

Programming for Adults with Developmental Disabilities (DD): Why and How Handout 2: Working with Partner Agencies

Libraries can offer adults served by agencies:

- Welcoming, free, community-based activities
- Access to books and other resources agencies cannot provide on their own
- Opportunities to learn skills and develop personal interests
- Opportunities to explore their creativity
- Recreational and social experiences

Agencies that bring groups can help the library by:

- Informing library staff of the needs, abilities, and communication styles of the people they serve
- Identifying programs that might appeal to the people they serve, and the activities that will reinforce ones they are doing at the day or residential program
- Helping recruit program participants and marketing programs
- Letting library staff know about gaps in programming that the library can fill
- Providing transportation to the library for regular visits or programs
- Assisting with crafts, room setup, and other aspects of programs

Basic Tips:

- Ask the person who escorts a group to the library who has authority to plan visits or programs for the people the agency serves, then cultivate a relationship with that person.
- Find out the best times for them to bring people they serve to the library for programs.

- Plan library programs that will be worth the effort for them to bring a group, either because they are really fun and appealing or because they meet a stated need.
- Remember: bad weather, staff or volunteer shortages, or other barriers may keep groups from showing up for your programs, even if they commit to come.
- Be flexible. Because of transportation issues, adults with DD may arrive very early or very late for your programs.
- Offer unique programs that the day or residential agencies aren't doing.
- Keep an assortment of puzzles, games, adult-appropriate coloring pages with colored pencils, sensory tools, and similar items on hand for groups to use on their own during library visits.
- Find out the interests and reading abilities of the adults with DD who come regularly in a group, and prepare a cart of curated books and other materials for them in advance.
- Use group visits and targeted programs to introduce adults with developmental disabilities to all that the library has to offer them. Make sure to invite them to your other programs too.

Prepared by Carrie Banks and Barbara Klipper, 2020. Some items were adapted with permission from the handout "Inclusive Activities for Adults" by Candice Casey, Osceola Library System, Florida.