



*The LEND Center at the University of Pittsburgh
at
UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh*

What Is LEND (www.lend.pitt.edu)?

The LEND Center at the University of Pittsburgh is one of 52 university centers of excellence in neurodevelopmental disabilities in 44 states throughout the US. The primary focus of the LEND network is the **education, training, and mentoring of future interdisciplinary leaders** to support and advocate for individuals (infants/toddlers to adults) and their families with neurodevelopmental disabilities, chronic medical conditions, challenging behaviors, and at-risk factors for future disabilities.

LEND funded trainees or fellows gain expertise and knowledge in: *diverse neurodevelopmental disabilities; family-centered practices; authentic and alternative assessment procedures; evidence-based interventions, with a special emphasis on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); interdisciplinary teamwork; leadership competencies; program evaluation research; public policy, education and disability law; and advocacy.*

The LEND interdisciplinary experience is universally lauded and recognized as exemplary in the US for jump-starting interdisciplinary careers, especially for psychologists and other allied health team members.

What is the Source of Funding for LEND & LEND Trainees?

Since 1995, The University of Pittsburgh and UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, Department of Pediatrics have been awarded continuing grants by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources Service Administration (HRSA) to support the interdisciplinary leadership education of allied health professionals to train future leaders to support individuals with disabilities and their families in both urban and rural settings.

The LEND Center grant funding supports the engagement of University of Pittsburgh faculty and Masters and Doctoral students from core allied health professional disciplines to be members of the LEND team, including: *Medicine, Nursing, Physical & Occupational Therapy, Communication Science and Disorders, Social Work, Psychology, Special Education, Nutrition, and other professional disciplines.*

How Does LEND Engage Interdisciplinary Trainees?

LEND recruits and promotes the development of future leaders in the disabilities fields by **funding LEND trainees for 1-year internships on the LEND team at UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh in Oakland.** Through didactic sessions, core courses, and applied service and research experiences, LEND trainees become knowledgeable and skilled in “best professional practices” and in applied research initiatives with community partners focusing in “real-life” agency, school, hospital, and clinic settings in both urban and rural contexts. Each year, on average, 2 School of Education (SOE) students compete successfully in the application and interview process to be selected for internship funding to become LEND trainees. All LEND trainees will become associated with the national professional organization which represents LEND and disabilities training in the US: Association for University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) (www.aucd.org). At graduation from the LEND experience, LEND Trainees receive a **special certificate of completion certifying their neurodevelopmental disability education through federal funding.**

In conjunction with The LEND Center, Applied Developmental Psychology students have been selected for internships with the Office of Child Development (OCD); (www.oed.pitt.edu) in the SOE to work on the HealthyCHILD team. Currently, 6 ADP students are interns with the HealthyCHILD program affiliated with Dr. Bagnato as mentor, and receive acknowledgement also as LEND-E trainees, gaining the experience of LEND, but without funding.

Who Are the SOE Faculty in LEND?

Dr. Stephen J. Bagnato, Ed.D., NCSP (Professor of Psychology & Pediatrics) is one of the founding core faculty members in Applied Developmental Psychology of the **The LEND Center (Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities)** grant; in partnership with *Rachel Robertson, Ph.D* of DIL, Dr. Bagnato represents the School of Education on the LEND interdisciplinary team. Both faculty have complementary responsibilities and are funded by the LEND Center grant to recruit and mentor current and future trainees.

What Are the Major Assets & Duties for a LEND Trainee in SOE?

All prospective and awarded LEND trainees engage in the following central activities:

- Commit to a full-day per week of LEND duties & activities (9:00-4:00)
- Receive a modest stipend to support their LEND internship roles
- Participate in LEND didactic education sessions on disability-related topics
- Enroll in two Fall and Spring courses: Leadership I and II taught through Special Education and Health & Rehabilitation Sciences

- Engage on physician-lead interdisciplinary clinic teams at the Child Development Unit of UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh and affiliated neurodevelopmental outpatient clinics
- Provide services and support to specific individuals with disabilities and their parents/families
- Engage in short-term experiences with specified community agencies
- Engage in the *Families as Mentors* program throughout the year
- Participate in a national professional conference with AUCD or own discipline
- **Engage in a service or research project with Dr. Bagnato or Dr. Robertson so that ADP students can complete their capstone and community-based practice learning requirements**

How Does a Prospective Student Apply to LEND?

Prospective LEND trainees must be officially accepted and enrolled currently in an SOE Masters or Doctoral program at Pitt such as Special Education or Applied Developmental Psychology. Information on completing an on-line application for LEND can be found on the LEND Center website. Interested prospective SOE students should contact the following individuals for more information on LEND:

- Stephen J. Bagnato, Ed.D., NCSP, Professor of Psychology & Pediatrics at bagnatos@pitt.edu
- Amy Wetmore, LEND Training Coordinator, amy.wetmore2@chp.edu