



ArizonaLEND

PROGRAM IMPACT REPORT

2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ArizonaLEND is part of a national network of Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) programs funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) within the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). These programs aim to improve the health and well-being of infants, children, and adolescents with neurodevelopmental and related disabilities (NDD) through interdisciplinary leadership training.

This program impact report reflects ArizonaLEND's activities, outputs, and contributions from 2011 through 2026, highlighting the program's growth and its role in developing interdisciplinary leaders and advancing systems of care for individuals with neurodevelopmental and related disabilities.

Since its establishment in 2011, ArizonaLEND has played an important role in strengthening the workforce serving individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities across Arizona. To date, the program has trained over 840 trainees across a wide range of disciplines and has supported more than 3,000 activities across 24 projects, including 28,815 continuing education and community training experiences. Through interdisciplinary training, clinical experiences, community engagement, and research dissemination, ArizonaLEND prepares leaders equipped to improve systems of care for individuals with disabilities and their families.

ArizonaLEND trainees and faculty have contributed to a wide range of scholarly, educational, and community-focused outputs. Since 2011, the program has produced over 600 educational and scholarly products, including peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations, training modules, and educational resources for families and professionals.

This report highlights the program's impact across several domains:

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
INTERDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION
KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
SYSTEMS-LEVEL LEADERSHIP

The report also includes reflections from ArizonaLEND trainees and alumni that illustrate how the program shapes professional development and strengthens the disability workforce across Arizona.



Program Background

Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND)

LEND programs were established to address the complex needs of children and youth with neurodevelopmental and related disabilities by preparing interdisciplinary leaders who can improve systems of care.

ArizonaLEND operates as part of this national network and focuses on preparing leaders committed to improving services and supports for individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities and their families throughout Arizona.

ArizonaLEND is funded through the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) within HRSA and contributes to the broader national network of programs focused on improving outcomes for children and youth with special health care needs.

ArizonaLEND prepares graduate students, practicing professionals, family members, and self-advocates to assume leadership roles in improving systems of care for individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities. Participants represent a wide range of disciplines and perspectives, creating a collaborative learning environment that reflects the interdisciplinary nature of disability services.

Key principles emphasized across LEND programs include:

INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION
FAMILY-CENTERED CARE
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
CULTURAL + LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE
SYSTEMS-LEVEL THINKING
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Graduates of ArizonaLEND pursue leadership roles across:

HEALTHCARE AND CLINICAL SERVICES
RESEARCH AND ACADEMIA
PUBLIC HEALTH
POLICY AND ADVOCACY
COMMUNITY-BASED DISABILITY SERVICES

ArizonaLEND Mission and Training Model

ArizonaLEND's mission is to prepare interdisciplinary leaders who can improve systems of care for infants, children, and adolescents with neurodevelopmental and related disabilities through leadership training, interdisciplinary collaboration, and community engagement.



The program's training model includes several core components:

Interdisciplinary didactic seminars

Clinical training experiences

Collaboration with family partners

Leadership development activities

Community outreach initiatives

Research and scholarship opportunities



THE CURRICULUM INCLUDES:

- *Didactic Learning*
- *Clinical Experiences*
- *Leadership Development*
- *Community Engagement*
- *Policy Engagement*
- *Research*

Through this model, trainees gain experience **addressing both clinical care needs and broader systems challenges** affecting children with disabilities and their families.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND ENGAGEMENT

ArizonaLEND has supported a wide range of **interdisciplinary training, clinical experiences, community engagement initiatives, and collaborative partnerships** designed to improve systems of care for individuals with neurodevelopmental and related disabilities. These activities provide trainees with exposure to interdisciplinary care models while also strengthening workforce capacity and community partnerships across Arizona.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH + EDUCATION

ArizonaLEND also supports community engagement activities aimed at improving awareness and access to services.

Examples include:

- **Autism awareness events**
- **Parent-professional partnership workshops**
- **Developmental screening initiatives**
- **Training programs for healthcare providers**
- **Outreach to rural and underserved communities**
- **Collaboration with community disability organizations**
- **Family mentorship projects**

INTERDISCIPLINARY SEMINARS

Trainees participate in seminars addressing topics such as:

- **Life course theory**
- **Genetics of neurodevelopmental disabilities**
- **Family-centered care**
- **Disability policy and advocacy**
- **Transition to adult care**
- **Rural health services**
- **Cultural humility**
- **Interdisciplinary collaboration**

CLINICAL TRAINING EXPERIENCES

ArizonaLEND trainees participate in interdisciplinary clinical experiences that expose them to real-world disability care. Examples include:

- **Interdisciplinary clinics**
- **Developmental pediatrics clinics**
- **Autism diagnostic clinics**
- **Neuromuscular clinics**
- **NICU follow-up clinics**
- **Genetics clinics**
- **Audiology services**
- **Feeding and behavioral health clinics**

PARTNERSHIPS + COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

ArizonaLEND works closely with a variety of organizations and systems to support interdisciplinary training and expand services for individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities.

