



LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

Dyslexia Friendly Libraries: A Guide to Staff Preparation

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Introduction

43.5 million Americans have dyslexia, about 1 in 5 people. Surely, they are in your libraries as both staff and patrons. With this in mind, the Library of Virginia's Library Development and Networking Division created an asynchronous professional development opportunity for all library staff to raise their awareness of, sensitivity to, and ability to serve people with dyslexia.

After surveying interested parties, a focus group was formed from both the library community, caregivers of dyslexic students, and educators. The outcome of that focus group were goals to normalize dyslexia; raise the awareness of library staff; equip library staff to provide referrals, readers advisory, and reference materials in relation to dyslexia; and provide a supportive community space.

A two phase response was planned with the hope that individual buy-in and understanding would lead to system wide buy in and understanding.

The principle partners in this project are Rebecca Warner, designer and owner of www.pqbd.org^R, Decoding Dyslexia – Virginia organizer and parent of a dyslexic student and Nan Carmack, Director of Library Development and Networking at the Library of Virginia. Please note that Decoding Dyslexia is organized independently in each state.

The project and its materials may be found at <https://vpl.virginia.gov/continuing-education/ce-general/dyslexia-friendly-libraries/>. The Library of Virginia offers free license to use, share, edit these materials, with the exception of any representation of the pqbd^R symbol. The Virginia Department of Education module may be taken without cost but may not be edited.

Phase 1: The Dyslexia Friendly Library (DFL) Staff Challenge

Virginia library staff were invited to participate in the October 2019 (National Dyslexia Awareness Month). The following components made up the challenge:

- Complete the Virginia Department of Education Dyslexia module (about 45 minutes):
 - http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/licensure/dyslexia-module/story_html5.html
- Review 5 International Dyslexia Association fact sheets of your choice (about 15 minutes):
 - <https://dyslexiaida.org/fact-sheets/>
- Visit and explore the Decoding Dyslexia – Virginia Facebook page (about 10 minutes)
 - <https://www.facebook.com/DecodingDyslexiaVirginia/>
- View this 10 minute video:
 - <https://www.cbsnews.com/video/dyslexia-cracking-the-code/>
- Participate in one of these simulations* (about 30 minutes):
 - Misunderstood Minds (includes numeracy)
 - <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds/reading.html>
 - Web Accessibility in Mind (does not include numeracy)
 - <https://webaim.org/simulations/dyslexia>

**Please disable pop-up blockers to access these simulations*

Participants then completed an online survey indicating their completion. Participants then received a certificate of completion and a pin with the www.pqbd.orgTM symbol on it.

174 Virginia library staff members from 73 of Virginia's 95 library systems participated in the initial challenge.

Phase 2: The Dyslexia Friendly Library

A DFL page (<https://vpl.virginia.gov/continuing-education/ce-general/dyslexia-friendly-libraries/>) was added to the "InfoCenter," a website maintained for Virginia library staff that included access to the challenge as well as a bibliography for reference and collection development; links to a podcast produced by James L. Hamner Library in Amelia, Virginia, featuring Rebecca Warner, discussing dyslexia.

Further, an Inclusive Resources page was added to “Find It Virginia,” a website (www.finditva.com) maintained for Virginia citizens with access to statewide databases as well as resources for individuals with differing abilities, including dyslexia.

From those participants who indicated a further interest in having their entire library designated a DFL and in hosting a Decoding Dyslexia support group were contacted to view a Decoding Dyslexia webinar, which was recorded and housed on the Library of Virginia YouTube™ and linked on the InfoCenter’s Dyslexia Friendly Library page, referenced and linked above.

The focus group defined the parameters of a DFL with the following as:

- 90% of the library’s degreed librarians complete the DFL Challenge;
- Develop and maintain collections
 - for readers with characters with dyslexia
 - for parents/caregivers about dyslexia
- Maintain resources including
 - a bibliography, libguide, or wiki about dyslexia
 - IDA Fact Sheets
 - Web links on their websites to appropriate dyslexia resources, such as
 - National Center for Improving Literacy (NCIL) <https://improvingliteracy.org/>
 - Understood <https://www.understood.org/>
 - IDA <https://dyslexiaida.org/>
- Promote the library as a place professionals/schools can refer to parents for additional resources
- Provide programming for the dyslexic community in the form of educational events, book groups, host Decoding Dyslexia support group, etc.
- Post dyslexia information in its social media

2020 marks the beginning of phase 2—developing, recruiting, education and promoting Dyslexia Friendly Libraries. The Library of Virginia looks forward to continuing its efforts on behalf of Virginia citizens with dyslexia and those who care about them. Feedback, suggestions, and ideas are welcomed by Director Nan Carmack, (804) 692-3792 or nan.carmack@lva.virginia.gov.



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