

Welcome to today's Project ENABLE Webinar



Hosted by Infopeople



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Libraries and Autism Services



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Overview

- Introduction to Me
- Introduction to Autism
- How Might Characteristics of Autism Manifest in the Library?
- Questions to Ask when Starting a Program
- Two Key Considerations: Creating a Culture of Inclusion and Training
- Storytimes and Programs for Kids: Best Practices
- Programs and Services for Teens



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Introduction to Me

- Hi, I'm Amelia Anderson!
- I'm a former public librarian
- And a current assistant professor
- I use identity first language (autistic person, not person with autism)
- I am neurotypical



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Introduction to Autism

- “a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges.”
- “...a developmental disability that affects how we experience the world around us. Autistic people are an important part of the world. Autism is a normal part of life, and makes us who we are.”
- It is a “spectrum disorder”
- It can be diagnosed at any age, and is a lifelong disorder



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About the Increase in Prevalence

- Current estimates are 1 in 44 8-year-olds in the US meet diagnostic criteria (but this is not a crisis!)



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Autism as Neurodiversity



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How Might Characteristics of Autism Manifest in the Library?



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Questions Libraries Should Ask When Starting a Program

- What are your goals for the program?
- **Will your program be inclusive or autism-specific?**
- What age range are you targeting?
- **How will you market the program?**
- What kind of budget will you require, and what funding is available?
- What frequency, time, and length of program do you envision?
- Will you collaborate with other organizations?
- How will you evaluate the program?



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Questions to Ask When Starting a Program

- **Will your program be inclusive or autism-specific?**



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Questions to Ask When Starting a Program

- **How will you market the program?**

“Sensory Storytime engages children through movement, music, stories, sensory activities and play. This welcoming, encouraging and supportive program is smaller and more adaptive than other storytimes. An early intervention professional will assist.”



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Establishing Programs and Services: Two Key Considerations

- Creating a Culture of Inclusion
- Training and Educating Staff to Support this Mission



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Creating a Culture of Inclusion



"Participation might look different, but it doesn't mean (an autistic child) is enjoying your library program any less than their peers."

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Creating a Culture of Inclusion

"Nothing about us without us"



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Training and Educating Staff



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Training and Educating Staff

Communication Strategies

An important topic to cover in staff training is basic communication strategies that make interactions easier for everyone. Think about the following:

- Autistic people are concrete, literal thinkers. Because of this, you should be prepared to hear the honest truth. Although this might initially lead to hurt feelings, once you understand that this is just a communication style, it becomes truly refreshing.
- Along those lines, try to avoid using slang, idioms, and other figurative language.
- Try using visual supports, which can be very helpful to support communication.
- When giving directions or instructions, present one step at a time.
- Provide very clear directions. Focus on the behavior you wish to see rather than what not to do. Remember, be straightforward and honest.
- Don't expect an autistic person to make eye contact or to show body language that indicates they are paying attention. These social cues are not innate for them, and the child gazing at their shoe might be paying just as much attention as the child nodding their head in agreement.
- Non-speaking children likely have a preferred method of "augmented and alternative communication" (AAC); one common example is the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). Ask the child's parent or caregiver for guidance, and use the child's preferred method to communicate.
- Don't forget that autistic people like to interact and engage just as much as anyone else; they just might have a different communication style. Provide options for communication so that they can participate in the way that best suits them.



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Training and Educating Staff

Targeting Autism in Libraries

<https://targetingautismlibs.com>

Autism and Libraries: We're Connected

www.librariesandautism.org/index.htm

Project ENABLE (Expanding Non-Discriminatory Access by Librarians Everywhere)

<https://projectenable.syr.edu/>

Project PALS (Panhandle Autism Library Services)

<https://pals.cci.fsu.edu/>

The State Library of Illinois

www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/libraries/targeting-autism.html#Training

Special Needs and Inclusive Library Services (SNAILS)

<https://snailsgroup.blogspot.com/p/resources.html>

The Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN): <https://autisticadvocacy.org/>

Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network: <https://awnnetwork.org/>

