



Self-Advocate Application

Fall 2025 – Spring 2026

The Illinois LEND Program is funded Grant Number: T73MC11047 by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).



1640 W. Roosevelt Road, Chicago, IL 60608
Tel: 312-413-2652 | TTY: 312-413-0453

TO: Interested Individuals / Self-Advocates with Diagnosed Autism Spectrum Disorder or other Neurodevelopmental Disabilities

FROM: Kruti Acharya, IL LEND Program Director

SUBJECT: IL LEND Fellowship Program

Applications are now being accepted for the **2025-2026** IL LEND Fellowship Program at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Enclosed please find program information and an application form. Adults with developmental disabilities, parents and/or siblings of individuals with developmental disabilities, and individuals from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to apply. To learn more about IL LEND visit www.illinoislend.org

Application Checklist

- ☐ Completed 2025-2026 Self-Advocate Application Form, including cover page
- ☐ Résumé/CV (informal is acceptable)
- ☐ Two letters of recommendation. Letters must be signed.
- ☐ High School or College Transcript
- ☐ Interview with one or more members of the review committee (*Selected applicants only*)

Please return application materials **by March 1, 2025** to:

Dr. Kruti Acharya, IL LEND Director, acharyak@uic.edu
University of Illinois at Chicago
1640 West Roosevelt Road, Rm 705
Chicago, Illinois 60608

For further information about LEND, please visit our webpage at www.illinoisLEND.org or contact Eleanor Powell, Program Coordinator, at illinoisLEND@uic.edu.

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A collaboration between:
University of Illinois Chicago
The University of Chicago
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
Southern Illinois University- Carbondale
Rush University Medical Center
Advocate Medical Center

Self-Advocate Application Cover Page

What is LEND?

The Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) Interdisciplinary Training Program is a one-year training program. It includes both didactic (classroom) teaching and learning by experience. This is a leadership program that prepares future leaders to support and work with children with disabilities (with a focus on autism) and their families.

This is done through focusing on care that is appropriate for families and respecting people's cultures. LEND also focuses on public health services and policy change. It encourages people from different backgrounds to learn to work together. LEND is based at the University of Illinois Chicago but works with other universities including the University of Chicago, Southern Illinois University, and Rush University.

For more information on Self-Advocates in LEND, please view our self-advocacy video: <https://www.illinoislend.org/self-advocacy/>

Training Activities

The LEND training develops skills in the following 7 areas:

- (1) leadership
- (2) public health
- (3) interdisciplinary clinical training and practice
- (4) cultural competence
- (5) family centered care
- (6) emerging issues and
- (7) research.

Learning experiences include classroom teaching, interdisciplinary group activities (people from many backgrounds working together; for example a group which has a family member, a teacher, and a social worker), systems and policy trainings, clinical screenings, care coordination, a research or leadership project, and faculty mentoring. Sessions take place over two semesters starting **August 2025** and ending **May 2026**.

Program Requirements

Trainees in the LEND program are required to complete a minimum of 300 hours of classroom, advanced clinical, community, and interdisciplinary leadership training. The following activities are important parts of the LEND training program:

- A mandatory (required) LEND Orientation held on **Friday, August 15, 2025** (8am to 4pm)
- Seminars/classes every week (Thursdays from 4 to 7pm)
- Clinical sessions two times each month (Fridays from 1 to 4pm)
- Monthly meetings with your training coordinator
- Development of an Individual Leadership Plan (ILP) to plan your LEND time and pick personal goals
- Participation in clinical and community training including multiple visits outside of class time
- Development of a policy project and final LEND project
- A mandatory poster presentation of final LEND project at the Open House on **Thursday May 8, 2026** (10am-2pm).

I have read and understand the requirements as listed on this application

Applicant Signature

Date



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IL LEND Fellow Application 2025-2026 ***Self-Advocate***

Instructions: This is a fillable application form. Enter your information directly into each field.

Contact Information

Name: _____

Local Address: _____

Permanent Address (if different from Local): _____

Home Phone: _____

Day Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

What is the best way to contact you?

☐ Home Phone

☐ Day Phone

☐ Cell Phone

☐ Email

Demographic Information

Sex Assigned at Birth: ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Decline to Answer

Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Transgender Male

☐ Transgender Female ☐ Gender Diverse ☐ Decline to Answer

☐ Additional Gender Category: _____

What pronouns do you use? _____

Ethnicity: ☐ Hispanic/Latino ☐ Not Hispanic/Latino

Race: ☐ Black or African American ☐ American Indian/Alaska Native ☐ Asian

☐ White ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander ☐ More than one

Are you legally eligible for employment in the U.S.? _____

Languages Spoken: _____

Current Education *(if applicable)*

Current Degree Program:

College/University: _____ GPA: _____

Program(s) of Study: _____

Advisor: _____ Anticipated Date of Graduation: _____

Anticipated Degree: ☐ M.A. ☐ M.S. ☐ M.Ed. ☐ M.S.W. ☐ Ph.D. ☐ Other: _____

Prior Education *(if applicable)*

Name of School: _____ GPA: _____

Program/s of Study: _____ Date of Graduation: _____

Degree Earned: ☐ B.A. ☐ B.S. ☐ B.Ed. ☐ B.S.W. ☐ Other: _____

Name of School: _____ GPA: _____

Program/s of Study: _____ Date of Graduation: _____

Degree Earned: ☐ M.A. ☐ M.S. ☐ M.Ed. ☐ M.S.W. ☐ Other: _____

Employment *(if applicable)*

Current Employer: _____

Job Title: _____

Start Date: _____ Hours/Week: _____

Position Responsibilities:

Self-Advocate Status

Which disability category do you identify with? (Please check all that apply)

☐ Physical disability

☐ Autism

☐ Intellectual disability

☐ Sensory disability

☐ Other cognitive disability

☐ Mental illness

☐ Other _____

If you would like to provide more information about your disability, please do so here:

Do you require any special accommodations? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe:

Self-Advocate Application Questions

Directions: On a separate page, please type your answers to the questions (you also may video or audio record your answers and send them in electronically). Each question can be answered in one or two paragraphs, but you may give longer answers if you wish.

1. Please tell us about your background and experience as a self-advocate.
2. Why are you applying for the IL LEND Program? How do you feel this program will benefit you? What are your expectations for IL LEND?
3. What are your goals for participation in the IL LEND program? What are your career goals related to self-advocacy? In your future, how do you hope to use the things you learn as an IL LEND trainee?
4. In your adult life, what is one of the biggest challenges you experienced related to your diagnosis? How have you handled it?

5. The IL LEND program is designed to support the development of leadership skills. IL LEND will help trainees to successfully participate in positive social change for people with disabilities.
- a. Within the self-advocacy movement, what do you believe are the characteristics of a successful leader?
 - b. What opportunities have you had to be a leader? What has helped you lead? What has been difficult for you as a leader?
 - c. What is your vision for the self-advocacy movement?
6. How did you hear about the IL LEND program?
7. If accepted into the program, which of our training sites would be most convenient for you to attend if necessary?
- ☐ University of Illinois at Chicago
 - ☐ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
 - ☐ Southern Illinois University- Carbondale

Thank you for your application!
Deadline: March 1, 2025