NJLEND: A Proposed Interdisciplinary Leadership Education Opportunity for Graduate Students at Rutgers and RBHS

What is NJLEND?

NJLEND is The Boggs Center’s proposed Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities program. Pending funding, NJLEND will provide graduate-level interdisciplinary training aimed at preparing the next generation of health and allied health leaders to address the needs of children and young adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), related developmental disabilities, and other maternal and child health populations as part of a national network of LEND programs. In addition to interdisciplinary, leadership education, LEND programs focus on developing future health care professionals who are culturally competent and provide family-centered care to diverse patients. All NJLEND trainees will be paired with a Faculty Mentor from their discipline who will work with the trainee to integrate NJLEND requirements with the requirements of the student’s academic program, as well as to guide and reflect on their individual leadership development throughout the LEND year.

What are the requirements of participation?

The long-term NJLEND training program is delivered across a 9-month academic calendar, and trainees are required to commit at least 300 hours to participation. The program can be utilized by students to fulfill a practicum or fieldwork requirement of their academic program. Curricular components included in the 300 hours of the NJLEND training program include:

**Didactic Seminar Series**

The NJLEND didactic seminar series is delivered in weekly, 4-hour sessions held on Fridays from 10 AM- 2 PM in New Brunswick. The series is comprised of presentations in 3 broad topic areas delivered across the year, including: Caring for Children with ASD and other Complex Neurodevelopmental Disabilities Across the Lifespan; Policy & Advocacy; and Research: From Bench to Bedside to Community.

**Experiential Learning Opportunities**

A rich range of experiential learning opportunities, both required and elective, will be offered in locations across the state, including family homes, at sites within Rutgers, Children’s Specialized Hospital (CSH), and the larger community. These include: shadowing a home visitor, attending a service provision meeting with a family, and observing the Autism Team Evaluation at CSH.
Leadership Development

Leadership development, based on Maternal and Child Health Leadership Competencies, is integrated into the curriculum and supported by Faculty Mentors who are paired with trainees from the same discipline. Trainees will be required to complete a leadership project, culminating in a poster presentation or publication.

Clinical Training

Clinical training, through practicum or field placements, will equip trainees with the skills and knowledge to provide quality care to children and youth with autism and developmental disabilities and their families. Students will be matched with their practicum or field site through their academic department, field office, or practicum coordinator, but should request a placement that offers interaction with children and young adults with disabilities and their families, if possible.

What are the benefits of participation?

NJLEND provides students with the opportunity to learn from experts in the field, and offers support and mentoring by faculty in their respective disciplines. Students receive a stipend, and may receive course credit based on the requirements of their academic program, for participation in NJLEND. Given the LEND program’s national reach, participation in the program is a credential that has currency beyond New Jersey, and in the pursuit of job opportunities.

Where can I learn more?

For more information on the NJLEND program, including how to apply, visit the LEND page on The Boggs Center’s website or contact Carrie Coffield, The Boggs Center’s Interdisciplinary Training Coordinator.