Wrong Planet: <https://wrongplanet.net/>

Amythest Schaber's "Ask an Autistic" YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/neurowonderful/

Autism-Focused Facebook Groups: Autistic Allies Information Group; Ask Me I'm Autistic; Autistics in Libraries & Their Allies; Neurodiversity Librarians

Not an Autism Mom: <https://notanautismmom.com/>



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Storytimes and Programs for Kids: Best Practices

- Limit enrollment.
- Have teen or adult assistants.
- Prepare participants for the program.
- Use visual supports.
- Manage transitions.
- Control the environment.
- Provide designated seating, with options.
- Supply fidgets and other sensory tools.
- Create quiet or sensory rooms.
- Incorporate repetition and routine.
- Provide structure while being flexible and understanding.



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Storytimes and Programs for Kids: Best Practices

- Limit enrollment.



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Storytimes and Programs for Kids: Best Practices

- Have teen or adult assistants.



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Storytimes and Programs for Kids: Best Practices

- Prepare participants for the program.



This is my Library - the Deerfield Public Library



I visit the Library with my parent, caregiver, or friends.
I walk when I'm in the Library.



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Storytimes and Programs for Kids: Best Practices

- Use visual supports.



FIGURE 3.1 Visual schedule

*Visual schedule based on one used during a
Sensory Storytime at the Ferguson Library*



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Storytimes and Programs for Kids: Best Practices

- Manage transitions.



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Storytimes and Programs for Kids: Best Practices

- Control the environment.



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Storytimes and Programs for Kids: Best Practices

- Provide designated seating, with options.



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Storytimes and Programs for Kids: Best Practices

- Supply fidgets and other sensory tools.



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Storytimes and Programs for Kids: Best Practices

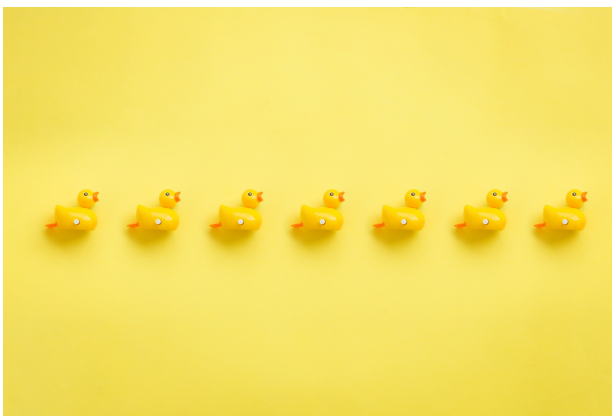
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Storytimes and Programs for Kids: Best Practices

- Incorporate repetition and routine.



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Storytimes and Programs for Kids: Best Practices

- Provide structure while being flexible and understanding.



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Programs and Services for Teens

- Provide inclusive options whenever possible



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Programs and Services for Teens

- Try interest-related programs



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Programs and Services for Teens

- Try life skills programs



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Programs and Services for Teens

- Try career readiness programs and opportunities
- Don't forget about the library as a career!
 - As librarian Charlie Remy says, "my decision to become a librarian wasn't directly related to my autism diagnosis but I will say that libraries can be good places for autistic people to work!"
 - Engage teens as volunteers
 - Invite them to join a teen advisory board



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Programs and Services for Teens

- *Offering More Support for Volunteers*
- The first time the volunteer comes, have two or three tasks in mind that they can do. Ask which of these they prefer. Show them the job they select in several ways: in writing, by modeling what to do, and verbally. Teach the job one step at a time. It may be helpful to prepare a checklist of the steps in the project that the teen can follow.
- Build routine and predictability into the volunteer job. Build in breaks between more sedentary activities for moving around.
- Help with transitions by giving ten- and five-minute warnings as the volunteer time is coming to an end.
- Find out if fidgets or a stim are helpful, and allow their use during volunteer sessions. For jobs that involve the public, identify a place the autistic volunteer can go to if they need to stim.



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Thank You!

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Book code:

ACCT22

exp. 8/31/22

\$5 off Library Programming for Autistic Children and Teens,
Second Edition

