

Maximizing Technology to Engage LEND Trainees and the Community

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Introduction

PacWest LEND programs successfully navigate the challenges of vast geographic expanses to positively impact communities, professionals, and families, across the states each program serves. PacWest programs (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Washington) serve populations in urban, rural, and frontier areas.

Following are strategies five PacWest LEND programs have successfully used to engage trainees, offer continuing education, conduct research, and offer clinical experiences beyond the immediate community where the program is situated.

Engaging LEND Trainees

Distance education technologies are used in varying ways to meet the needs of trainees:

- **Synchronous:** Video conferencing connects multiple sites for shared didactic seminars (AK, AZ, HI, UT)
- **Asynchronous:** Web-based learning platforms (e.g. Blackboard or Wikispaces) are used to offer resources, seminar preparation, and discussion boards so more of didactic time can be spent in active learning (AK, AZ, HI, NV, UT)
- **Web-based video** (e.g. Skype) is used to connect trainees living in different communities to collaborate on research or other LEND activities, or for faculty mentoring (AK, AZ, HI, UT)
- **Social Media** (e.g. Facebook) is used to connect trainees working on LEND activities (AZ, HI)
- **ePortfolios:** Serves as trainee Individualized Leadership Training Plan and tracking of required activities. Integrated with Blackboard but can be exported when program is completed. (AK)

Clinical Services: Parent Directed Consultations (UT): Using video conferencing, trainees from partner sites provide answers to a family's questions about their child with disabilities. There is a facilitator, a note taker, and a panel of trainees (can be in different locations from each other).

Research: Leadership projects: Members from different communities work together on leadership projects, and as a team they decide the best way to coordinate and use technology to meet regularly and complete the project (AK, AZ, HI, NV, UT).

Continuing Education Training for Underserved Areas

Project Echo (NVLEND):

- Innovative health care delivery solution pioneered at the University of New Mexico and replicated in Washington, urban Chicago, and Nevada.
- Uses web-based video conferencing to develop the knowledgebase of health care providers in rural and remote areas.
- Teams of professionals in remote areas of NV were trained on the ADOS-2 using this approach.

Recordings of LEND seminars shared for broader use:

- Webinar trainings are easy to record and share with a broader audience following the event (HI)
- Seminars are recorded through the video conferencing equipment and select seminars or portions of seminars are posted for community participants and workforce development. Trainees offering training (e.g. PEDS and MCHAT) were recorded and posted on YouTube for participating clinics (AZ)

Community Training events offering CEUs via videoconference (AK)

- Each site has a designated on-site facilitator (LEND trainees serve this role if their community is participating) to assist with technology and the flow of the session, to communicate with main site tech facilitator, and to help with CEU paperwork and training evaluation.
- Facilitator guide and tech outage plan equips distance facilitators to be self-sufficient in case technology fails. It includes the learning objectives, timing of each part of the session, questions for discussion, PowerPoint slides, and specific times their site will be called on to report out.
- Site specific cases or activities tailor the main topic to individual sites needs
- Two trainings in 2014 had 85–95 participants each in 6 communities across Alaska

Strategies to Create Rich Distance Learning Environments

- Encourage presenters to include break out activities that can be done at each site to increase interactive learning and application of the didactic content.
- Encourage speakers to call on distance sites, and to start with distance sites whenever asking a general question of the participants.
- Make sure all sites are recognized and addressed in each part of the seminar.
- Have trainees from the main site pair up with distance site trainees by using cell phones or Skype during break-out sessions.
- As much as possible, make sure there is an electronic equivalent available to the distance sites of anything being shown or shared at the main site (e.g. handouts, props, books).
- Intentionally feature trainees or guest speakers from the distance sites whenever possible, so the content is not always driven from one location.
- Have a dedicated person to run the camera at the main site, to keep close-up views of who is speaking. This makes it easier for distance sites to follow what is happening and reduces screen fatigue. This person also keeps an eye on the distance trainees and gets them into the flow of conversation by being their representative in the room. Distance trainees can text questions or issues they are having with volume, etc. to this person.
- Include video conference etiquette training during the orientation to help create a shared culture of inclusion of the distance trainees. Address the need for longer wait times to allow distance trainees to respond, share that main site trainees will at times be asked to defer to the distance sites to offset the distance disadvantage, and build an expectation for flexibility for all.