

Request for Application:
CDC-AUCD Leadership Opportunity
Act Early Ambassadors: State or Territorial Liaisons to
CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early." Program



Act Early Ambassador Program Overview

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's \(CDC\) National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities](#) and the [Association of University Centers on Disabilities \(AUCD\)](#) with support from the [Health Resources and Services Administration \(HRSA\)](#), [Maternal and Child Health Bureau \(MCHB\)](#), announce a limited funding opportunity for Act Early Ambassadors to work with CDC's "[Learn the Signs. Act Early.](#)" (LTSAE) program to improve early identification of developmental delays and disabilities, including autism, by:

- promoting the adoption and integration of LTSAE resources and materials to support developmental monitoring in systems that serve young children and their families (e.g. WIC, home visiting, child welfare, early care and education, etc.);
- serving as a state or territorial representative of CDC's national LTSAE program; and
- supporting the work of Act Early Teams and other state/territorial or national initiatives to improve early identification of developmental delay and disability.

Learn the Signs. Act Early. Program Background

CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early." program aims to improve early identification of developmental delays and disabilities, including autism, by promoting parent-engaged developmental monitoring (regularly tracking milestones) so children and their families can get the services and support they need as early as possible. Parent-engaged developmental monitoring, using parent-friendly milestone checklists like those offered by LTSAE, is important for early identification of developmental delays and disabilities. Developmental monitoring (surveillance), in addition to periodic developmental screening, is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. While other efforts focus on the promotion of routine general developmental and autism-specific screening, the focus of LTSAE is to engage, educate, and empower parents and other caregivers to monitor milestones and discuss a child's developmental progress between recommended screenings. LTSAE complements screening by engaging those who care for young children in celebrating a child's developmental progress and discussing any concerns. If concerns are identified during monitoring, LTSAE reinforces the AAP's recommendation for a developmental screening or direct referral for further evaluation and services.

Qualifications for an Act Early Ambassadorship

Most importantly, this leadership opportunity aims to identify individuals who share the “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” commitment to improving systems and outcomes related to identifying young children with developmental delay and disability early so they and their families can get the help they need.

This opportunity is open to all who meet the criteria and can fulfill the responsibilities. Those who have previously served as Act Early Ambassadors are eligible to re-apply. Awards will be made based on an objective review that includes standardized scoring, past participation (for returning Ambassadors), two independent reviews, and group discussion.

To be considered, applicants must:

- reside or physically work in the state/territory they wish to represent as an Ambassador;
- be able to commit to performing the role of Ambassador for the entire term, through August 31, 2022;
- be connected to or familiar with state/territory/tribal programs that serve young children and their families, such as child care, WIC, Early Head Start, home visiting, or others;
- be involved in or familiar with any cross-systems efforts to improve developmental monitoring/screening and early identification of developmental delay and disability in their state/territory;
- have knowledge and expertise in child development and/or systems that support families with young children, and/or early identification and referral for developmental delay/disability;
- have good presentation and communication skills; and
- have a strong interest in working collaboratively to further the goals of the “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” program in their state or territory.

Responsibilities of the Act Early Ambassador

Ambassadors are encouraged to apply individual creativity and expertise toward meeting their state’s or territory’s unique challenges related to early identification. CDC’s LTSAE program offers [some examples of past creative activities](#) to promote early identification. Successful Ambassadors are highly resourceful and seek strategic connections. Act Early Ambassador responsibilities typically require about 6-10 hours per month. Act Early Ambassadors are required to:

- work with CDC’s LTSAE program, AUCD, fellow Ambassadors, and their state’s Act Early state team or other related collaborative initiatives to support national, state/territorial, and local activities to improve early identification of developmental delay and disability;
- commit to leading or co-leading (where applicable) their state’s [Act Early Response to COVID-19 Team](#);
- focus efforts on increasing parent-engaged developmental monitoring through the promotion and sustained integration of LTSAE materials into state-wide systems and other programs that serve families with young children;
- collaborate with programs that serve young children and their parents, such as Head Start and Early Head Start, WIC, home visiting, IDEA Part C/Child Find and others, as well as health care and child care

professionals to introduce and sustainably integrate LTSAE developmental monitoring tools and trainings into the work of those programs with parents and professionals;

- commit to performing the role of Ambassador for the entirety of this term (through August 31, 2022);
- develop, maintain and implement a work plan that includes at least 2 Ambassador goals; at least 1 of your goals must advance the adoption and sustained integration of developmental monitoring using LTSAE in one state-wide system/program such as WIC, home visiting, IDEA Part C/Child Find, early care and education (including early Head Start), child welfare, or similar;
- participate in 90-minute Ambassador calls with AUCD and CDC every other month;
- prepare and record a yearly 5-7 minute project update;
- prepare an annual report of Ambassador activities;
- complete pre- and post-Ambassadorship surveys; and
- participate in an annual training, either virtually or in-person depending on current COVID-19 guidance

Additionally, Act Early Ambassadors are encouraged (but not required) to:

- collaborate with state agencies and others to improve policy and programs related to early identification;
- post updates and share resources among the network of Ambassadors (through the Ambassador email listserv and other mechanisms);
- participate in 1-hour “learning circle” webinars every other month;
- participate in 1-hour evaluation workshops every month;
- participate in 1-hour, topic-specific “Act Early” webinars on a quarterly basis; and
- present Ambassador achievements and lessons learned at state and national conferences and other appropriate forums.

