LEND Trainee Bio

Name: Ellie Kraichely

Discipline: Speech-Language pathology

Past/current experiences working in the field of disabilities:

I've been fortunate to hold a variety of leadership roles in the disability community, including coaching Special Olympics teams and serving as board members for both Special Olympics and Best Buddies at UW-Madison. I have sought out every opportunity to connect with and support individuals with disabilities, and each experience has shaped my commitment to this work. These roles have guided me in learning the power of community and inclusion. Whether on the basketball court or at a chapter event, I witnessed how shared experiences could erase barriers and highlight the strengths of every individual.

My professional experiences deepened that understanding. While working as a line staff in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), I supported children with autism and other developmental disabilities, including two young girls with Angelman Syndrome. This role challenged me to think creatively, adapt constantly, and see behavior not as "problems" to manage but as communication waiting to be understood. I also provided respite care, building close relationships with families and gaining a deep appreciation for the trust they place in professionals who support their children. These experiences taught me that success comes from meeting each individual where they are and honoring their unique needs, interests, and voices.

Goals for your LEND training experience:

As an IL LEND trainee, I hope to expand my knowledge of policy and advocacy while strengthening my ability to work across disciplines. In my time with ABA, I often noticed that many goals were communication-based, yet staff had no guidance from a speech-language pathologist. That gap in collaboration left me wondering how much stronger outcomes could be if professionals were equipped to work together. My goal is to bridge those gaps by learning how to integrate communication expertise into broader care and to promote family-centered, interdisciplinary support. I am excited to learn from my peers in other disciplines.

I am also eager to develop the leadership skills needed to advocate not only for individual clients but also for systemic changes in schools, clinics, and communities. By engaging with families, professionals, and policy, I want to grow into a clinician who not only treats but also helps reshape the systems around individuals with disabilities.

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

I envision myself as both a professional and lifelong advocate. I want to push for more inclusive classrooms where children of all abilities can learn, grow, and thrive side by side. I want to support families as they navigate a system that can feel overwhelming and fragmented. Most importantly, I want my advocacy to extend beyond my clinical role, because people with disabilities don't disappear when the workday ends. They are friends, neighbors, teammates, and leaders, and they deserve to be fully included in every space.

My ultimate hope is to use the knowledge, skills, and relationships I gain through LEND to create meaningful change. Whether through direct clinical work, policy advocacy, or community leadership, I want to help break down communication barriers and build a more inclusive world where every individual's voice is heard and valued.