CREATING AND MARKETING A SUCCESSFUL SENSORY-FRIENDLY CULTURAL EVENT

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Welcome & Introductions
Benefits of accommodating audiences & visitors with disabilities:
It’s the right thing to do and it makes cents!

Consider these facts:

• Twenty percent (63 million) of Americans have a disability
• Each year for the next 20 years, 4 million baby boomers will turn 65 in the United States alone
• Over 40 percent of baby boomers will be retiring with some form of disability
• 2015, the baby boomer generation will command 60 percent of net U.S. wealth and 40 percent of spending
Expanding Programmatic Access for Audiences with Disabilities

an overview of the Theater Inclusion Program and making cultural events inclusive for everyone

- Accessible Materials
  - Large Print
  - Braille
  - Electronic
- Assistive Listening Devices
- Open Captioning
- ASL Interpretation
- Shadow Interpreted Theater
- Audio Description
- Touch Tours
- Sighted Guides
Why offer “Sensory Friendly” cultural programs?
At least 1 in 20 children’s daily lives is affected by Sensory Processing Disorder

1 in 6 children experiences sensory symptoms that may be significant enough to affect everyday life

Autism prevalence figures are growing

Autism is the fastest-growing serious developmental disability in the U.S.

Autism now affects 1 in 88 children, of which 1 in 54 are boys

Autism affects over 2 million individuals in the U.S. and tens of millions worldwide
What is Sensory Processing Disorder?

Sensory processing refers to the way the nervous system receives messages from the senses and turns them into appropriate motor and behavioral responses.

Sensory Processing Disorder is a condition that exists when sensory signals don't get organized into appropriate responses.
What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?
Autism Spectrum Disorders: What We Know

- Complex developmental brain disorder
- Thought of as a spectrum of disorders
- Significantly impacts social skills & communication
- All racial, ethnic, and social classes are affected

- No known cause
- No medical test for diagnosis
- Diagnosis is based on observed behavior and social history
- No known “cure,” but evidence-based approaches can improve outcome
The Autism Spectrum "Umbrella"

- Communicating & Interacting with others
- Unusual or Repetitive Interests & Behaviors
Behavioral Challenges

- May exhibit unusual *motor mannerisms*
- May have *strong reactions* to small changes in their environment or to routines
- May have problems being “flexible” and become anxious or angry if rules or schedules are not followed
- May use objects repetitively or in unusual ways
- May have highly restricted/fixated interests
- May have tantrums and/or display self-injury
Other Challenges & Characteristics That May Be Seen

- Sensory processing & response to sensory input
- Fine and/or gross motor skills
- Attention & organization
- Motivation
- Uneven learning profile
- Anxiety or depression
- Problems eating or sleeping
- Challenging behavior
Strategies and Supports!
Reducing Stress & Anxiety = A Positive Experience

1. Address Sensory Challenges
2. Keep Language Simple
3. Use Visual Supports
4. Increase Predictability
5. Keep a Positive Attitude
Strategies to Address Sensory Problems

- Dim the lights and/ or avoid overly noisy environments
- Permit accommodations (e.g. headphones, earplugs, sunglasses, fidget toys) (see nationalautismresources.com)
- Create a “safe place” where a child can go when overwhelmed
- Don’t force participation if a child is uncomfortable
- Warn the child before fire drills, bright lights, etc.
What are Visuals and how do we use them?

Anything that we **see** that:
- Helps us communicate
- Helps us gain information or understand expectations

We can use Visual Supports for:
- Schedules, Routines & Transitions
- Choices
- Communication
- Social & Behavioral Cues

**WE ALL USE AND NEED VISUALS!**
Benefits of Visual Supports

- Increases vocabulary
- Increases spontaneous communication
- Allows for choice-making
- Helps explain rules and expectations
- Increases predictability
- Helps with independence
- Decreases challenging behaviors/frustration
Schedules

- Give information on
  - What is going to happen
  - When it’s going to happen

- Increases Predictability
  - Tells the ORDER of events
Creating a Sensory-Friendly Cultural Event for Audiences with Sensory Processing Disorders and Autism Spectrum Disorders

Best Practices for Cultural Organizations

- Convene Focus Groups
- Establish an Accepting Environment (training)
- Provide a pre-visit guide
- Incorporate pre-show introductions
Appropriate Modifications and Accommodations

- Consider the size of the crowd
- Limit the length of the performance/visit
- Do not include an intermission
- Make appropriate modifications to sound and lighting levels
Appropriate Modifications and Accommodations

- Provide noise canceling headsets/earmuffs
- Provide a professionally staffed “Quiet Room”
- Provide remote viewing for performing arts experiences
Marketing

• Find your audience!

• Promote the pre-show / pre-visit guide

• Embed hyperlinks to the online guide

• Use the Sensory-Friendly access symbol
Marketing

- Embed hyperlink to the Sensory-Friendly PSA
- Include an access statement
- Survey your audience, assess and evaluate
RESOURCES
QUESTIONS?