Name: Sarah Gillespie

Discipline: Family

Past/current experiences working in the field of disabilities:

My younger sister, who has Down syndrome, has profoundly influenced both my personal development and professional aspirations. Her impact motivated me to dedicate over a decade to volunteer and professional work supporting individuals with disabilities across academic, vocational, and recreational settings. Professionally, I have worked as a Registered Behavior Technician, delivering in-home, culturally responsive behavioral therapy to clients, many of whom were from marginalized and underserved communities. This role emphasized the importance of collaborative care, requiring ongoing coordination with caregivers and family members to ensure consistent, lasting progress. By integrating direct interventions with family engagement, I facilitated meaningful, functional outcomes that extended beyond the scope of clinical work and positively impacted clients in their daily lives.

Goals for your LEND training experience:

My primary goal for the LEND training experience is to expand my understanding of how professionals from diverse disciplines can collaborate to provide comprehensive, person-centered care for individuals with disabilities. I am eager to learn how interdisciplinary teams function effectively and how their combined expertise can be leveraged to deliver the highest quality of care. I aim to strengthen my skills in both interdisciplinary collaboration and leadership, so I can be more effective in future clinical and advocacy roles. By engaging with professionals from different fields, I hope to deepen my knowledge of available support and services, particularly those that extend beyond my current scope of practice, to better advocate for and support my future clients. Additionally, I am committed to integrating clinical research into my practice, ensuring that my approach remains evidence-based and informed by the latest developments in the field. Through LEND, I hope to broaden both my knowledge base and my professional reach, allowing me to serve individuals with disabilities and their families through a holistic, culturally responsive, and collaborative lens.

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

As a future clinician, I aspire to deliver accessible, culturally responsive psychotherapeutic services and assessments. My goal is to provide psychotherapy and comprehensive evaluations that inform meaningful, individualized recommendations tailored to each person's unique needs. I aim to develop expertise in evidence-based assessments and interventions, with a strong emphasis on cultural humility and equity in practice. I strive to serve as both a clinician and advocate, bridging gaps in services by building a skill set that empowers me to champion equitable access to healthcare, education, and services for individuals across the lifespan.

I am committed to creating a more inclusive and effective system by fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and advocating for policy reform. I work toward ensuring that all individuals with

disabilities, regardless of background or circumstance, have the opportunities and care they need to thrive. To achieve this, I am pursuing a path that integrates evidence-based assessments and interventions, culturally responsive care, and equitable access throughout the lifespan.

As a family member, I will continue to advocate for my sister and others in the disability community, applying the knowledge and skills gained through the LEND program to promote inclusion, understanding, and empowerment. Ultimately, I aim to build a career at the intersection of direct service, advocacy, and systems-level change, ensuring that every individual, regardless of background or diagnosis, has the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.