

**Va-Lend  
Family Mentoring Experience – Trainee Evaluation  
2004-2005**

- 1) The quantitative data demonstrates that overall trainees were satisfied with their mentoring experience. Trainees indicated their agreement with statements regarding their experience on a 5-point scale from “strongly agree” (5) to “strongly disagree” (1). Average ratings for the items ranged from 3.2 to 3.6.
- 2) Trainees clearly felt that the face-to-face visits with family members were worthwhile. They responded that these experiences were amazing, enjoyable and valuable. Many trainees indicated that they desired more time with their families than was originally allotted. As one trainee wrote, “These (visits) were definitely worthwhile. I didn’t get to hang out with my family outside of their home as much as I would have liked.”

Trainees also reported that the visits increased their knowledge of advocacy and helped to reinforce the similarities between children with disabilities and children without disabilities.

- 3) Overall trainees reported that they did not find the monthly phone contact with families helpful. Several indicated that the phone calls seemed awkward and artificial. Most used these calls primarily to set up future meetings dates. One participant suggested that trainees be given topic items to be used during these phone conversations in order to facilitate discussion.

Many of the trainees stated that they preferred keeping up with families using email rather than telephone. They felt that e-mail was a better option because of its convenience and ease. One trainee wrote, “I mainly contacted the mom through email. We had several discussions in-depth on the emails which were helpful. I was able to advise her about some upcoming meetings. My family is quite busy and I had to adapt to their schedule.”

- 4) Trainees were mixed in their responses regarding journaling and the journal discussion group. Some trainees reported they did not enjoy the journaling and two trainees reported that the journaling was either mildly or fairly useful. In contrast to their views about journaling, most of the trainees described their journaling discussions favorably. Many felt that the journal discussion group provided an opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences ideas with LEND faculty and their peers. In particular it gave trainees an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and gain validation about their individual thoughts feelings from the other trainees. One trainee wrote, “Journal discussion groups are a great way to share experiences and learn what other trainees have similar feelings.”

- 5) The majority of trainees found the “blackboard” discussion activities to be interesting, a great opportunity to share ideas and experiences with others, and an overall a good idea. One trainee even suggested expanding the “blackboard” to other Va-LEND programs. One criticism that was voiced about the activity was the amount of time it took to read all of the responses.
- 6) Trainees reported that the group FME discussions were enjoyable, particularly when listening to other trainees’ experiences. However, several individuals stated that these discussions were redundant and too similar to the information shared on “blackboard” and journal discussions.
- 7) Overall trainees rated the October session on chronic illness, death and grief positively. Trainees described it as “useful,” “well done,” “helpful,” and “interesting.”

2004-2005

Partnership for People with Disabilities  
Va-LEND Program  
Family Mentorship Experience Evaluation Report

***Va-LEND Trainee Evaluation of the Family Mentorship Experience***

I have a better understanding of the day-to-day activities/routines of families that have a child with a disability.	10	3.4
I have a better understanding of the additional issues which having a member with a disability brings into the life of a family (in terms of emotions, values/choices, culture, social life, schedules, finances, planning for the future, etc.)	10	3.4
I have a better understanding of the impact (positive and negative) that professionals can have on the lives of families.	10	3.6
I have become more sensitive to the need to consider the family and its particular routines and circumstances when developing treatment plans and interventions in my professional capacity.	10	3.4
I have learned to appreciate family strengths and recognize the family as the expert in their child, in order to better promote parent-professional partnerships.	10	3.5
I have a better understanding of the great diversity among families and their needs.	10	3.3
I have a better understanding of similarities between families that have a member with a disability and families that do not.	10	3.4
I recognize that any professional working with families that have a child with a disability would benefit from this type of an experience.	10	3.5
I have discussed/promoted family-centered care with my colleagues/peers.	10	3.2
I intend to promote family-centered care in my professional practice.	10	3.3

**Five face-to-face visits with your mentoring family:**

n/a

I really enjoyed the face-to-face visits with my mentoring family. I spent the most amount of time with the mother of the family and I wish I'd tried to spend a little more time with the father. It was also a pleasant surprise to me that my mentoring family was more like my own than different from my own.

These were definitely worthwhile. I didn't get to hang out with my family outside of their home as much as I would have liked.

This was an AMAZING experience!

Still working on this...so far have enjoyed working with my family and hope to continue to enjoy this experience. They are a strong family unit. So far it has been a worthwhile experience. I have learned the importance of advocacy for your children.

I enjoyed getting to know the family, found them very welcoming. However, I felt that I already had a pro-family orientation going into this experience and I have lived/worked for many years with people with various disabilities (and their parents) so I did not feel I had any significant experiences that altered my perceptions of ways of practicing.

I think the visits were beneficial. However, I found myself spending more time with the mom than with the actual child. Which was great and I learned a lot from her and am extremely impressed by her, but I did not feel comfortable enough to interact or initiate interaction with the child.

Although scheduling was difficult at times, I believe that this was the best component of the whole experience. After the 1st couple of visits I learned that it's important to just treat the child as any other child that I have worked with before. I don't know really how it could really be improved at this time.

I had hoped to vary my face-to-face visits. I did not see the family in the home and one visit to a playground opening but I had hoped to be part of a school meeting and go to another venue. It was valuable to see the home and to visit with the family in comfortable surroundings. I gained a lot from my talks with the parents as well as my interactions with my "child."