These partnerships allow ArizonaLEND to integrate training with real-world service systems and support collaborative approaches to addressing complex healthcare and social needs.



COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS HAVE INCLUDED:

Children's Clinics and pediatric healthcare systems

Banner University Medical Center

The Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind

Autism Society of Southern Arizona

Navajo Nation programs and tribal health partners

Northern Arizona University interdisciplinary training clinics

Community organizations supporting individuals with developmental disabilities



COMMUNITY OUTREACH + EDUCATION

ArizonaLEND also supports community engagement activities aimed at improving awareness and access to services.

Family members and self-advocates participate in ArizonaLEND as trainees and collaborators, ensuring that lived experience informs discussions about disability care, service systems, and policy development.

This emphasis on family partnership reinforces the program's commitment to family-centered and culturally responsive care.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND TRAINING EXPERIENCES

ArizonaLEND's training model is built on a two-semester interdisciplinary leadership training program requiring a minimum of 300 documented training hours for long-term fellows. This structure prepares trainees for systems-level leadership roles in maternal and child health and disability services.

At the start of the program year, trainees participate in a three-day Leadership Intensive Workshop, which introduces core concepts in leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration, and maternal and child health systems.

Each trainee works with a faculty mentor or coach who provides guidance on professional development, leadership goals, and project activities throughout the program year.

Trainees also develop an Individual Development Plan (IDP) outlining leadership goals and professional development objectives.



KEY TRAINING COMPONENTS



Interdisciplinary seminars

Clinical training experiences

Leadership development workshops

Research and evidence-based practice training

Collaboration with family partners and self-advocates

Leadership projects focused on systems improvement

ARIZONA LEND IMPACT SINCE 2011

ArizonaLEND's integrated approach to clinical training, leadership education, community outreach, workforce development, and collaborative partnerships reflects a multi-level system of care, advancing impact through over 840 trainees, 3,000+ activities across 24 projects, and 28,815 continuing education and community training experiences statewide.

3,000+

Projects and activities advancing care for individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities through interdisciplinary workforce training

> 600

**Scholarly +
Educational
Products**

> 200

**Conference
Presentations**

90 +

**Peer-Reviewed
Publications**

The following pages highlight the scale and reach of ArizonaLEND's impact through key program metrics.



IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

ARIZONA LEND TRAINEES (2011-2026)

840

Total ArizonaLEND
Trainees (2011-2026)

249

LONG-TERM TRAINEES

182

MEDIUM-TERM TRAINEES

409

SHORT-TERM TRAINEES

Since its founding in 2011, ArizonaLEND has trained **840 trainees** across a wide range of disciplines. Through interdisciplinary training, mentorship, and clinical experiences, these trainees have developed the leadership skills needed to improve systems of care for individuals with neurodevelopmental and related disabilities.

ArizonaLEND trainees represent diverse professional backgrounds, including healthcare, behavioral health, education, public health, and family leadership. This interdisciplinary approach strengthens collaboration across fields and prepares trainees to address the complex needs of individuals with disabilities and their families.



IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

ARIZONALEND PROJECTS + ACTIVITIES (2011-2026)

Since 2011, ArizonaLEND has supported a **total of 3,172 activities across 24 projects**, with an average of **130 activities per project**. This reflects a sustained commitment to training, community engagement, and systems improvement. Approximately half of all activities (1,580) were conducted in association with formal projects, demonstrating strong integration of training, research, and service initiatives.

ArizonaLEND's activities span a wide range of domains, with the greatest contributions in technical assistance and training, **totaling over 660,000 instances of support provided to communities, organizations, and professionals.**

3,172+

ACTIVITIES ACROSS 24 PROJECTS

29,000+

CONTINUING EDUCATION +
COMMUNITY TRAINING EXPERIENCES

18,640+

INTERDISCIPLINARY TRAINEE
TRAINING EXPERIENCES

5,312+

EDUCATIONAL + INFORMATIONAL
PRODUCTS

1,049+

RESEARCH + EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

1,742+

DIRECT CLINICAL + MODEL
SERVICE ACTIVITIES



IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

ARIZONA LEND PRODUCTS/OUTPUTS (2011-2026)

607

Total Educational & Scholarly Projects

Since its establishment in 2011, ArizonaLEND has contributed significantly to workforce development and knowledge dissemination related to neurodevelopmental disabilities.

