



**LEADERSHIP EDUCATION IN NEURODEVELOPMENTAL AND
RELATED DISABILITIES PROGRAM (LA LEND) SCHOLAR
HANDBOOK
2025-26**

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Human Development Center at LSU Health New Orleans

Description

The Human Development Center was established in 1974 and became a University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Education, Research and Service (UCEDD) in 1984. The center, which is housed within the School of Allied Health Professions at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, is an organizational member of the Association for University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), a national network of 67 UCEDD programs.

Mission

To provide leadership and innovation in interdisciplinary education, community services, and research, and to disseminate information to strengthen and increase the capacity of local communities to support and include individuals with developmental disabilities and their families in all aspects of community life.

Vision

To build capacity and inspire change.

Disaster Preparedness Plan

<https://www.lsuhsu.edu/emergencypreparedness/erp.aspx>

Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities

Program Description

Louisiana Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LA LEND) is an interdisciplinary training program offered by the Human Development Center to graduate students, professionals, self-advocates, and family members who wish to become leaders in their fields and communities. The program is funded under the Autism Collaboration, Accountability, Research, Education, and Support (CARES) Act, and is administered by the Health Resources and Service's Administration's (HRSA) Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). There are now 60 LEND programs operated within university systems across the United States, all of which share the following objectives¹:

1. Advance the knowledge and skills of all child health professionals to improve health care delivery systems for children with developmental disabilities.
2. Provide high-quality interdisciplinary education that emphasizes the integration of services from state and local agencies and organizations, private providers, and communities.
3. Provide health professionals with skills that foster community-based partnerships.
4. Promote innovative practices to enhance cultural competency, family-centered care, and interdisciplinary partnerships.

LA LEND Statement of Commitment

The LEND program at LSUHSC Human Development Center is dedicated to fostering a learning and working environment that values the full participation of all individuals. This commitment is reflected in our curriculum, research, community partnerships, and training experiences. We strive to enhance the health, education, social, and economic well-being of people with developmental and other disabilities and their families.

We actively welcome and support individuals of all backgrounds, identities, and experiences—regardless of disability, age, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. Our efforts include amplifying underrepresented voices, honoring personal autonomy, and upholding each person's right to self-determination.

As faculty, staff, and trainees, we take personal and professional responsibility to challenge unfair treatment, reduce bias, and address systemic barriers in our communities. We are committed to ongoing learning and to engaging others with empathy and respect when confronting prejudice or exclusion.

LA LEND Core Faculty & Faculty Mentors

The LA LEND program is predominantly administered by Core Faculty. Core Faculty includes the LA LEND Director, the LA LEND Program Coordinator, and any additional faculty having a significant role in the planning, implementation, and/or evaluation of the training program.

¹ Association for University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD). <https://www.aucd.org/template/page.cfm?id=473>

Office hours are available. The LEND coordinator will be available 30 minutes before the start of each bi-monthly seminar. Scholars may request additional meetings via email request.

Additional faculty include Faculty Mentors. Each scholar is assigned a Faculty Mentor who will provide support and mentorship throughout the program year. The intended role of these Mentors is to help scholars make meaningful connections between what they are learning in LA LEND and their future careers. Scholars should also use Mentors as a resource in developing and implementing LEND projects and activities. Scholars and Mentors should coordinate an in-person meeting at least once per month. The following items should be used to guide discussion during these meetings:

- What seminars, activities, or assignments were completed since the last scholar-Mentor meeting?
 - Did the scholar identify any major takeaways or implications for practice?
 - Was there anything the scholar did not understand or struggled with?
- Upcoming LEND activities/assignments, especially year-long projects:
 - *Capstone Project*: proposal development, implementation, evaluation
 - *Policy & Advocacy Project*: advocacy topic, fact sheet and elevator speech, speaking with the legislator
 - *Family Mentor Experience*: challenges or concerns, lessons learned

Core Faculty for Program Year 2025-2026

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Core Maternal and Child Health Leadership Competencies

The Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Leadership Competencies developed by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal and Child Health Bureau are used as a framework for developing LA LEND training objectives and for the measurement and evaluation of scholar leadership skills.

The 12 MCH Leadership Competency Areas:

SELF

1. MCH Knowledge Base/Context
2. Self-Reflection
3. Ethics
4. Critical Thinking

OTHERS

5. Communication
6. Negotiation and Conflict Resolution
7. Cultural Competency
8. Family-Professional Partnerships
9. Developing Others through Teaching, Coaching, and Mentoring
10. Interdisciplinary/Interprofessional Team Building

WIDER COMMUNITY

11. Working with Communities and Systems
12. Policy

Further description of the MCH Competencies can be found on the HRSA website.

