Agenda

Community Assessment
Staff Training
Programs & Outreach
Inclusive Services
Spaces
Lessons Learned
Q&A
Dakota County Library

Twin Cities metro area
Population: 421,751
⅓ urban ⅓ suburban ⅓ rural
Nine library locations

https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/libraries
## Community Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Focus Groups</th>
<th>Community Conversations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online via SurveyMonkey</td>
<td>In-person led by Dakota County Social Services</td>
<td>In-person led Dakota County Library’s Adult Librarians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Community and disability advocates</td>
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<td>Older Adults</td>
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<td>Total Participants</td>
<td>160 participants</td>
<td>17 participants</td>
<td>25 participants</td>
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<td>Quotes</td>
<td>“I am so delighted that Dakota County Library is even thinking about being more inclusive. What a great thing for families.”</td>
<td>“Library staff are very welcoming, helpful, non-judgemental, and always happy to answer questions when I’m at the Library.”</td>
<td>“You never know when you’re going to need help.”</td>
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Figure 1. Experiences with Dakota County Library
N = 164

- I am aware of DC Library services.
  - Strongly Agree: 16
  - Agree: 64
  - Disagree: 45
  - Strongly Disagree: 11

- My experience with DC Library has been positive.
  - Strongly Agree: 41
  - Agree: 84
  - Disagree: 2

- I feel welcome at DC Library.
  - Strongly Agree: 47
  - Agree: 73
  - Disagree: 10
  - Strongly Disagree: 2
Survey

Should libraries integrate people with ASD into existing programs?

97% YES

Should libraries offer special programs to those with ASD?

89% YES
Survey

Figure 5. Percent of People Indicating Given Service Would Be Useful (N = 146)
Focus Groups

Quick Facts
- 4 one-hour long programs
- Discussions facilitated by Social Services Staff
- Asked 6 open-ended questions (HANDOUT)

Takeaways
- Barriers to access
- What’s working vs. what’s not
- Program and service ideas
- Overall: DCL is trusted, safe, and welcoming
Community Conversations

- Fall 2017--Spring 2018
- Conversations in every library community, some with older adults
- Questions focused on community, aspirations
- Top concerns from older adults:
  - Safety
  - Transportation
  - Isolation, social connectedness
  - Staying independent and aging in place
Older Adults Team

- 35-40% of adults aged 65 and older report at least one disability.
- Focused on services and making the library accessible for older adults in many situations
- First project: revamping outreach services
- Working with community partners:
  - Dakota County
  - DARTS
  - Act on Alzheimer’s/Dementia Friends
- Staff training
Accessibility Team

Supports innovation in accessibility and inclusion for customers with disabilities at Dakota County Library.

Identifies, prioritizes, evaluates and implements accessibility projects and initiatives county-wide.

Involves community members to inform priorities and build awareness about library services.

Subgroups
- Customer Experience
- Community Engagement and Awareness
Training

Who: DCL employees all levels

When:
- Annual Staff Day
- April for Autism Awareness Month
- Brand Trainings

What:
- In person & online
- Autism Spectrum Disorder 101
- American Sign Language and Deaf Culture
Sensory-friendly Saturdays

● 2017 Pilot: Wentworth Library (West St. Paul) & Wescott Library (Eagan)
● Featured at Dakota County Special Needs Resource Fair
● Parent/Caregiver distribution list
● Value
  ○ Introduction to librarian and library.
  ○ Knowing the library is a welcoming place.
  ○ Feeling comfortable coming to and in our libraries.
● The value for me as a librarian is never-ending!
What does a Sensory-Friendly Saturday look like?

- Sing a song
- Hello
- Read Story
- Bean Bag Game
- Read Story
- When I take a deep breath, I smell a flower, then blow out a candle.
- Parachute time
- Bubbles
- Goodbye
- Go Home
ASL Celebration

Partnership with Metro Deaf School in Faribault & MN State Academy for the Deaf

Promotion of MN Resource Libraries and library card sign-up

Presentation by local Deaf community advocate: ASL storytelling and voice narration, games, and activities

Community resources

ASL interpretation services by ASLIS
High School Visits

ISD 917 high school students visit and attend program at Robert Trail Library (April, 2018)
Next Chapter Book Club

Helping people with disabilities enjoy books, friends and their community.

https://nextchapterbookclub.org
Project Explore/Access Project

- Partnerships with Community Education
- Behind-the-scenes tours, Book BINGO
- iLab demonstrations
- Promoted jointly with Community Ed
More Programs & Outreach

**Autism Book Discussion** presented by local special education teacher and Autism Society of Minnesota

**A Look At Autism Research with University of Minnesota’s Autism Initiative** presented by Dr. Amy Esler and Jaclyn Gunderson from the University of Minnesota

**Dakota County Special Needs Resource Fair** coordinated by Dakota County Social Services

**Faces of Autism** presented by local author, photographer, advocate, and parent Tera Girardin

**Makerspace outreach programs** for MOFAS Minnesota Organization of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
Accessibility Kits
Visit Kits for Individuals with Dementia
Inclusive Spaces: Calming Space

What’s inside?

Calming Space Social Narrative

Calming Space User Guide

In addition:

- Comfortable seating
- Adjustable lighting
- South machine
- Marble wall feature
- Noise-reducing headphones
- Weighted pad & fidgets
- Visual timers
- 5 Point Scale
Inclusive Spaces: Furniture

- Adjustable Height Tables
- Wobble Stools
- Balance Cushions
- Backpack Chair
Inclusive Spaces: Supports

- Noise-canceling Headphones
- Visuals
- Fidgets
- Weighted Blanket
WHAT I have LEARNED
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