



ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY CENTERS ON DISABILITIES  
THE LEADERSHIP, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY & RESEARCH NETWORK

**Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) Programs provide interdisciplinary training, service, and care to improve the health of people with developmental disabilities.**

Authorized under the Autism CARES Act (P. L. 116-60), LEND programs operate within a university system and collaborate with local university hospitals and/or health care centers. They are a strong community link to services and supports for addressing emerging issues within the disability community for individuals and their families. The 52 LEND programs located in 44 U.S. states, with an additional six states and three territories reached through program partnerships, have played key roles in providing advanced training to a broad array of professional disciplines in the identification, assessment, and intervention of children and youth with a wide range of developmental disabilities. These programs, without additional federal or state aide, have pivoted in response to the COVID-19 emergency. Critical clinical services have transitioned to a mix of telehealth and in-person formats, providing access to assessment, support, and treatment. A real-time transition to provision of training either entirely remotely or in a hybrid model proved an added benefit of building maternal and child health leaders with experience in telehealth to support the population of Americans with neurodevelopmental disabilities. The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) supports and promotes this national network of university-based interdisciplinary programs.



**FY 2022 Funding Request:**

AUCD requests that Congress appropriate \$56,500,000 for Autism and other Developmental Disabilities for FY 2022 and of this amount appropriate \$38,000,000 for LENDs within Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill.

**Funding History:**

	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22 Request
<b>Autism and other DD</b>	\$49,000,000	\$50,000,000	\$52,344,000	\$53,844,000	<b>\$56,500,000</b>
<b>LENDs</b>	\$31,317,485	\$33,500,000	\$35,245,000	\$36,245,000	<b>\$38,000,000</b>

**Recommended Report Language:**

This funding will enable the LEND network to fulfill its expanded statutory mandate to serve individuals across the lifespan, addressing a critical shortage of health care professionals for adults with autism and other developmental disabilities. This funding is critical to the LENDs’ role in providing direct clinical assessment and evidence-based interventions. In addition, the funding will allow these programs to contribute to the development of telehealth clinical services to support individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities and their families. LENDs are uniquely positioned to provide innovative strategies to integrate and enhance existing investments, including translating research findings on interventions, guidelines, tools, and systems management approaches to training settings, to communities, and into practice, and to promote life-course considerations – from developmental screening in early childhood to transition to adulthood issues.

**Justification:**

An increase in FY22 funding will support LENDs to recruit and support autistic adults as faculty advocates and as trainees, with particular emphasis on expanding LEND curriculum to include and address adult life needs and healthcare. It will also expand their efforts, training more professionals to diagnose and provide high quality care for individuals of all ages with ASD/DD. Additionally, this funding will enable the LEND network to assist in ongoing developmental monitoring, especially for children impacted by the current public health and economic crises and their resulting complications.

*For more information on LEND work in your state, visit [www.aucd.org](http://www.aucd.org) or contact Rylin Rodgers, Director of Public Policy, at [rrodgers@aucd.org](mailto:rrodgers@aucd.org)*