

Providing a Holistic Understanding of Autism through a LEND Autism Training Experience

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The purpose of this poster is to examine the Georgia Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (GaLEND) autism seminar, which is in addition to and follows the 300-hour GaLEND curriculum. The intent of the seminar is *to increase use of evidence-based diagnostic and intervention services for children with autism by providing intensive, targeted training for professionals serving them and their families*. We describe the month-long GaLEND autism seminar, our process for evaluating the seminar, and trainee reports of attitude, knowledge, and skill development through participation in the seminar.

Components of the Autism Seminar

Conferences

The autism seminar is one month in length and is scheduled in conjunction with an autism conference that occurs in the Atlanta area. The autism conferences varies. The year IMFAR was in Atlanta, the autism seminar was scheduled so the trainees could attend IMFAR. Other years, the autism seminar is scheduled so trainees can attend the Georgia Statewide Autism Conference.



Individualized Field Experiences - Trainees are matched with a community organization that supports individuals with autism and/or their families for a job shadowing experience



Presentations from Autism Experts - Trainees spend time in a university classroom hearing presentations from autism researchers, community service providers, policymakers, grassroots advocates, and others who support individuals with autism and their families.



Cohort Reflection - The autism seminar concludes with trainee presentations and reflections on their experiences.



Trainee Feedback on the Autism Seminar

Trainees participate in focus group discussions at the end of the Autism Seminar that are part of the cohort reflection process. Focus group discussion questions inquired about and are coded according to trainee perceptions of the autism seminar and perceptions of skill and knowledge acquisition as a result of participating in the autism seminar.

Knowledge

The greatest area of learning reported by three cohorts of trainees related to the domain of *knowledge*. Trainees reported learning most about the following content areas:

- Incidental teaching
- Universal design of learning
- Technology for individuals with autism
- Different approaches to advocacy
- Disparities in access to services
- Administration and interpretation of screening tools

Attitudes

Attitude change was reported by most trainees, particularly as it related to coalition building and to the importance of considering culture during research, assessment, and intervention.

Skills

Skill acquisition reported after participating in the autism seminar related to professional networking and using components of family-centered care more effectively.



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