

Colorado LEND Family Mentorship Program Fall 2012

Information and Instructions for Trainees

Family mentorship is a unique opportunity for LEND fellows to learn about the real-life experiences of families raising a child with a developmental disability. We ask that you arrange both an interview with one of the parents in your host family and a visit that will take you into their home or with them into the community. We hope that as a result of this training, you will better understand the full range of experiences families face daily, and that both your professional practice and your insights will be enriched as a result.

Learning Goals for the Family Mentorship

- To understand the impact a child with developmental disabilities may have on the entire family.
- To learn about the emotions experienced and stages of adjustment parents go through when a child is diagnosed with a developmental disability.
- To understand the complexity of these families' lives and routine when developing treatment plans and interventions in your professional capacity.
- To appreciate family strengths and recognize the family as the expert in their child, in order to promote parent-professional partnerships and family-centered practices.
- To develop leadership in promoting systems change among professional peers regarding family-centered care.
- To consider the obstacles, challenges, opportunities and outcomes of school and community inclusion for children with developmental disabilities
- To increase appreciation of the potential, capabilities, and contributions of children and adults with developmental disabilities.

Program Overview

Parent Interview (1-2 hours) – Trainees will arrange to interview a parent about their family and experiences. Having an interview ahead of the visit will give the parent an opportunity to share information about the child they might not want to share in front of the child.

Home or Community Visit with the Family (2-3 hours) – Trainees will visit their host family either in their home or as part of a community visit in order to meet all members of the family, if possible.

In Class Discussion – Trainees/fellows will participate in group discussions in class about their families, their experiences in the family's homes or community and to synthesize their observations and responses.

Paper – Trainees/fellows will write a 2-3 page description of and reflection on their visits. The **Trainee Reflections** will provide additional guidance

The Specifics

Parent Interview and Visits:

- Once you have been given the contact information for your family, call them to introduce yourself. Your family will be expecting to hear from you by November.
- Arrange the Parent Interview to take place in person, if at all possible. Many parents will be glad to share a cup of coffee and discuss their experiences with trainees. If in-person can't work, it may be possible to have a conference call with the parent. Regardless, make sure the situation allows the parent to talk with you privately. Allow 1-2 hours for the interview.
- Review the **Trainee Reflections** prior to the interview and the visit as preparation for what to discuss. However, do not work directly from these forms **during** your visit. They will also be helpful to review when you're taking notes after the visit.

Community Visits:

- The following are a few examples of community outings you may want to consider. These can be instead of a home visit or in addition, if there is time:
 - Attending an I.E.P. meeting
 - Taking a trip to the grocery store
 - Accompanying the family to the doctor or therapist
 - Participating with the family at a recreational outing
 - Eating dinner at a restaurant
 - Visiting with other family members, extended family or friends who play an important role in the family's life

Discussion and Paper:

- Tuesday, Dec 11th (Key Concepts) - You will break up into small groups to share and discuss your FM experiences.
- At that time, you will turn in a 2-3 page reflection paper about your family and what you learned as a result of being a part of their lives.

Things to Consider:

- Be sure to talk with everyone in the family, if possible. Each person will have a unique perspective.
- Remember that you are visiting as a guest, not as a professional. As such, you should not provide any professional services, including giving advice or counseling.
- Please be clear that you cannot be responsible for the child at any time. A family member should always be present and responsible for the child. This does not mean that you cannot play, read, hold or interact in other ways with the child.
- Confidentiality – Remember to respect your family’s privacy.
Do not discuss your family mentorship experiences with your friends, family members, or anyone else not associated with the LEND program. You are, however, required by law to report any abuse or neglect. If you feel you have witnessed abuse and/or neglect, notify your faculty advisor and the Family Discipline Director (Harriet Austin) immediately.

When you write up a personal reflection of your visits and when you share your thoughts about the visits with the LEND group, do *not* use the last name(s) of the family members or other identifying information. Keep your written summary private. Do not share personal information about your host family outside of the LEND program.