[Maternal and Child Health Leadership Competencies Version 4.0](#)

Flipped Classroom Approach

LA LEND utilizes a flipped classroom approach, an instructional strategy that provides content (e.g., readings, webinars, assignments) prior to class so that students arrive primed to learn and prepared to engage in the discussion. LA LEND also values interactive and hands-on lesson components that increase scholar learning and engagement.

Moodle and Assignment Submission

LA LEND utilizes the course management system Moodle to disseminate program information and provide prior-to-seminar materials. Scholars are required to submit all assignments (e.g., reflection papers, presentations) in Moodle. For scholars who are not familiar with this system, more information can be found by visiting the following site: <https://nursing.lsuhsu.edu/helpstudents/moodle.aspx>

LA LEND Program Components

Overview

LA LEND includes the following components, which are described in more detail in the sections below:

- Friday seminars (in-person & virtual as designated on At-a-Glance calendar)
- Cohort led seminars
- Family Mentor Experience or PayCheck Experience
- Capstone Project
- Policy & Advocacy
- Experiential components (i.e., field and clinical activities)
- FASD Impact Week

LA LEND Seminars

Seminars occur on Friday afternoons from 12:30 pm – 4:30 pm approximately twice a month. Seminars serve two purposes: 1) Increase knowledge base in topics related to Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and other Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NDD) and 2) Improve leadership and policy/advocacy skills. Topics related to ASD/NDD follow the life course (i.e., prenatal through transition to adulthood) as chronologically as possible. Leadership and policy/advocacy content is delivered intermittently throughout the year.

Cohort-led Seminars

Some LA LEND content is offered in a flexible learning format. For each cohort led seminar, a faculty topic expert provides **prior-to-seminar** assignments and in meeting materials. For these meetings, cohorts can utilize Zoom or meet in-person at a mutually agreed upon time. Core Faculty will provide guidelines for conducting these meetings.

Family Mentor Experience or PAYCheck Experience

Each scholar is assigned a Family Mentor or PAYCheck student (depending on their discipline) at the beginning of the year as part of these experiences. The purpose is to provide scholars the opportunity to witness the “lived experience” of people with disabilities. They mentor their scholars by answering questions about their lives, discussing the challenges and triumphs of being a family of a child with a disability or a person with a disability, and providing insight into how clinical recommendations are executed in the real-life home and community environments. Scholars meet with families or students a minimum of six hours throughout the training year and complete a service-learning project at the end of the year. A full explanation of these components can be found in the LA LEND FME or PAYCheck Manual.

Year-Long Projects

Capstone Project

The Capstone Project is a year-long project that immerses scholars in an MCH- or disability-related field. Scholars collaborate with their LEND faculty mentor on a project. Scholars work on their project through the end of the training year. **A full explanation of the Capstone Project can be found in the LA LEND Capstone Project Handbook.**

Policy & Advocacy Project

The Policy & Advocacy Project is year-long project that improves scholars' understanding of legislative processes and provides the opportunity for scholars to interact with policymakers. The group project is completed within scholars assigned interdisciplinary cohorts. Cohorts work together to identify an MCH- or disability-related issue about which they wish to educate a legislator. Cohorts then develop a fact sheet and elevator speech that are presented to a local policymaker near the end of the training year. **A full explanation of the Policy & Advocacy Project can be found in the LA LEND P&A Handbook.**

Sprout

Sprout is an app that care coordinators can use to streamline services and connect clients to resources. During LEND, you will be working with the app designer to identify resources in your assigned region of the state to add to the app. Orientation for this project will be held on August 8th from 1:00-2:00 pm via Zoom.

Experiential Components: Field & Clinical Experiences

Scholars also complete several field and clinical experiences throughout the training year. Longstanding experiences are listed below, though the exact opportunities may vary from year to year:

- *Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) observation:* Scholars observe an interdisciplinary NICU team implement family-centered practices.
- *Autism Spectrum Disorders Identification and Diagnosis (ASDID) clinic observation:* Scholars observe the interdisciplinary ASDID clinic team at the Human Development Center as they evaluate a child who is suspected of having autism using the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) protocol.
- *Hearing Loss Genetics Laboratory:* Scholars learn about clinical genetic testing of hearing disorders as staff shows scholars how to isolate DNA from saliva and prepare chromosomes for testing.
- *Inclusive Classroom observation:* Scholars will travel to a local school to observe a child with ASD in a classroom setting. Scholars evaluate the environment for inclusive practices and make recommendations based on a checklist provided by the Louisiana Autism Spectrum and Related Disabilities (LASARD) Project at HDC.
- *Developmental and Autism Screening:* Scholars will join a faculty member at the We Play Community Center to assist in screening children under the age of 5 using the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and mCHAT.
- *Additional experiences TBD*

Timeline and Due Dates

The At-A-Glance Calendar is provided to scholars at orientation and contains all known dates and deadlines for the program year. **However, there are a small number of events/activities that are not known until nearer to their occurrences (e.g., field and clinical experience opportunities).** Scholars should work with Core Faculty to identify these dates and make room in their schedules to complete them to the greatest extent possible.

