

Va-LEND
Family Mentoring Experience – Family Evaluation
Spring 2005

Strengths

- 1) The quantitative data demonstrates that overall the families were very satisfied with the performance of the Va-LEND trainees with an average of 4.56. Families indicated their agreement with statements reflecting the trainees' performance on a five-point scale from "strongly agree" (5) to "strongly disagree" (1). In all of the six questions, families rated the trainees' performance above a 4, ranging from 4.11 to 4.89. The lowest rating was given to the item, "the trainee knew a lot about child development."
- 2) Families indicated that the most positive parts of mentoring a trainee were being able to get to work with students who were enthusiastic and eager to learn about children with disabilities, the sense of satisfaction they gained through teaching others what it is like to have a child with a disability, and contributing to the professional careers of those who have a desire to work within the disability field.
- 3) Seven of the nine families indicated that they would be willing to work with other trainees in the future. One family reported that they will be moving to out of state and another family stated that they were unable to be involved in the program next year due to previous commitments, but would be interested in working with a mentor in the future.
- 4) Families identified the following as "things that trainees do best":
 - focuses on child and overall family issues
 - listens attentively and asks pertinent questions
 - exhibits interest and concern about the child
 - communicates well
 - is open to family member's feedback and suggestions
 - is calm and gentle
 - is sensitive to family member's needs and situation
 - shares own knowledge and expertise
 - presents with positive and outgoing personality traits
- 5) All of the nine families responded that they had received enough information about the program to prepare them for mentoring a trainee and that the occasional resource/advocacy information e-mails that they received were helpful. One participant suggested that he or she would like to be sent some background information about the trainee prior to the first meeting.

Weaknesses

- 1) When families were asked to indicate areas where they encounter problems, they all reported that scheduling was the most difficult issue. In particular, one family member suggested that trainees be more flexible when scheduling visits.
- 2) Families felt that trainees needed to further develop their skills in the following areas, knowledge of their specific child's disability, increase their eagerness and assertiveness in getting involved and interacting with the child.

Recommendations for Improvement

- 1) Families listed the following recommendations for improvement in the program:
 - make the family mentorship experience integral to the students' completion of the program rather than a sideline piece.
 - introduce the students to the family mentors in the summer.
 - have the trainees observe the child at school.
 - don't have students attend IEP meetings as they are too private.

All family evaluation data is attached.

Part I: Trainee Performance

	N	Mean
1. The trainee was considerate of our family's routines when scheduling contacts with us.	9	4.778
2. The trainee listened to me when discussing my child/children.	9	4.778
3. The trainee seemed to recognize and appreciate my knowledge and insights about my child/children.	9	4.889
4. The trainee knew a lot about child development.	9	4.111
5. The trainee seemed to understand the special needs of my child/children and family.	9	4.444
6. The trainee got along well with my child/children.	9	4.333

1.2 For our family, the most positive parts of the mentoring a trainee were...

- Holly was very positive and upbeat. Asked lots of questions. Was always polite and politically correct in her terminology.
- Hopefully we were able to give our trainee a glimpse into what life is really like when one or more of a family's members have significant special needs. I would like to think that Cristin's professional career will have been positively impacted by the information we were able to share and that the families she works with in the future will benefit from that knowledge.
- Sharing our life situation with someone who wants to devote their life work to helping children with disabilities.
- The feeling of investing in the future development and training of Occupational Therapists. Having the opportunity to share our positive and active lifestyle with Jennifer. It was also wonderful to work with someone who currently works in the school system. It was interesting for us to share the possibilities for inclusion with children with disabilities. Sharing with Jennifer the after school activities that Molly is involved with, with her friends from school. I think this allowed Jennifer to see how the other children embraced Molly.
- Contributing to the future of medical care. Having someone who wanted to hear about us.
- Sharing Gracie's story with Selvi and being able to teach her re: the disability/special needs world.
- Seeing Carolyn get to know Ben and develop a relationship with him.
- Instilling knowledge about our daughters abilities.
- Meeting a lovely, outgoing student who is interested in Matthew's life, family, and activities. Emily saw Matthew as a valuable little boy and not "just another Downs baby."

1.3 Some problems we encountered were...

- None.
- As always, scheduling is a problem. Some of our past trainees have seemed to have a little more flexibility with scheduling visits. I would liked to have had more time, especially during some key doctor visits or school meetings, for Cristin to observe our family.
- Scheduling around our life schedules and her classes.
- We didn't encounter any problems. It all went very well!
- Busy schedules.
- Scheduling: plus Selvi was a little reticent.
- Tough to schedule sometimes, but we always worked things out.
- None.
- The year flew by too quickly. We hate to see our time with Emily come to an end!

