

NEWS RELEASE

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PIERCE COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM RECEIVES NATIONAL GRANT *\$10,000 grant provides youth sensory kits to all PCLS locations*

PIERCE COUNTY, Washington – The Pierce County Library System (PCLS) has been awarded a \$10,000 Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities grant from the American Library Association (ALA). The initiative provides funding and resources to help small and rural libraries strengthen community engagement and expand accessibility for people with disabilities.

As a result of the award, PCLS rolled out youth sensory kits at all library locations, featuring items based on recommendations from the University of Washington’s Autism-Ready Libraries initiative. The kits are available for children to use during library visits to support a more inclusive experience.

“Part of being a welcoming and inclusive library means acknowledging that shared public spaces can provide sensory challenges for some members of our public — especially youth still learning what they need,” said Blythe Summers, Programs and Services Manager for Youth & Family Services at PCLS. “Providing a variety of sensory support items is one way we can make our spaces more accessible.

The sensory kits are geared toward ages birth-12 years old, and include items such as puppy lap pads, ear protection, sunglasses, sensory windows, emotion poppers, visual timers and other items. The kits can be requested at the Help Desk of any Pierce County Library and are available for in-library use only.



Photo by Creighton Simpson, PCLS

As part of the grant, the Buckley Pierce County Library gathered input from community members on accessibility needs and priorities through community engagement efforts, including a hybrid discussion held in partnership with the Tacoma Area Coalition of Individuals with Disabilities (TACID).

“Having youth sensory kits available at the library creates a welcoming space where all children, including those with sensory needs, can feel seen, supported and included,” said Nalani Linder, Executive Director of TACID. “These kits not only offer tools for self-regulation and comfort, but also send a powerful message that the library is a safe place for every learner and family. TACID is grateful to have participated in the community engagement process and we're pleased to see these resources expanding across all locations.”

Since 2014, ALA’s Libraries Transforming Communities initiative has re-imagined the role libraries play in supporting communities. Libraries of all types have utilized free dialogue and deliberation training and resources to lead community and campus forums; take part in anti-violence activities; provide a space for residents to come together and discuss challenging topics; and have productive conversations with civic leaders, library trustees and staff.

“Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities is an initiative of the American Library Association (ALA) in collaboration with the Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL).”

About Pierce County Library System

The nationally acclaimed [Pierce County Library System](#) serves 686,500 people throughout Pierce County with 19 libraries and online services. The system is the fourth largest in the state and property taxes are the main funding source. People may choose from more than one million books, e-books, audiobooks, movies and other materials. Through the Library’s strategic plan, the Pierce County Library strives to empower the people of Pierce County by advancing all forms of literacy, championing access to information, creating inclusive and inspired spaces, and enriching lives. People make approximately one million visits to Pierce County Libraries each year. The Library provides services and programs directly to people in adult care facilities, people who are homebound, and to children in childcare centers and schools. [Pierce County Libraries are located](#) at Anderson Island, Bonney Lake, Buckley, DuPont, Eatonville, Fife, Gig Harbor, Graham, Key Center, Lakewood, Milton/Edgewood, Orting, Parkland/Spanaway, South Hill, Steilacoom, Summit, Sumner, Tillicum and University Place. Pierce County Library is an independent municipal corporation and operates as a junior taxing district.

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