



Carlos A. Gimenez, Mayor

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Guidelines for Presenting a “Sensory-Friendly” Cultural Event

The following guidelines are intended to provide a general overview of best practices, accommodations and appropriate modifications to consider when presenting a Sensory-Friendly cultural event, tour, or performance. These guidelines are meant to be discussed as part of an in-depth technical assistance training for cultural organizations wishing to present a Sensory-Friendly cultural event, tour, or performance.

For additional information and to learn more about how your organization can present a [Sensory-Friendly](#) cultural event or performance, call the [Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs](#) at (305) 375-4634.

Pre-Visit Planning

- Convene focus group meeting(s) / pre-visit / pre-show screening(s): invite constituents to preview the show/event/tour, provide feedback and discuss the appropriate modifications and accommodations to be provided. At a minimum, focus groups should include target audience members and/or their families/caregivers. Other key individuals to include are experts in the field of Sensory Processing Disorders and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), such as educators, practitioners, clinicians, behavioral and occupational therapists, psychologists, etc.
- Establish an accepting and inclusive environment (training): house/event staff members as well as performers need to be trained on how to interact appropriately with audience members and what to expect from individuals with Sensory Processing Disorders / Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), including possibly disruptive behavior such as individuals making loud noises and moving around.



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- Provide a pre-show / pre-visit guide: provide a pre-show / pre-visit visual/picture schedule guide (such as Going to the Show* or Going to the Museum*) or video to patrons in advance, in order to help prepare and orient audiences and visitors before they arrive (see page 3).
- Prepare a pre-show / pre-visit introduction: plan to begin the show/visit by introducing the characters/performers or key staff (such as docents, group leaders or educators) to the audience/visitors and providing an overview of the program or visit and facility. The pre-show / pre-visit guide can also be utilized during the introductions. Be sure to mention the length of the performance or visit, whether or not there will be an intermission or breaks, and the location of key services such as the quiet room, restrooms, concessions, etc. For performing arts experiences also “set the scene” by providing a summary of the storyline.

Modifications and Accommodations

- Consider offering discounted or free admission.
- Consider the size of the crowd / limit attendance if possible: this is especially relevant for museums and similar venues where large crowds in close proximity can be overwhelming for individuals with Sensory Processing Disorders and Autism Spectrum Disorders. For performing arts experiences, consider using smaller venues or blocking out seating or upper tiers.
- For performing arts venues, allow general admission seating whenever possible.
- Limit the length of the performance/visit: the length of the performance or guided visit should be considered, with no more than 45-60 minutes maximum being the ideal.
- For performing arts experiences, do not include an intermission unless truly necessary.
- Make appropriate modifications to sound and lighting levels: amplified sound and special effects should be lowered / subdued. Lighting should be bright enough to see around the room without being harsh. Avoid strobe lighting effects.



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- Provide noise canceling headsets/earmuffs: noise cancelling headsets/earmuffs should be made available prior to the performance/visit and located in the lobby or at the entrance.
- Provide a “Quiet / Cool-Down Room”: set up a comfortable room where individuals/families can take a break if needed. Ideally, the Quiet Room should be staffed by autism/disability experts or volunteers who have been trained to work with individuals with Sensory Processing Disorders and Autism Spectrum Disorders. The Quiet Room should include two zones/areas: one with quiet activities such as reading, drawing or using fidgets; the other zone should be a calm, quiet, sensory-free sanctuary. Healthy gluten-free/casein-free/nut-free snacks, subdued lighting, beanbag chairs, and play tents are appreciated by children and families.
- Provide remote viewing: Ideally/best practice for performing arts experiences, the Quiet Room should include remote viewing of the main stage show. If not possible, a live-stream feed in the lobby would be an acceptable alternative.

Marketing Materials

- Promote the availability of the pre-show / pre-visit visual/picture schedule guide (such as Going to the Show* or Going to the Museum*) or video in all marketing and promotional materials (i.e. press releases, advertisements, email, websites, Facebook, etc.).
- Embed the hyperlinks to online versions of the pre-show / pre-visit visual/picture schedule guide (such as Going to the Show* or Going to the Museum*) or video in all electronic communications and listings (see resources).

** Organizations wishing to reference or link to Going to the Show or Going to the Museum in their marketing and promotional materials or on their website are asked to include the following text credit as well as the Miami-Dade County and the Miami-Dade County Children’s Trust logos in all materials:*



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Going to the Show, Going to the Museum and the Sensory-Friendly access symbol were developed by the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs as part of its “All Kids Included - Accessible Arts Experiences for Kids” (AKI) program. AKI is an initiative of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, made possible with the support of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners, and in part through grant funding provided by The Children’s Trust. The Children's Trust is a dedicated source of revenue established by voter referendum to improve the lives of children and families in Miami-Dade County by making strategic investments in their future.

