

NAME: ALEXANDRIA (ALEX) BARKHIMER

DISCIPLINE: SPECIAL EDUCATION

Past/current experiences working in the field of disabilities:

Throughout my undergraduate and graduate training, I have worked in the field of disabilities, with a specific focus on individuals with intellectual disability. My experiences are mainly via volunteer work and through behavioral research. As a PhD student, I currently work on a research project that promotes the accessibility of voice recognition technology for individuals with diverse speech patterns and disabilities (e.g., Parkinson's disease, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome). My personal work focuses on including the perspectives of transition-aged students with Down syndrome in research. Although my interests are closely related to special education, I am actually a 2nd year PhD student in the Department of Speech and Hearing Science and received my master's degree in the same field. I find so much value in integrating different aspects of both fields into the work I do!

Goals for your LEND training experience:

Through my LEND training experience, I hope to work with an interdisciplinary team of professionals from other disciplines and self-advocates to inform research practices and promote policy change to better support individuals with disabilities. I hope to improve my advocacy skills so that I can better support those with disabilities. I look forward to learning from self-advocates and hope to understand their perspectives better

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

I hope to continue to promote the importance of interdisciplinary work and bring unique perspectives while also learning from other professionals in fields I am less familiar with. From a research perspective, I strive to be a leader in the field and find the best methods to support transition-aged youth and young adults with Down syndrome as they move from school-based services to their inclusion in the community as adults. I hope to conduct community-based participatory research in which individuals with Down syndrome are at the forefront of research and are true collaborators on projects. In turn, these partnerships will help ensure that work from advocates and professionals supports postsecondary outcomes and hopefully reforms policy related to these important areas.