



FITCHBURG STATE
UNIVERSITY

Meeting the Needs of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Background

- ▶ Statistics:
- ▶ How we got started:
 - ▶ Project A+
 - ▶ Working group members

Student Employee Training Not Meant To:

- ▶ Diagnose ASD in Patrons
- ▶ Highlight as different or “Other” Individuals on Spectrum



Student Employee Training Goals:

- ▶ Provide Tools to Address Communication Breakdown
- ▶ Discuss Characteristics and Raise Awareness, Foster Empathy



Training Modules in Blackboard

- ▶ Presented to Library Staff (Aug 2020)
- ▶ Vetted by Director of Disability Services (Feb 2021)
- ▶ Consulted with 2 BCBA's

Blackboard Training Modules



Training Modules Timeline

- ▶ No Fall 2020 Training
- ▶ Student Employees Completed March/April 2021
- ▶ Training Assessment and Interviews Completed April 2021



▶ Goal

Gain student employee perspective on modules and input about the Library and University Environment

▶ Student participation

100% of student employees volunteered to be interviewed

▶ Campus and Library Environment

- ★ Library 1st Floor Computer/Printer Areas
- ★ Campus Dining Areas, Game Room
- ★ Campus Events, Rock the Block, Sports Events

▶ Suggestions for Improvement?

- ★ Keep Computers Spaced Out, Move one Printer
- ★ Provide Noise Cancelling Headphones
- ★ Online Streaming of Events
- ★ Spacing and Pathing for Outdoor Events
- ★ Buddy System

► Applying Strategies at the Library or Elsewhere

“Sometimes people have rough days. So being patient, having a kind tone, not aggressive. You don’t always know if someone has a disability or not.”

“A patron asked a question, but wouldn’t look at me. I didn’t know what to do at the time, so I would try to make eye contact and I thought they were being rude, but after this [training] I can see that they weren’t being rude. I would have used different strategies.”

▶ Continue this Training?

"Yes, I think when they first get hired. Not a lot of jobs in the world teach you to talk to someone who might look different or have a disability, you're not taught that."

▶ Who Else?

- ★ All Students
- ★ Anyone in Customer Service
- ★ Tour Guides
- ★ Faculty

"Every student on campus should take this training. Our generation knows nothing about autism."

► Student Suggestions

- ★ Module on Person First Language
- ★ Additional Training for other Disabilities
- ★ Staff and student employees wear a nametag
- ★ Offer this training to newly hired student employees

“Staff and students should wear a nametag, it’s very important to someone on the spectrum. It identifies people they can reach out to and offers a friendly atmosphere.”

Next Steps...

- ▶ Explore expanding the training to other departments on campus
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