Issues change over time with development (infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood).
What can libraries do?
The ASD Community

Information

Keeping Current

Access to Technology

YOUR LOCAL

Public Library

Support Groups

Community Resources

Programming
Barriers to Inclusion

• Parents of children with autism often avoid community interaction because of the child’s “inappropriate” tendencies.

• There are often no outward physical characteristics or prosthetics signaling a person with autism as having a disorder.

• Onlookers might misunderstand the person’s behavior and/or the caregiver’s reactions.
The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) were passed specifically to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to community life and facilities.
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Strategies for Successful Customer Service

- Respect differences.
- Use person-first terminology.
- Greet all who enter.
- Talk to the individual.
  - Be clear and concise.
  - Use his/her name if you know it.

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**Customer Service Tips**

“If you know one person with autism, you know one person with autism.”

**Communication Tips**
- Address the individual by name first
- Speak directly, simply, slowly and at a normal volume
- Try to make eye contact
- Avoid broad open-ended questions
- Provide a non-verbal communication board

**Behaviors to ignore**
- Rocking
- Quiet humming
- Pacing
- Wigglng

**Languages You Should Not Ignore**
- Destructive Activities
- Violent Tantrums
- Loud or inappropriate interaction with other patrons
- Violent Tantrums

**Behavior Tips**
- Offer to help the caregiver and be empathetic
- Sit next to the person with autism
- Redirect attention
- Ask common social questions
- Offer to relocate other patrons

**Emergency Tips**
- Contact security
- Call 911
- Do not touch the individual
- Avoid standing too close

**Relationship Building Tips**
- Don’t be condescending
- Be aware of your own attitude and avoid being judgemental
- Don’t consider the caregiver as an intermediary
- Be an ambassador
- Give a tour of your library
- Know where your autism materials are located
- Offer “This is My Library” book

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www.thepointlibrary.org/autism • autism@thepointlibrary.org • www.libraryconnections.net • MeganLib@libraryconnections.net
Strategies for Success

Assess communication style

• verbal
• picture system
• augmentative / alternative system
• sign language
• smart phones, tablets, ipads, e-readers
Adapted Materials

• Materials should be simple.
  • few words on a page
  • pictures to explain them

• Use hands-on and meaningful activities.

• Use adapted books.

• Depend on Social Stories: step-by-step activity descriptions with words and pictures.
This is My Library
The Scotch Plains Public Library

This is the inside of my library.

These are the times I can use my library.

This is the circulation desk at my library.

This is a library card.

I can use my library card to check-out, renew or return books or tapes or videos or DVDs to use outside the library.

I need to bring my card when I go to the library. The card lets me check out books and use the computers.
Special Needs Communication Guide

Library Services
Servicios de la Biblioteca
Guía de Comunicación para Necesidades Especiales

www.thejointlibrary.org/autism

books
libros

late fee
cargo por demora
Technology

- Web-based social stories
- Apps for iPads, iPhones, Tablets, etc.
- Computers – Blogs, Self-expression
In 2008 the Scotch Plains Public Library and the Fanwood Memorial Library, together with our partners, created Libraries and Autism·We're Connected. This award winning project produced a customer service training video and website primarily for library staff to help them serve individuals with autism and their families more effectively. The video focuses on what you need to know about autism and will empower you with specific techniques to offer more inclusive service to this growing and underserved population.

The resources here on the website, along with the on-site training workshops which have been presented to hundreds of librarians around the country, expand on our customer service video to address the real world implementation of best practices and universal service for people with ASD and their families and helps staff to improve their ability to provide excellent, inclusive, universal customer service to everyone who uses the library.

Every library we visit tells us the same story of increasing numbers of families dealing with ASD who are turning to their public library for resources, programs and a community center where they are welcome. We stress communication, customer service, using individuals on the spectrum and with other developmental disabilities as staff and volunteers in the library, programming strategies that work, connecting with local experts, and the importance of empowering staff to be willing to 'do something'.

