LEND Trainee Bio

As we grow our LEND program, we hope to build a network dedicated to understanding disability services. We believe that including your bios will help cultivate an interest in your work, leadership, and how you contribute to LEND. Prospective trainees, other LEND trainees, community organizations, clinics, etc., can develop their understanding of how other trainees have contributed to LEND and view our contributions in the field of disabilities. Feel free to provide as much or as little information as you are comfortable posting publicly. Remember, it is ok to keep this information very general. The website is illinoislend.org if you would like to view what former trainees have posted.

When complete, please upload to your summer assignments folder.

Name: Kate coogan

Discipline: occupational therapy

Past/current experiences working in the field of disabilities:

I am a doctoral student in Occupational Therapy at the University of Illinois Chicago and previously served as a paraprofessional in a Life Skills program, supporting high school students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. My work included facilitating inclusive classroom activities, community-based learning, and collaborating with educators and related service providers to promote student success. Previously, as Manager of Education Programs at the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust and Manager of Public Programs at The Walt Disney Family Museum, I designed and implemented accessible programs, including Family Access Days and resources for visitors with sensory, visual, and auditory needs. Across my career in public and museum education, I have centered accessibility, equity, and inclusion.

Goals for your LEND training experience:

Through my LEND fellowship, I aim to deepen my knowledge of interdisciplinary approaches to supporting individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. I hope to strengthen my skills in systems-level advocacy, policy development, and leadership in order to create sustainable, community-driven change. I am particularly interested in learning from peers and mentors across disciplines, gaining a more comprehensive understanding of how medical, educational, and social services intersect to impact quality of life.

What you wish to contribute, in the future, as an advocate/professional/family member in the field:

As an occupational therapist, I aspire to be a leader in designing and implementing inclusive, person-centered programs that empower individuals with disabilities to fully participate in their communities. I plan to integrate my background in education, program development, and accessibility into my clinical practice, advocating for systemic changes that remove barriers and promote equity. I hope to serve as both a practitioner and policy advocate, contributing to interdisciplinary teams that champion disability rights and foster environments where all individuals can thrive.

We would also like to post a headshot of each trainee along with the bios. Please upload in jpeg or png file to your summer assignments folder.