

Division of Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Workforce Development: Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND)

MISSION

Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) programs provide interdisciplinary training to enhance the clinical expertise and leadership skills of professionals dedicated to caring for children with neurodevelopmental and other related disabilities including autism. Since their inception, LENDs have trained thousands of individuals from a wide variety of disciplines to work with and provide the best possible services and supports for children with developmental disabilities and their families. The focus of these training programs has always been on children with a wide range of intellectual and developmental disabilities and special health care conditions, especially medically fragile children with multiple or complex challenges. More recently an additional focus has been added to this network's mission. Authorized in December 2006 and appropriated in December 2007, the Combating Autism Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-416) brought additional funds to the LEND program to promote education, early detection, and intervention in autism spectrum disorders. Trainees in LEND programs participate in academic, clinical, leadership and community opportunities. They receive training in cultural and linguistic competence using a family centered approach¹.

PROGRAM PROFILE

MCHB currently funds 43 programs at universities and children's hospitals across the nation with annual grant awards totaling approximately \$28 million. In addition, a Combating Autism Act Interdisciplinary Training Resource Center is funded at approximately \$700,000 per year. The next competition for LEND is in FY 2016.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the MCH LEND Training Program is to improve the health of children who have, or are at risk for, neurodevelopmental or related disabilities by preparing trainees from a wide variety of professional disciplines to assume leadership roles and to ensure high levels of clinical competence. Through the Combating Autism Act, new LENDs were created and existing LENDs received supplemental funds to carry out the following activities:

1. Increase awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs);
2. Reduce barriers to screening and diagnosis;
3. Promote evidence based interventions for individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities; and
4. Train professionals to utilize valid screening tools to diagnose and rule out autism and other developmental disabilities.

Program Impact

- ▶ **Trainees.** In FY 2012, the LEND training program trained 1,339 long-term trainees, 3,081 medium-term trainees, and 13,446 short-term trainees. Over 19% of long-term trainees are from underrepresented racial groups and almost 10% are from underrepresented ethnic groups.
- ▶ In FY 2012, 81% of LEND program graduates (5 years following completion of program) are engaged in work related to MCH populations and almost 79% demonstrated field leadership in academic, clinical, public health practice, and/or public policy and advocacy activities.
- ▶ **Faculty.** LEND faculty mentor students in exemplary MCH public health practice for children with disabilities, provide continuing education on the latest research and practice to professionals currently in the field, and develop innovative curricula on interdisciplinary leadership practices for children with ASD and developmental disabilities.
- ▶ **Title V.** In FY 2012, LEND training programs reported collaborating with State Title V (MCH) agencies or other MCH-related programs on over 6,400 activities in areas of service, training, continuing education, technical assistance, product development and research.

<http://www.mchb.hrsa.gov/training/>

