

**ARTICLE TITLE: Accessibility and inclusion for families with children with autism spectrum disorders in cultural institutions.**

**Key points:**

- Children on the autism spectrum often face barriers to being able to fully participate in cultural institutions.
- Families may limit their participation in cultural institutions due to barriers which decreases opportunity for social and cultural exploration.
- A toolkit was developed with stakeholders to help recognize and address barriers to participation for children on the autism spectrum.

**Glossary:**

**Accessible:** Being able to use something without difficulty

**Barrier:** Things that make it hard to do something

**Cultural Institution:** Place that promotes culture such as museums, libraries, or community centers

**Stakeholder:** A person who is actively involved in a particular community

**Toolkit:** Collection of questions used by a program to assess their ability to achieve a certain goal

**Self-Assessment:** When someone completes an evaluation about their own ability to do something

**Why this article matters:**

We need to keep children on the autism spectrum in mind when designing cultural institutions so that they are easily accessible for them to participate in.

**Description of the study:**

Researchers began by trying to understand what would make a cultural institution more accessible to families with children on the autism spectrum.

To figure out what would make cultural institutions more accessible, they:

1. Observed existing programs and events held by the museum
2. Reviewed museum artifacts to assess how easily children on the autism spectrum could participate in them
3. Held interviews with museum staff to understand how they had been involved with various programs and events in the past

Based on the information gathered, a toolkit with 5 tools was designed by a university team for cultural institutions to assess their accessibility for families with children on the autism spectrum.

**ARTICLE TITLE: Accessibility and inclusion for families with children with autism spectrum disorders in cultural institutions.**

Then, the toolkit was reviewed by a stakeholder team and revised based on their feedback. One of these revisions included an additional framework called, Dimensions of Accessibility, for cultural institutions to use along with the toolkit.

**Research questions:**

- What is important to making cultural institutions accessible for families of children on the autism spectrum?
- How can cultural institutions assess their ability to make programs accessible for families with children on the autism spectrum?

**Important results:**

A toolkit was created by researchers, with stakeholders' input, for cultural institutions to assess their accessibility for families with children on the autism spectrum. The 5 tools in the toolkit include:

1. Questionnaire about barriers in the museum environment
2. Staff survey and interview about their awareness of children on the autism spectrum
3. Form about how user-friendly the museum's website is
4. Form about how well children on the autism spectrum can participate in museum environment
5. Form about how families of children on the autism spectrum can participate in museum events

Additionally, a framework called, Dimensions of Accessibility, was developed for cultural institutions to use. This framework can be used with the toolkit to thoroughly assess strengths and areas of improvement when supporting families with children on the autism spectrum.

**How the results will be used:**

- Cultural institutions should use the toolkit and framework to assess their accessibility to families with children on the autism spectrum
- Once they complete the assessment, cultural institutions can implement changes to increase their access and inclusion of these families

**Full article reference:** Hladik, L., Meyer, R., ^Scott, A., ^Bonnici, S., Froelke, N. A., Romaniak, H., Ougayour, Y., Nelson, N., Alkhamees, A. K., ^Davis, H., & Ausderau, K. K. (2022). Accessibility and inclusion for families with children with autism spectrum disorders in cultural institutions. *Curator; The Museum Journal*, 65 (2), 435-449. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cura.12468>