Download Miami-Dade County logo:



- Color: http://www.miamidadearts.org/sites/default/files/files/inline/miami-dade_logo_color.jpg
- Black and White: http://www.miamidadearts.org/sites/default/files/files/inline/miami-dade_bw.jpg

Download The Children’s Trust logo:

- <http://www.thechildrenstrust.org/providers/news/media-kit>

Note: to view Going to the Show or Going to the Museum online, or to request printed copies and classroom posters, go to:

- Going to the Show <http://www.miamidadearts.org/education/going-show>
- Going to the Museum <http://www.miamidadearts.org/education/going-museum>

-   Use the Sensory-Friendly access symbol: utilize the Sensory-Friendly disability access symbol in all marketing materials to indicate that the advertised show/event will provide Sensory-Friendly accommodations.
- Embed the hyperlink to the Sensory-Friendly programs web page in all electronic communications and listings, wherever the Sensory-Friendly access symbol is used (see resources).



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- Include an access statement: together with the Sensory-Friendly access symbol, include detailed, explicit language in all marketing and promotional materials describing the specific accommodations that will be provided, for example:

(Performance) This performance will offer accessible accommodations for individuals with Sensory Processing Disorders and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The theater will provide an accepting and inclusive environment, modifications to sound and lighting, noise canceling headsets, a professionally-staffed quiet room with remote viewing of the main stage performance, and a special pre-show guide to preparing new audiences for a live performing arts experience.

(Event/Museum Visit) This event will offer accessible accommodations for individuals with Sensory Processing Disorders and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The museum will provide an accepting and inclusive environment, modifications to sound and lighting, noise canceling headsets, a professionally-staffed quiet room, and a special pre-visit guide to preparing new visitors for a museum experience.

- Survey your audience, assess and evaluate: solicit feedback from your audience and patrons through surveys and follow-up focus group discussions to evaluate what worked and what could be improved upon. An audience survey is available from the Miami Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs (see resources).



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Resources

- Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs Sensory-Friendly Symbol and Programs:
<http://www.miamidadearts.org/education/sensory-friendly-access-symbol-programs>
- Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs ADA/Accessibility Resources:
<http://www.miamidadearts.org/education-outreach-access/ada-accessibility>
- Going to the Show PSA Flyer:
http://www.miamidadearts.org/sites/default/files/files/inline/going_to_the_show_psa-flyer.pdf
- Going to the Show online guide: <http://www.miamidadearts.org/education/going-show>
- Going to the Museum online guide (English/Spanish and English/Creole):
<http://www.miamidadearts.org/education/going-museum>
- Department of VSA and Accessibility at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts:
<http://www.kennedy-center.org/education/vsa/>
- Kennedy Center's "Sensory Friendly Programming for People with Social & Cognitive Disabilities" guide for performing arts settings:
<http://www.kennedy-center.org/accessibility/education/lead/SensoryGuidebook.pdf>
- Social Stories™: www.thegraycenter.org/social-stories
- Autism Society of America: <http://www.autism-society.org/>
- Autism Speaks: <http://www.autismspeaks.org>
- Sensory Processing Disorder Foundation:
<http://www.spdfoundation.net/about-sensory-processing-disorder.html#looklike>
- The Arc: <http://www.thearc.org/>
- Easter Seals: <http://www.easterseals.com/>
- Parent to Parent USA: <http://www.p2pusa.org>
- National Autism Resources (fidgets): www.nationalautismresources.com
- Peltor Noise Reduction Earmuffs:
<http://www.envirosafetyproducts.com/peltor-kids-ear-muffs-children-ear-muffs.html>



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Video Resources

- A is for Autism <http://youtu.be/cPR2H4Zd8bl>
- Autism "Awareness" – Ten Things You Should Know <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5m5vqrFZpc>
- Autism: National Autistic Society Anti-Bully campaign <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tB4J00xkC4>
- Imagination Stage: Preparing for a Sensory Friendly Performance Pre-Visit Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9MxfjOQc>
- National Autistic Society Part 2 (misunderstanding) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsRdpPMAvfs>
- Carol Gray: What are Social Stories™? <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjIYYbVlrl>

Additional Resources (Miami-Dade County)

- University of Miami / Nova Southeastern University Center for Autism & Related Disabilities: www.umcard.org
- Parent to Parent of Miami: <http://www.ptopmiami.org/>
- The Children's Trust: <http://www.thechildrenstrust.org/>
- CCDH: <http://www.ccdh.org/>
- Miami-Dade County Public Schools Division of Exceptional Student Education: <http://ese.dadeschools.net/>
- Miami-Dade County Public Schools Division of Special Education, Programs for Autism Spectrum Disorder: <http://ese.dadeschools.net/autism/index.asp>
- Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System-South (FDLRS-South): <http://fdlrs-south.dade.k12.fl.us/>
- Family Network on Disabilities of Florida, Inc.: <http://www.fndfl.org/>
- The Autism Society – Florida/Miami: <http://www.autismfl.com/>