

LEND TRAINEE BIO

NAME: ANTONIA M. BERENBAUM (TONI)

DISCIPLINE: SOCIAL WORK

Past/current experiences working in the field of disabilities:

In 2013, I started working with exceptional children and adults as part of the Illinois F.C. TOPSoccer (Link: <https://illinoisyouthsoccer.org/topsoccer>) Program and Champaign – Urbana Special Recreation (Link: <https://cuspecialrecreation.com/>) as a volunteer. In 2020, I worked as a behavior technician for two Applied Behavior Analysis (A.B.A.) companies whose primary population were children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, emotional behavior disorder, intermittent explosive disorder, mood dysregulation disorder, A.D.H.D., specific learning disability, intellectual learning disability, and other neurodevelopmental disorders.

I am currently interning at the University of Illinois Autism Clinic (Link: <https://psc.illinois.edu/autism-spectrum-assessment-services/>) under the supervision of Dr. Amy Paige Cohen (Link: <https://psychology.illinois.edu/directory/profile/amycohen>). I am also currently interning at The Neuropsychology Center for Attention, Behavior, & Learning (The ABLE Center – link: <https://www.theablecenter.com/>) under the guidance of Dr. Jennifer Imig Huffman (Link 1: <https://www.theablecenter.com/about/meet-our-team/profile/jennifer-i-huffman-phd-abpdn> and Link 2: <https://psc.illinois.edu/neuropsychological-assessment-services/>).

Goals for your LEND training experience:

I really want to learn how to not only build rapport, but have the skill set to foster mutually respectful and trusting relationships with my clients and their families. I want to learn how to not only advocate for my clients and their families, but also to empower them. I want to learn how to not only want to support their journey of finding self-determination, but also support them as they develop agency. I want to learn how to not only promote social change within the context of existing current legislature, but how to write new and better policy proposals that may lead to new legislature.

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

As a future social worker, I wish to be a leading role model who can inspire my fellow neurodivergent community. I want to lead by example by influencing those individuals who do not have the same strengths & challenges as people who have been diagnosed with 'x' disability (disabilities). I want to demonstrate to those individuals who have been repeatedly judged, spoken down too, discouraged, and discriminated against for a disability diagnosis (diagnoses) that you can change the narrative. I want to be living proof that my disability diagnoses are not the just these supposed weaknesses that will limit me, but rather the strengths that allows me to be the success who will continue to supersede all preconceived expectations that have been repeatedly placed on me.