220

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND POSTERS

91

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

55

WEB-BASED EDUCATIONAL PRODUCTS

35

FACT SHEETS AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

40

ACADEMIC COURSES DEVELOPED

10

DISTANCE-LEARNING MODULES

6

DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS OR MASTER'S THESES

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IMPACT



The impact of ArizonaLEND is reflected not only in program outputs and activities, but also in the experiences of **trainees** and **alumni** who apply these skills in their professional careers.



The following stories highlight how participation in ArizonaLEND influences **leadership development, interdisciplinary collaboration, and career trajectories.**



Melanie Clawson

(she/her/hers)

Genetic Counseling



“This program has given me opportunities to collaborate with other disciplines, self-advocates, and family advocates, which I had not previously had much of. Additionally, through the seminars and clinical rotations, I was able to see gaps in my field that I could advocate to fill.”

“The most meaningful part of the program has been the connections that I have made along the way - both the professionals that I have worked with and the fellow trainees I have grown to know.”

CURRENT TRAINEE
(2025-2026)

Vanessa Macamo, LLM

Education/Special Education

Featured in AUCD 360 Newsletter



"I think all of the lessons from the LEND program shaped how I think about disability issues, not only those issues, but also myself as someone who can influence change."

CURRENT TRAINEE
(2025-2026)



ALUMNI (2012-2013)

Nerissa Birdsell, EdD

Education/Special Education

“Leadership, vision, and purpose were key takeaways from my participation in ArizonaLEND. It was my very first leadership program that I participated in, and it helped me better understand my own leadership style and strengths. It also helped me shape my vision and purpose which allow me to think more intentionally about the impact I want to have in the field. Since then, I’ve been more deliberate in aligning my work with my values, vision, and purpose.”

“ArizonaLEND helped me more in clearly defining my leadership identity, values, and purpose. As my first formal leadership experience, it expanded how I think about my role beyond direct service and into systems-level impact. It also strengthened my confidence to pursue opportunities outside of the traditional school setting which ultimately supported my transition from a long career as a special education teacher/transition specialist into my current work as a consultant and researcher. “

“ArizonaLEND equipped me with both the practical skills and the confidence to engage in systems-level work and advocacy. Through workshops, mentorship, and lived-experience discussions and activities, I developed a deeper understanding of how policies impact people with disabilities. It also strengthened my communication and leadership abilities which enable me to effectively share my perspective with stakeholders and advocate for the disability population. “

ALUMNI (2015-2016)

Nick Tanner, PhD

Pediatric Psychologist

“I think there’s a self discovery aspect of [ArizonaLEND] that was insanely helpful to me. It allowed me to look at how I have a different conflict style or how my personality type might integrate with how I tend to process information and make persuasive arguments. I continuously use the communication circle that was described in our first weekend intensive to craft messages.”





ALUMNI (2017-2018)

Brie Seward
(she/her)

██████████
Family/Parent Advocate

“[ArizonaLEND] changed my life. It taught me about the grant writing process and gave me the confidence to pursue my master's degree in Communications. It expanded my network and helped me focus on developing the Navigating Autism Program that became a funded program. Having this on my resume has propelled me forward in my nonprofit career and is an experience I will never forget.”

“Professionals trained through ArizonaLEND gain a comprehensive understanding of families and their experiences navigating complex healthcare systems. The program offers a unique paradigm shift—providing perspectives and knowledge that are unparalleled elsewhere. ArizonaLEND equips professionals to enhance their work through grant education, deepen their understanding of community needs, and cultivate the skills necessary to become thoughtful, impactful leaders in their field.”

ALUMNI (2020-2021)



Chelsea Carr, BCBA-D, PhD (she/her)

Education/Special Education

ArizonaLEND Training Director

“Arizona LEND strengthened my commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration and family-centered care, which continue to guide my clinical, training, and research work. It also reinforced my interest in leadership and systems-level impact, ultimately shaping my career toward training future professionals and improving services for individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities.”

“LEND helped me better understand the perspectives and expertise of professionals across healthcare, education, and behavioral health.”

Georgina Georgelos, MEd Family/Parent Advocate

Featured in AUCD360 Newsletter

“The ArizonaLEND program gave me something incredibly powerful: confidence in my own leadership,” Georgina reflected. “It helped me recognize that my lived experience as a parent is valuable and that I have a voice that can make a difference.” Through the program she realized the importance of building a strong, collaborative network and team of interdisciplinary healthcare providers to support her son’s healthcare needs, what she calls “Mateo’s Amazing Team.”