Act Early Ambassador Support

To support Ambassadors, AUCD will provide:

- \$4,000 annual stipend plus travel expenses for the annual Ambassador training.
 - The stipend can be used to support a variety of activities related to the implementation of the Ambassador work plan (e.g., local travel, meeting costs, printing, etc.). Please note, if you cannot accept a stipend for Ambassador efforts related to work you’re already carrying out, you can use the stipend for convening meetings, printing materials, etc.
 - Stipends are distributed in two installments—the first \$2,000.00 installment upon completion of the Act Early Ambassador orientation and the second \$2,000.00 midway through your Ambassador year.
- Scheduled and as-needed technical assistance provided by email, phone, and webinar.
- Structured peer support, and a forum to network, share ideas, and problem-solve with colleagues working on similar issues nationwide.
 - Note: participation in in-person meetings, webinars, and the Ambassador group email list helps keep Ambassadors connected with one another; this connection to other Ambassadors is among the most valued aspects of the Ambassador experience.

- Technical expertise and consultation, and information from leading national experts in the fields of child development, developmental disability, and health promotion.

States and Territories Eligible for Funding

This funding opportunity is restricted to the two states with Act Early Ambassador vacancies:

- Louisiana
- Maryland

Timeline

RFA Release: September 20, 2021

Application Deadline: October 8, 2021 at 5:00pm ET

Notice of Awards: No later than October 18, 2021

Application Procedure

To be considered eligible, applicants are required to complete and [submit all sections of the application and include all required attachments](#). Applications received after the deadline will not be considered. You will receive a notification of the receipt of your application no later than 48 hours following submission. If you have not received a notification of receipt within this timeframe, please [contact Danielle Webber](#).

Fiscal Agent

Ambassadors will receive an annual \$4,000.00 stipend to support expenses related to the implementation of their Ambassador workplan. The Ambassador stipend must be awarded to a fiscal agent that will receive the funds and be responsible for progress reports. **Applications must include the signature of the fiscal agent representative.** Please direct questions concerning the Act Early Ambassador stipend or fiscal agent requirement to [Danielle Webber](#).

For More Information

AUCD contact: [Danielle Webber](#), MSW | dwebber@aucd.org

CDC/NCBDDD contact: [Karnesha Slaughter](#), MPH, CHES | KSlaughter2@cdc.gov

Act Early Ambassador Program Application

State/Territory: _____

Name: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Current Affiliation: _____

Current Professional Role: _____

Are you a member of any cross-systems initiative to improve developmental monitoring/screening and early identification of developmental delay in your state/territory? Y N Former Member

If yes, please name the initiative and describe your role: _____

Are you a US citizen?

 Y N

(Non-citizens are eligible to apply; knowing citizenship is helpful in accounting for security requirements for access to the CDC campus.)

Are you a full-time resident and/or physically working in the state/territory you are representing?

 Y N**Required Attachments (submit by email as a single file):**

- **Headshot**
- **Brief Bio (250 words or less):** Highlight relevant training and recent professional experience and any qualifications not covered below.
- **Personal Statement (250 words or less):** Tell us about your interest in becoming an Act Early Ambassador and how this role fits with your personal and professional goals.
- **Goals (500 words or less):** Describe at least 2 goals that you hope to accomplish during your term as an Act Early Ambassador, and why you believe you will be successful in achieving them, including the extent of relevant personal and professional contacts and past success. Goals should be specific and should detail the potential for sustaining impact beyond your term. Remember that at least 1 of your goals must advance the adoption and sustained integration of developmental monitoring using LTSAE in one state-wide system/program such as WIC, home visiting, IDEA Part C/Child Find, early care and education (including early Head Start), child welfare, or similar.

Sample Ambassador Goals:

- (1) Work with state Head Start and Early Head Start to improve developmental monitoring by systematically integrating the use of LTSAE materials, including the CDC Milestone Tracker app, into classrooms and parent-teacher conferences state-wide.
- (2) Work with regional agencies, such as WIC, to improve developmental monitoring by integrating the milestone checklists into WIC visits.
- (3) Work with early childhood state agencies to incorporate the “Watch Me! Celebrating Milestones and Sharing Concerns” online developmental monitoring training into early care and education training programs.
- (4) Work with state-wide home visitation programs to increase developmental monitoring by integrating LTSAE materials into home visits.
- (5) Work with local pediatric clinics to integrate LTSAE materials, including the CDC’s *Milestone Tracker* app, as a method to conduct developmental surveillance between well-child visits.

Required Letters of Support:

- **Attach a letter from your supervisor/Program Director that supports your application (one page maximum).**
- **Attach a letter of support from an individual (from outside your organization of employment) who can attest to any past success you have had in terms of fostering cross-system collaboration to create positive change for young children and their families.**

Please read and check the boxes below before signing:

- I fully understand the requirements and responsibilities associated with an Act Early Ambassadorship.**

Applicant Signature:

Name of Fiscal Agent (Print) _____

Fiscal Agent Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Submit the completed form to Danielle Webber at dwebber@aucd.org.

Questions/More Information

If you have any questions regarding this opportunity, please contact Danielle Webber at dwebber@aucd.org