Valuable, esp the first 3 (+picnic). After that, it felt like we had actually already covered most of what we had to cover. But I did get to know the child a little better in the last 2.

2004/2005 Semester

**Monthly phone contact with family:**

n/a

I don't enjoy talking on the phone very much so I appreciated that email was also an option. SB and I emailed each other fairly often. I think it was easier for her, too, since she is a busy mom and doesn't have a whole lot of time to spend on the phone.

We primarily used these to arrange meetings. Personally, I didn't really want to get into long talks on the phone with my mentor family. I found it awkward to chat on the phone with someone I hardly knew; it seemed artificial. I much preferred speaking to them face-to-face. Towards the end, once I had gotten to know them better, phone calls were much easier.

My phone calls were pretty much only to set up visits with my family.

Also still working on this...emails are generally easier and more convenient to catch up with my family. Scheduling is definitely tough, however, we do have plans to get together in the near future.

These were fine...I think these are a good additional requirement, as 5 face visits represent a very limited slice of the family's life; the emails and calls allowed for some continuity in the relationship.

I communicated through email with my family, which was good because they had some stuff happen that they were able to update me with regards to that.

It was sometimes hard to have a conversation beyond just "How are you doing?" because during the year there really weren't any significant changes with the child. Most phone calls were follow-ups or confirmations of visits.

I mainly contacted the mom through email. We had several discussions in depth on the emails which were helpful. I was able to advise her about some upcoming meetings. My family is quite busy and I had to adapt to their schedule.

Valuable. Maybe suggested topic (or several to choose from) for some of the phone calls could have made it easier to start or guide a conversation? As an option?

**Journal and/or journal discussion group:**

n/a

I didn't really get much from the journaling experience. I think the journals are a good idea, but personally I am not much of a journaler. I considered the meeting with the faculty advisor option, but I felt a little bit like I would have been adding to an already busy schedule.

The journal was fairly useful. Writing about the time I spent with my family allowed me to reflect on what I was learning from them.

I did NOT enjoy journaling. I feel that any reflecting I have were already analyzed and explored before I wrote journal entries. I DO appreciate my advisors and Elaine's comments on the journal.

Journal discussion groups is a great way to share experiences and learn what other trainees have similar feelings (i.e. feeling like you are intruding/in the way).

I did not enjoy the journal experience.

I enjoy the journal discussion group, because I prefer to talk. I also enjoyed being able to hear what and how other people's experiences are going.

I liked the option of the journal discussion group rather than journaling. I enjoy hearing about other trainee experiences and relate them to my own. I definitely think it's a great way to reflect on my experiences.

I enjoyed writing in my journal and reflecting on my visits or contacts. It was a time for me to analyze what had happened and what I wanted to happen for my family. I liked feedback from my advisor which helped me to understand better things I had observed.

The journal was mildly valuable only for me. I think it was probably valuable for you, too, though, to see how it was going with different trainees and families.

**Blackboard discussion activities:**

Great idea expander. Would be great to blackboard with other LEND programs regarding similar topics with families.

I liked the blackboard activities because it was a good opportunity to be exposed to things I may not have thought about on my own and it was nice to hear the thoughts and opinions of others.

These were just ok. I don't know how useful they were for me, personally.

This is another activity that I did not find helpful.

Interesting although because I joined the group late, I only participated in 1 or 2. New perspectives can always be interesting.

These were a good idea as it allowed the class to interact and exchange ideas/experiences.

I did not really enjoy the blackboard discussions. I preferred the group discussions. I just did not get much from blackboard.

Although they are a great way to reflect on experiences, it's really time consuming to read everyone's responses. I think that more period discussions would be more effective and time worthy, although scheduling is probably an issue I think that I, personally, would get more out of it.

I liked reading other responses and posting my own opinions and experiences. I am not sure we needed as many assignments in this area.

Was nice to hear other peoples' experiences and thoughts some.

**Group FME discussions:**

Good for working through issues with families as well as ideas.

I enjoyed hearing about other people's mentoring experiences and getting different perspectives.

Again, these were ok. I felt a little embarrassed that I hadn't spent as much time with my family as other trainees had. It put a little pressure on me to try to spend more time with them.

The Journal, blackboard and discussions were too repetitive. I would recommend eliminating either the Blackboard assignments or the groups FME discussions.

Haven't been to one yet.

These were fine, I think other people may have appreciated the experience more than I.

I enjoyed these discussions and liked being able to hear about other's experiences.

I believe that more group discussions would be effective as I commented above. Even one or two more instead of Blackboard would be more effective.

Some of these discussions were redundant as we had already heard some of the information via the blackboard. I think it would had been better to have certain themes to discuss about working with families rather than random stories.

ditto.



**October session on chronic illness, death and grief:**

n/a

I thought that even though this is a hard topic, it was a very useful session that we will all probably benefit from professionally.

I thought this session was well-done-these were extremely emotional topics and they were handled well.

Did not attend.

This was a useful training session/experience.

I found this session to be helpful; however, it did not really highlight anything that I was not already aware of. But that is affected by my own life experiences, which not everyone else has had.

I think that it was a good way to reflect on a somewhat hard topic to talk about, but necessary to talk about when working with children with disabilities. Perhaps a parent panel of some sort would be helpful.

This was very interesting.

I didn't feel like I LEARNED much new, but it was sort of therapeutic to talk about this subject

***Any additional comments:***

Nope - thanks!

None.

Thanks for all your work organizing this!

2004/2005 Semester