The Alaska LEND Without Walls (Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities) aims to improve the health of children who experience disabilities and their families by preparing professionals to assume interdisciplinary leadership roles.

LEND Core Disciplines

Faculty from nine disciplines mentor LEND fellows during all aspects of the LEND Program, including weekly seminars and clinical and field experiences focusing on family-centered care and Leadership Research Projects.

Core Disciplines include:

• Special Education
• Social Work
• Family
• Occupational Therapy
• Medicine
• Public Health
• Nursing
• Psychology
• Speech Language Pathology

Leadership Research Project Topics

The Leadership Research Projects address a variety of Alaska-based topics targeted on systems change to strengthen statewide services for families who have children with developmental disabilities.

Examples of Leadership Research Projects that build on community partnerships include:

• Community needs assessment – transition summer camp for children with autism
• Family resiliency
• Friendships and dating among young adults with autism
• Needs assessment of services for children in rural, remote communities and their caregivers
• Role of school psychologists in autism screening and identification
• Emergency preparedness for people with disabilities
• Alaska Pyramid Partnership through the lens of Northern cultures
• Policy review for the Alaska Safety Planning and Empowerment Network (ASPEN)

Example 1: Community needs assessment - transition summer camp for children with autism

• To learn about families’ experiences with transitioning from preschool into kindergarten
• To assess community resources available to assist families with transitioning
• To explore types of community-based services families and community members would recommend

Example 2: Family resiliency

• Some families are resilient and others are not - why?
• What skills do parents identify as “resilient” skills?
• How did families/parents develop resiliency?
• What resources are available for families in developing resiliency?

Example 3: Role of school psychologists in autism screening and identification

• To understand the current practices of school psychologists regarding educational certification of the Anchorage School District in Alaska
• To determine if families are informed of the support and services available
• To develop an educational brochure “Your Child and Autism” for parents

Background

LEND Programs offer training at the master’s, doctoral, and postdoctoral level with emphasis on:

• Neurodevelopmental and related disabilities, including autism
• Family-centered, culturally competent care
• Interdisciplinary and leadership skills

Key elements of the Alaska LEND Without Walls include:

• Building on existing community services
• Maximizing distance-delivered educational resources
• Strengthening community and academic partnerships to expand statewide capacity

Moving Mountains: Systems change to improve services for Alaskan children who experience autism and other developmental disabilities

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