Georgina Georgelos, MEd, an ArizonaLEND alumna, was named the **2026 Arizona Mother of the Year**, recognizing her outstanding advocacy and commitment to supporting children and families. Her leadership exemplifies the family-centered and community-driven approach that ArizonaLEND strives to cultivate.

ALUMNI (2020-2021)

Claire Adams

Self-Advocate

Featured in AUCD 360 Newsletter



“One takeaway that really stands out to me is the importance of adapting your message to different advocacy styles, which we got a lot of practice with at the Leadership Intensive! ArizonaLEND taught me how different disciplines have their own strengths to bring to the table, and how collaboration across disciplines can lead to the best outcomes to the populations we serve.”

ALUMNI (2021 - 2022)



Emma Ferns

(she/her/hers)

Psychology

“ArizonaLEND gave me valuable training in working with interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary teams. I love interdisciplinary collaboration and cannot imagine working without an interdisciplinary team!”

“I am currently a clinical psychology intern at University of Alabama, Birmingham in their Civitan-Sparks UCEDD and an AlabamaLEND trainee for the 2025-2026 AY. I accepted a post doctoral fellowship in autism/IDD at Phoenix Children's, which I will start in August of 2026. As a predoctoral psychology intern, I diagnose autism and other NDDs (such as ADHD and ID), provide intervention to children and adults on the autism spectrum, and provide psychology consultation services to children and their families with Down Syndrome (all with supervision).”

ALUMNI (2023-2024)

Selene Amador - Self-Advocate

Featured in AUCD 360 Newsletter



Selene reminds employers [and all of us in the community] “to be more open minded to hire people with disabilities and to try more often to include people with disabilities.”

Self-advocacy alumna **Selene Amador** has been recognized for **highlighting innovative employment approaches** that promote greater inclusion and independence for people with disabilities.

Through her work, Amador has helped bring attention to employment models that focus on individualized supports and community integration, demonstrating how inclusive hiring practices can create meaningful opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

ALUMNI (2024 - 2025)

ALUMNI (2024-2025)



Carolyn Tureaud

Psychology

Carolyn Tureaud, an ArizonaLEND alumna, was recently recognized for her accomplishments and contributions to advancing services for individuals with disabilities. She was awarded the University of Arizona Hispanic Alumni Graduate Scholarship, which will assist Carolyn in advancing access to education for children with special health care needs during prolonged hospital stays.

Her recognition highlights the continued impact of ArizonaLEND-trained professionals who are working to improve systems of care, expand access to services, and advocate for individuals with neurodevelopmental and related disabilities.

ALUMNI (2024-2025)



Hope Wollen (she/her/hers)

*Genetics/Genetic Counseling
(Pediatrics)*

"[ArizonaLEND] really allowed me to see things outside of my scope and value interdisciplinary cooperation. Being in LEND I got to interact with people of all different expertise who brought different perspectives that I have been able to learn from. Now I always try to tackle a problem not only from my own background and expertise, but also try to think how someone else in a different specialty would tackle a problem."

"LEND allowed me to think of neurodevelopmental and other related disabilities in a more holistic view. We had a lot of parent and family speakers and I personally feel like this is the most valuable type of experience to learn from. Children with neurodevelopmental or related disabilities are people first, I never want to think of kids as their diagnosis. I always want to think of them as an individual who is loved and their own person first."

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

ArizonaLEND alumni contribute to a diverse and growing workforce dedicated to improving systems of care for individuals with neurodevelopmental and related disabilities. The reflections below illustrate the program's lasting impact on professional development and interdisciplinary collaboration.

CAROLINE SHANHOLTZ
(she/her)
Clinical Psychologist

ALUMNI (2020–2021)

Current Role: Clinical Psychologist in Private Practice providing therapy to kids with ADHD

“[ArizonaLEND] provided a better understanding on neurodevelopmental or related disabilities.”

“I use what I learned in LEND daily!”

EMILY GAYLORD
(she/her)
Physical Therapy

Current Role: Lead Specialist for Related Services at the Arizona Department of Education

ALUMNI (2014–2015)

“[ArizonaLEND] helped me connect with many leaders in the field. It also helped to better understand leadership roles. I think part of what I learned at LEND is to always center the voice of the student or family.”

“I lead professional development opportunity for related services providers in the state. LEND helped me to understand what is available in our state and how to support therapists in schools.”