Attendance

Scholars are expected to attend all scheduled seminars and activities. In the case of emergencies or other extenuating circumstances, scholars must provide notice as soon as possible prior to absences to receive approval from Core Faculty. **Scholars are allowed up to one approved absence before removal from the program.** In-Person obligations are **mandatory**, with few exceptions for virtual accommodations. Please contact the Program Coordinator in the event of emergencies or conflicts. This includes all LEND activities and conferences.

Scholar Performance Evaluation

The rating scale outlined below was created for LA LEND Core Faculty and Faculty Mentors to provide scholars ongoing feedback on their performance. Rubrics for written assignments ([Appendix A](#)) and presentations ([Appendix B](#)) can be found at the end of this document.

Score	Level	Description
1	Unsatisfactory	Scholar is performing below expectations in multiple essential areas of responsibility, and significant improvement is needed. The scholar's mentor and/or Core Faculty should work with scholar to outline a plan to correct performance in areas of weakness.
2	Improvement needed	Scholar is performing below expectations in one or two essential areas of responsibility. The scholar's mentor and/or Core Faculty should work with scholar to outline a plan to correct performance in areas of weakness.
3	Satisfactory	Scholar's performance meets expectations in most essential areas of responsibility. The overall quality of work is good.
4	Exceptional/ Exceeds expectations	Scholar's performance exceeds expectations in most or all essential areas of responsibility. The overall quality of work is superior. Scholar is prepared, engaged, and insightful in classes.

Probation and Remediation Plans

Scholars should maintain timely submission and adequate completion of all LA LEND assignments and presentations. Scholars who fail to meet designated deadlines or obligations may be placed on a probationary period and a remediation plan will be developed through collaboration among the scholar, his/her/their Mentor, and Core Faculty. Stipend payments may be delayed for scholars placed on a probationary period. Additionally, scholars who fail to meet the expectations set forth in the remediation plan in a timely manner may be subject to removal from the program without receipt of stipend payment.

APPENDIX A: Rubric for Written Assignments

Performance Rating Scale

Scoring Rubric: Written Assignments

SCHOLAR: _____

DATE: _____

Circle the number that best corresponds to scholar's performance in each essential area of responsibility. The overall average score should be indicated at the below the table. Scoring:

1 = Not met;

2 = Partially met;

3 = Mostly met;

4 = Completely met or exceeded

Scholar submitted the assignment in a timely manner. [1= 3 or more days late; 2= 2 days late; 3= 1 day late; 4= submitted on time]	1	2	3	4	N/A
Scholar followed assignment instructions, including prompt submission, and included all appropriate components.	1	2	3	4	N/A
Scholar's writing was clear, concise, and reasonably free of grammatical/formatting errors.	1	2	3	4	N/A
Scholar offered insightful comments or viewpoints that demonstrated that MCH concepts were integrated into his or her viewpoint.	1	2	3	4	N/A

AVERAGE SCORE: _____

Additional Comments:

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APPENDIX B: Rubric for Presentations

Performance Rating Scale

Scoring Rubric: Presentations

SCHOLAR: _____

DATE: _____

Circle the number that best corresponds to scholar's performance in each essential area of responsibility. The overall average score should be indicated at the below the table. Scoring:

1 = Not met;

2 = Partially met;

3 = Mostly met;

4 = Completely met or exceeded

Scholar followed assignment instructions and included all appropriate components.	1	2	3	4	N/A
Scholar's presentation materials were clear, concise, and reasonably free of grammatical/formatting errors. Information was delivered in a logical sequence.	1	2	3	4	N/A
Scholar was well-prepared for presentation as evidenced by confidence and mastery of presentation materials and topics.	1	2	3	4	N/A
Scholar offered insightful comments or viewpoints that demonstrated that MCH concepts were integrated into his or her viewpoint.	1	2	3	4	N/A

AVERAGE SCORE: _____

Additional Comments:

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