To receive a free "Libraries and Autism·We're Connected" Decal for your library, contact us at autism@thejointlibrary.org. We encourage you to explore this site and make use of our support resources.

Please contact us anytime with questions, inquiries, comments or programming suggestions, and take the time to let us know if the video and any of these materials have been of use to you via email.

**PROJECT NEWS:**

**BACK from ALA in NOLA!**

Three years ago when we started this project we searched the web hard for reference to libraries and autism and came up dry, so it was really refreshing to see such offerings being made to libraries to support them serving this important population. It's exciting for us to see such growing and ever-evolving support from the library world.
Strategies that Work

• Develop a well-rounded resource collection
• Sensory Storytimes
• Sensory Friendly Films
• After Hours Programs
• Paws to Read
• Create cozy safe areas
Programming for Kids on the Spectrum

Sensory Storytime *(separate or inclusive)*

“*Welcomes children of any age who have trouble sitting still*”

“Inclusive” story times for families can include a pictorial schedule and carpet squares to establish boundaries for the entire audience.

Incorporate two visuals to each story: the illustrations with the book and a flannel board to act out parts of the story.

Double visuals: read a book through once and follow with the same flannel story immediately after.

Engage as many senses as you can incorporate – with every story use music, pictures and items like beanbags and ribbons for the kids to touch. Emphasize the visual and tactile.

Sensory elements can include Educubes for seating, therabands with songs, use of a sensory balance beam or stepping stones and other sensory experiences for all participants.
Lights brought up

Sound turned down

Families can bring in their own gluten-free, casein-free snacks

No previews or advertisements

Audience is welcome to get up and dance, walk, shout or sing
Inclusive Programming?
Adapt Library Activities for People with ASD?
Individuals with ASD and with other developmental disabilities can make a valuable addition to your library’s staff and volunteer force.
Keep Walking

Community Collaboration

Local Experts

Group Spirit
One More Step

Fair application of rules & policy

Rules of Conduct

LIBRARY RULES OF CONDUCT AND USE

1. All persons are welcome in the library. Children under the age of ten must be under the direct supervision of a person over the age of thirteen at all times. This caregiver should monitor all activities and behavior of their children while they are in the building.

2. Please respect the rights of others to quietly study, read or work without interference. Please maintain low noise levels. Any listening devices should not be audible to anyone but the user.

3. Please turn all cell phones to silent alarm when inside the Library building. If you wish to make or take a call, we ask that you step outside the building. Library

Fanwood Memorial Library Policy Manual

General Conduct - The Fanwood Memorial Library believes all customers have the right to use Library facilities, services and materials safely and freely, in a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere. With these rights come responsibility for actions and conduct that respects the rights of other Library customers and staff members. Customers are expected to use the Library for its intended purposes and misconduct will not be allowed in the Library.

Customers that fail to recognize these rights may be asked to leave the premises. It is the Director or the senior staff member on duty that will decide on whether any patron will be asked to leave. In extreme circumstances, the Fanwood Memorial Library reserves the right to call the police in accordance with the Library’s Code of Conduct.

Library

One More Step

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Library
Getting Closer

Raise all staff awareness & ‘buy-in’
Empathy & understanding
www.disabilityisnatural.com
You’re Almost There

The Wakanheza Project

\wa- ‘khan- ja\`

www.co.ramsey.mn.us/ph/cp/wakanheza.htm

• Offer assurance through a smile or a nod.
  • Show empathy and imagine yourself in the other person's shoes.
  • Distract or redirect their attention away from the stressful situation.
  • Find something positive to say about the child, young person, or adult.
  • Offer encouragement about something positive that you see in the situation
Putting it all into Practice

Show Respect

Value the Dignity of Each Individual

Strive for Inclusion

Provide Opportunities for Participation

Just Ask - Address the Moment
Libraries and Autism

We’re connected.

Meg Kolaya
Dan Weiss

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