

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: JULIA KEITH

DISCIPLINE: MEDICAL STUDENT

Past/current experiences working in the field of disabilities:

My involvement in the field of disabilities has been both lifelong and multifaceted. Growing up with a twin brother who has Down syndrome profoundly shaped my understanding of the unique challenges and strengths of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). This personal connection inspired my early participation in Special Olympics as a Unified Partner, where I learned the importance of supporting and celebrating each individual's abilities in an inclusive environment. Over the past 11 years, I have continued to volunteer with Special Olympics in various capacities, including as a partner, coach, and, most recently, as a member of the SOILL (Special Olympics Illinois) Young Professionals Board.

Professionally, I have worked in clinical settings like Boston Children's Hospital and Boston Medical Center, where I contributed to early autism detection research and helped families navigate developmental care systems. These roles strengthened my clinical, research, and interpersonal skills while deepening my commitment to advocacy, accessibility, and family-centered care. These experiences reflect my long-standing dedication to working in the field of disabilities and have solidified my goal to continue this work as a future physician.

Goals for your LEND training experience:

Through the IL LEND program, I aim to bridge my personal and clinical experiences with more structured, interdisciplinary training. My primary goal is to develop the skills necessary to become a strong advocate and leader within the medical community for individuals with IDD. I

am particularly excited to learn how to design, implement, and sustain programs that address systemic barriers and improve access to inclusive, patient-centered care.

Additionally, I hope to expand my understanding of healthcare policy, systems-level advocacy, and culturally responsive practices. The mentorship, leadership development, and interdisciplinary collaboration offered by the program will help me grow into a clinician who not only provides high-quality care but also drives social change to ensure equity and inclusion for individuals with disabilities.

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

As both a sibling and future physician, I bring a unique perspective and deep personal commitment to the field. My goal is to be a physician who doesn't just treat individuals with IDD but champions their rights, inclusion, and access to comprehensive care. I plan to contribute to the development of innovative, multidisciplinary care models that prioritize family voices and promote equity across healthcare settings.

In addition to clinical care, I want to be involved in advocacy and policy work aimed at reducing healthcare disparities and improving systems of support for individuals with IDD and their families. I also hope to mentor future professionals in the field, using my experiences to foster a more inclusive and informed generation of healthcare providers. My lifelong dedication to this community drives my vision for a future where every person with a disability receives the respect, opportunities, and support they deserve.

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.