The LEND Training Clinic

In the current healthcare system, professional disciplines such as medicine, psychology, dentistry, audiology, and physical therapy typically operate independent from one another, and remain “silo-ed” within their area of expertise. Communication and collaboration between disciplines is rare and often fragmented. The patient is solely responsible for synthesizing care from a variety of sources and navigating through a complicated and confusing healthcare system.

The LEND Center at the University of Pittsburgh seeks to tear down these silos and forge partnerships between emerging professionals from a variety of disciplines in order to enhance the lives of children with disabilities and their families. Each patient referred to the LEND clinic receives a multi-disciplinary evaluation by advanced graduate students from different specialties, in addition to recommendations and access to resources.

The needs of the patient and his or her family are often multi-faceted and complex. Members of the team are required to “leave their comfort zone”, abandon their professional agendas, and develop new skills in order to meet the family’s goals. While each team member’s professional expertise represents one “piece of the larger puzzle”, teamwork, problem solving, and collaboration are required in order to provide meaningful, lasting change.

Family Centered Care

Family-centered care promotes the “tearing down of silos” between professional disciplines by recognizing that each family is unique; that the family is the constant in the child’s life; and that family members are the experts on the child’s abilities and needs. Rather than relying solely on evidence-based practice, professionals are encouraged to view their patient and his or her family as a single entity, and make treatment recommendations that are realistic, attainable, and family-friendly. In family-centered care, the strengths and needs of all family members are paramount.

LEND family trainees provided valuable insight to clinic teams on how to best-serve a patient while considering the family unit. Often, accessing resources for parents, siblings, or the family as a whole was a necessary component of service delivery.

The Families as Mentors Program provided the opportunity for each LEND trainee to develop a long-term partnership with a child with a disability and his or her family. Through interactions at home and in the community, the strengths of the family system were revealed, increased understanding of cultural diversity was developed, and challenges to overcoming adversity were better understood.

Interdisciplinary Leadership Training

What does it mean to be a leader in the field of Clinical Psychology? Effective leadership requires expertise in therapeutic and assessment skills, but also the ability to work seamlessly with professionals from other disciplines to provide effective interventions that meet the needs of the patient.

Self-reflection is an essential component of effective leadership. By developing an awareness of how personality impacts one’s communication style, approach to negotiation and conflict resolution, and working style, one can better understand personal strengths and areas for growth and development.

Understanding the personality and working styles of other individuals can foster group cohesion, motivation, and goal-directed behavior. Respecting the strengths of other members can enhance the overall effectiveness of a team by utilizing the expertise and knowledge of team members.

LEND facilitate the development of leadership skills through seminars, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator training sessions, guest lecturers, experience shadowing and interviewing a leader, didactics, and site visits.

Professional Development

The LEND program provided me with a variety of opportunities that promoted professional growth. My experiences are highlighted below:

- Attended monthly Bioethics meetings at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh in order to better understand the process of ethical decision making.
- Participated in the Autism Treatment Network at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh’s diagnostic evaluations in order to increase my knowledge about the assessment and diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorders.
- Contributed to the development of the Autism Curriculum for LEND trainees, presented presentations on “Changes to the DSM-V” and “Autism Interventions”, and coordinated site visits for LEND trainees to observe autism interventions in school and outpatient settings.
- Completed a psychological evaluation using measures of intelligence, achievement, and adaptive functioning to create an integrated report and treatment recommendations for a LEND patient who presented to the LEND clinic with a seizure disorder.