

**WI MCH LEND – FAMILY MENTOR  
2005 – 2006  
OUTLINE**

**REQUIRED COMMITMENT:**

The goal of the Family Perspectives discussions in the first semester has been to lay the foundation for an understanding of what Family-Centered Care means. The over-arching goal is for the MCH LEND Trainee to gain an appreciation for, and understanding of the perspectives of families with children with disabilities.

The Family Mentor program offers the LEND trainee the very real opportunity to reach this goal. Each trainee will be matched with a family and spend:

**10 hours, beginning in the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester.**

**Weekly visits, approximately 2 hours in each visit, in a variety of setting and experiences with the family during the spring**

Family Perspectives discussions during the second semester will be an opportunity for trainees to meet and share their family mentor experiences and insights with other trainees.

**OPTIONAL ALTERNATIVE COMMITMENT:**

**20 hours**

**Using elective hours to extend weekly interactions beyond the 10 hour commitment.**

With MCH Mentor (later in the fall):

- Decide on level of commitment (10 or 20 hours) in the Family Mentor Program.
- Develop Goals with MCH Mentor, and complete Family Mentor Goals sheet. (To be handed out.)
- Complete Student Information Sheet for Family Mentor. (To be handed out.) (Both of these forms will help to match you with a family.)
- Learn@UW will post turn-in date for Student Information and Goals sheet.

*Detailed information about the Family Mentor Program continues on page 2.*

## **WI MCH LEND**

### **Description of the Family Mentor Program**

As part of the MCH ID LEND Training Program, students are involved in a variety of activities with programs, providers and parents. The Family Mentor Experience is one critical component of the training.

The purpose of the Family Mentor Program is for trainees to increase their appreciation and understanding of what it is like to have a family member with special needs. This experience provides trainees with the opportunity to learn directly from a family. It occurs through interactions and the building of a relationship with a particular child with special needs and his or her family in their home and community. The family serves as mentor to the student in this important process. This *mentoring* relationship is distinct from a purely social or professional relationship, although it contains elements of both.

Students will share in *weekly* experiences with their mentor family that will enhance their sensitivity to the strengths, concerns, joys, and challenges of raising a child with special needs. In addition, through a variety of shared experiences with the family in their community, trainees will learn about social, environmental, medical, health and service system issues, and the responsiveness of those systems, from the family's perspective. Students will share and process what they are learning with their colleagues and clinical faculty in the training program.

#### **STUDENT/FAMILY MATCH AND ORIENTATION**

Families who are participating in the family mentor project are asked to fill out information regarding their home and work schedules; best times to get together with their student; information about their children; and what they most hope for a student to learn from experiences with their family. Students are asked to fill out similar information about their schedules (days, evenings, and week-end hours that are open,) and what they most hope to learn from their family mentor experience. Together, this information is used to match families and students according to schedules, and the balancing of individual student and family needs. During the following weeks the family facilitator will accompany the student on a first home visit to meet his/her mentor family and talk about the goals of the family mentor experience. At this first home visit, the trainee will bring his/her calendar, and Barb will assist the family and trainee in setting up the next one or two visits. The MCH program has learned from past trainees and families alike, that this initial structuring of visits and interactions for trainees and families facilitates a much smoother transition during the "getting to know one another" stage. Trainees and families agree that this is very helpful!

#### **SETTING GOALS**

The family and student will talk together to identify the goals and activities they will share during their time together. These goals should be mutually beneficial. The student's learning needs, as well as the family's priorities, will be considered as goals are set. Students' interactions with a family of a child with special needs will allow them to learn directly about the families' experiences in daily life. As part of our goals in accomplishing this, the following are some examples of what we want students to see and learn:

- That families with children with special needs are families *first*
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- There are many obstacles with many ways to work around them
- Acceptance of different priorities and styles for each family
- What behaviors and attitudes by professionals are helpful or hurtful
- How families are treated by the public
- An understanding of different living environments
- An understanding of the child's diagnosis, and the family's understanding of, and reaction to it.
- What leisure time and friendships mean to families and their children
- What school and community relations are like for families
- Sibling relationships in families
- What medical care is like.

## **SCHEDULING and FORMAT**

### **10 hour commitment:**

Trainees commit to 5 consecutive weekly visits with their family. At the First Home Visit, trainees will bring their calendar and Barb will assist the family and trainee in setting up the next couple visits. Optimally, these interactions will include a visit in the home, school, and an appointment with a service provider, and a community event. There may be an unexpected illness or scheduling conflict on one or both sides that will result in missing a week, but weekly interactions are recommended.

### **20 hour commitment:**

Trainees may elect to use some of their elective hours to extend their Family Mentor experience beyond the 10 hours. If trainees know at the on-set that they hope to spend 20 hours in Family Mentor, they should let their MCH Mentor and Barb know so that he or she will be matched with a family who would like to be in the program for 20 hours. Trainees and families may also decide to extend their 10 hour commitment later on, by mutual decision.

The time can be spent in a variety of ways, and the family and student may develop a time line of activities. Although students and families are encouraged to be creative and decide their own activities, a list of suggested activities is provided to give you ideas for the on-going contacts that make this experience so valuable.

## **SAMPLE ACTIVITIES BETWEEN THE STUDENT AND FAMILY**

- Participate in routine home life
- Have a meal with the family
- Accompany the family to buy groceries, shop, or run errands
- Sit and chat about the questions provided, as well as other important issues
- Attend a birthday party, bowling game, swimming class, or other recreational activity
- Attend a parent support group
- Accompany family and be able to observe in a setting where services are being provided (school, child-care, therapy.)
- Attend an IFSP/IEP or other conference held with early intervention, early childhood, or within the school system

- Provide respite/childcare (parent(s) may choose to be at home to finish a personal project such as filling out paperwork or paying bills or just relaxing, or go out.)
- Attend a medical visit.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

As part of the MCH ID LEND Training Program, students must maintain confidentiality about the families with whom they are matched. Families are aware, however, that students may refer to or describe an experience with their mentor family. In seminar, students are encouraged to share their experiences with the training project group. The sharing of these experiences within the boundaries of our training project is beneficial to the students' learning. This sharing of experiences will not go beyond our training project. Students should keep in mind, however, that sometimes families share certain information that is meant to help the student better understand the situation, but that is not intended to be shared within a larger audience.

### **RESPITE**

We expect that the majority of contact time the student has with the family will be with the parents as the mentor teachers. Our hope is that the family and student will establish a relationship that will allow the student to spend time alone on occasion with the child(ren) while the parent(s) might do other things, or take time for themselves in the home. More specifically, we define respite activity as providing care while a parent is present or close by, in order to take into account the children's safety, the student's training and the student's skills that s/he brings into the Family Mentor Program.

Respite, where the parent(s) are not at home, can take place if, 1) The student wants to do respite, 2) the student has made at least 3 to 4 visits to the home first, and the family and student are comfortable with one another, 3) the respite hours are mutually agreeable, and 4) the student has a clear understanding of safety concerns and procedures, and an emergency information sheet has been filled out.

### **FAMILY FACILITATOR**

The family facilitator is the person to contact if the family or the student has any questions, concerns or feedback. Please call Barb Lucas at 263-9672 at the Waisman Center.

### **UNIVERSITY CALENDAR**

Instruction Begins.....	September 2, 2005
Thanksgiving Recess.....	November 24 - 27, 2005
Last Day of Classes.....	December 15, 2005
Winter Recess.....	December 23 - January 16, 2006
Instruction Begins.....	January 17, 2006
Spring Recess.....	March 11 - 19, 2006
Last Day of Classes.....	May 5, 2006