Current Role: Primary Care Physician at El Rio

COLETTE OESTERLE, MD
(she/her)
Medicine - Pediatrics

ALUMNI (2019–2020)

“ArizonaLEND gave me more knowledge to support families through diagnosis and on getting support/treatment.”

“ArizonaLEND-trained professionals contribute to strengthening systems of care in Arizona through soft skills they can teach to others—often harder to quantify in traditional ‘productivity’ measures—as well as through increased awareness of resources and supports and strong interdisciplinary collaboration.”

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

WENDY SWARTZ

(she/her)

Parent/Family Advocate

President Elect for The Arc of Tucson

ALUMNI (2011–2012)

“I was a family participant and I feel there is real value in that representation...Non profits do a lot of community support directly to families and having a skilled pool of volunteers who can help local nonprofit to advocate teaming and assist families would be great. LEND changed my approach and helped me gain skills and knowledge to better help the community.”

“I am the president elect for The Arc of Tucson and a board member of the Arc of Arizona. I have served on local, state and national boards that support persons with IDD. I am a parent mentor for Encircle Families. I volunteer in the IDD community and help other families navigate the journey. Many families have to deal with multiple professionals and they have stated that having a parent who understands and has been there has been helpful.”

EMILY VOGEL

Psychology

Associate Professor and Assistant Chair at NAU

ALUMNI (2016–2017)

“LEND opened doors to networking and new experiences. It increased my knowledge of human development and disabilities and allowed me to improve my instruction inside and outside of the classroom. I have provided my students multiple bespoke opportunities through LEND that have assisted them in obtaining a place at excellent clinical psychology programs around the country. LEND's networking opportunities provided me the opportunity to publish in a high quality disability journal, and LEND provided support for me to present at a national conference.”

GABY ENRÍQUEZ HERNÁNDEZ

(she/her/ella)

Applied Behavior Analysis

Board-Certified Behavior Analyst

ALUMNI (2022–2023)

“ArizonaLEND provided me with opportunities to expand my research, connect with wonderful professionals, and learn about the work of a diverse range of professions that share similar goals. The interdisciplinary training helped me build bridges in how I communicate with other professionals and better understand their goals and challenges when working with neurodiverse and Hispanic communities. As one of the few Latinas in my program, this experience was especially meaningful.”

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

BRIDGET MALONEY

(she/her)

Genetic Counselor (Neurology)

ALUMNI (2023–2024)

“I am a neurology genetic counselor - I see patients who have suspected or confirmed genetic causes of their health concerns, including neurodevelopmental disorders such as epilepsy and conditions with symptom constellations that include autism/developmental delays/intellectual disabilities.”

CHRISTINE LIAO

(she/her)

Social Work

ALUMNI (2015–2016)

“My current role focuses on increasing economic power for people with disabilities through building community, cultivating meaningful opportunities, and strengthening their disability identity. I lead a team responsible for a variety of initiatives. I also work for a national disability nonprofit.”

Rebecca Hartzell, BCBA-D, PhD

Education/Special Education

ALUMNI (2018–2019)

Current Role: Associate Professor of Practice and Director of the Master's in Applied Behavior Analysis Program at the University of Arizona.

“ArizonaLEND helped prepare us to understand and experience others' experiences and use those experiences to meet the needs of other cultures within the disability community. I started working on a grant to create a culturally sensitive assessment for parents on the reservation of children with ASD.”

CONCLUSION

ArizonaLEND plays an important role in strengthening the disability workforce and improving systems of care for children with neurodevelopmental and related disabilities across Arizona.

Through interdisciplinary leadership training, clinical experiences, community engagement, and research dissemination, the program prepares professionals who are equipped to address complex challenges in disability care and services.

By continuing to expand training opportunities, strengthen partnerships, and support leadership development, ArizonaLEND can further advance its mission of improving access to care and promoting equitable systems of support for individuals with disabilities and their families.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Arizona Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (ArizonaLEND) program gratefully acknowledges the many individuals and partners who contribute to the success of the program.

ArizonaLEND extends sincere appreciation to the program's faculty, staff, and leadership for their dedication to training interdisciplinary leaders committed to improving systems of care for individuals with neurodevelopmental and related disabilities.

Special recognition is given to Dhani Bartolome, ArizonaLEND intern, whose dedicated effort in developing and writing this report made it possible. Dhani's commitment to this work reflects the spirit of leadership and service that ArizonaLEND strives to cultivate in all of its trainees.

The program also thanks the current trainees and alumni who shared their experiences and reflections for this report, as well as the family partners, self-advocates, clinical partners, and community organizations whose expertise and lived experiences enrich the training program.

ArizonaLEND is supported by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and is administered through the University of Arizona in collaboration with partners across the state.