1.4 Some recommendations to improve the program are...

- None.
- I think the program is excellent and needs very little improvement. However, if the FM piece is an important one, perhaps the trainees need to concentrate a little more emphasis on that piece- make it very integral to their completion of the program rather than an interesting sideline piece.
- Perhaps meeting the student sooner in the summer, to arrange some meetings before the kids go back to school.
- None.
- No changes.
- Many sessions (i.e. IEP mtgs) – these are more private and don't need by-standers – instead they can be described (this has worked in the past).
- If child is school-age, observe child at school perhaps.
- None.
- None.

1.5 Did you receive enough background information about the program to prepare you for mentoring the trainee?

- Yes.
- I most certainly did. Elaine does an excellent job of preparing the mentor families for this experience.
- Yes.
- Yes, however I would like a little background information on trainee prior to meeting her.
- Yes.
- Yes (have done this before).
- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.

1.6 Would you be willing to work with other trainees in the future?

- Yes.
- Yes, I would. I find the experience very rewarding and sincerely hope we are having an impact on professionals who will interact with children with disabilities.
- Yes.
- Not next year due to heavy commitments, however would like to remain informed for future possibilities.
- Yes.
- Yes.
- We are moving to TN, but otherwise we would definitely mentor again!
- Yes.
- Yes.

1.7 Did you find the occasional resource/advocacy e-mailings useful? What might have made the more useful?

- Yes; Yes.
- Yes; I can't think of anything. Email is a great way for me to receive this information and I hope that can continue; Yes.

- Yes;Yes.
- Yes;n/a;Yes.
- Yes;n/a;Yes.
- Yes;n/a;Yes.
- Yes;n/a;Yes.
- Yes;n/a;Yes.
- Yes;n/a;Yes.
- Yes;n/a;Yes.

1.8 **Any other comments or suggestions about the Family Mentorship Experience?**

- None.
- None.
- None.
- We thoroughly enjoyed getting to know Jennifer Dodge. She is a wonderful lady!
- I always enjoy participating.
- Nice job overall. I enjoyed doing it and would enjoy doing it again. Elaine does a good job supervising – very involved and stays on top of things – very supportive.
- Great program!
- None.
- We have been concerned that Emily may not have received enough information from us for her coursework. We hope that we fulfill our part of the experience for her.

19. **The things the trainee does best are:**

- Not sure...we mostly focused on Kimberly and our family issues.
- Cristin listened very well when I shared information, or when Ashley's intervener was sharing information. She asked pertinent questions and seemed genuinely interested in our responses.
- Interacting and showing concern and interest in the children and what is going on with them.
- Are cannot say just one thing that she does best however I can say she is a great communicator, she is open to ideas and suggestions, supportive and understanding and she shared a lot of her knowledge and expertise with us.
- Listen.

- Listening; she really seemed to enjoy Gracie. She also has a nice personality and presence – very calm and gentle. Great smile! Sweet girl!
- Enjoy our visits.
- Personality and manners, bubbly with children.
- Emily is very sensitive to other people's needs and situation. She also is socially outgoing and fit right in with friends, family and church members. I never worried about her ability to get along if Dou and I were busy with Matthew. (She met us at the D.S. Assoc. meetings and church). Emily was also very kind if she asked us about Matthew's medical history and D.S diagnosis. She will do well in her chosen field. It is obvious that she cares for people. She also made scheduling our times together very easy.

2.0 The things the trainee needs to continue to develop are:

- I would have liked to see Cristin interact a little more with Ashley. I believe one of the most valuable ways to learn about the needs of children with special needs is to have some "hands on" time. I know that sometimes I and the intervener made things seem a little easier than they actually were. For a full appreciation of some of the issues surrounding a child with special needs, a person needs to have to deal with some of the "harder" things – trying to change an older child's pull-up in a public restroom – trying to get a child to try new food – finding a way to calm a child who has been over stimulated by his/her environment, etc. Sometimes the only way to reach a comfort level with a child that has a significant disabilities is to jump in feet first!!
- Kara will do great in her field of study as long as she continues to develop and grow as she seems to be doing now. She doesn't need to change anything.
- None.
- None.
- Becoming more eager to jump in – don't hold back so much (she may just be unsure of what to do or "shy") be herself! She's a great girl with lots of potential – she may feel unsure of this.
- Learn more about autism/specific disability of child, not fall into "tragedy" stereotypes.
- None.