

Virginia Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities

(Va-LEND) Frequently Asked Questions

Question (Q.) Who should apply?

Answer (A.) Trainees in Va-LEND include self-advocates, family members and/or professionals from 16 academic backgrounds in school or/and in the field. Some trainees hold dual roles as a professional and person with disabilities or/and family member. If you have at least a high school diploma, are 18 years or older and meet any of these categories then there is a track for you.

Q. What is the cost of Va-LEND?

A. All Va-LEND trainees receive either a stipend or tuition support to help them participate in the program. While we can never guarantee the exact amount until July (when we receive our funding notice), it is always our goal that trainees do not have any out of pocket expenses or direct tuition costs related to their Va-LEND experience. Get in touch with us at valend@vcu.edu if you would like to discuss in more detail.

Q. How much time will I need to complete Va-LEND?

A. Anywhere from 150 to 300 hours over the course of 1 or 2 academic years, depending on your course plan. We meet via Zoom every Wednesday 4:30 until 7:00, and other Va-LEND activities can be completed according to your schedule. We try to be flexible! Contact Virginia LEND at valend@vcu.edu for more information. Below is a summary of the 3 Tracks:

Long-Term Academic	Long-Term Non-Academic	Advanced Medium-Term
•Enroll in 12 credit hours of graduate classes and get a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Disability Leadership. •Trainees must attend classes on Wednesdays from 4:30 – 7:00 pm. With additional work during the week. •Length of Time: 300 hours, completed in 1 or 2 academic years. •Requirements for Admission: Have an undergraduate degree and Work in the field of Neurodevelopmental Disabilities, Family, or Self Advocate. OR are currently enrolled in a Masters' or Doctoral program at VCU.	•Do not enroll in classes. •Trainees have an individualized program. •Trainees work with their advisors to develop a training and clinical experience plan that yields the required number of hours. •Length of Time: 300 hours, completed in 1 or 2 academic years. •Requirements for Admission: Work in a Va-LEND Discipline, Family or Self Advocate.	•Trainees have an individualized program. •They do not enroll in classes. •Trainees work with their advisors to develop a training and clinical experience plan that yields the required number of hours. •Length of Time: 150 hours completed in 9 months. •Requirements for Admission: Work in a Va-LEND Discipline, Family or Self Advocate.

Q. How intense is Va-LEND?

A. Va-LEND is as intense as you want it to be. Trainees in the Long-Term Academic track will complete class assignments and a leadership project as part of their hours. Long-term Non-Academic trainees complete a leadership project as part of their hours. Each trainee is paired with an advisor to help guide them through the program, develop a learning plan, set personal goals and complete hours. We can help you make Va-LEND manageable!

Q. What if I am in the Advanced Medium Term track and want to complete a leadership project?

A. Let your advisor know and they will work with you to include this in your learning plan.

Q. I'm a self-advocate or a family member of a person with a disability. Do I have to do the Family Mentorship Experience?

A. Yes. Every family is different, so we can always learn! All trainees are paired with a family that they will learn from and build a relationship with. The Family Mentorship Experience is the heart of Va-LEND. Through this experience, trainees learn about many things including different disabilities, life experiences, and the ways that families make decisions.

Q. Is the program online or in person?

A. Most of Va-LEND can be completed virtually. This is how we reach trainees from all parts of Virginia. While class sessions are delivered virtually, there are opportunities for in person events and experiences such as the Family Mentorship Experience, attendance at conferences, and clinical observations.

Q. Why should I join Va-LEND?

A. There are many reasons to join Va-LEND. Here are just a few...

1. To build your leadership working with children with neurodevelopmental and related disabilities, and special health care needs, their families and professionals that work with them
2. To increase knowledge, skills and abilities related to specific disabilities, family and person centered practices, cultural factors, policy, and interdisciplinary teamwork
3. To become a part of a large network of LEND trainees and alum that share information, resources, training opportunities and support each other