

Parents *as* Mentors

*Educating through
Family Experience...*



CENTER FOR DISABILITIES AND DEVELOPMENT
Iowa's University Center for Excellence on Disabilities
University of Iowa Children's Hospital

Parents as Mentors

The joys and challenges experienced by parents caring for a child with disabilities cannot be learned from a textbook or lecture. In the **Parents as Mentors (PAM)** program, the parent becomes the teacher. Parents have an opportunity to share hopes and dreams for their child and family and to teach trainees about the importance of collaboration between families and healthcare providers. The trainees visit with families at their home, during doctor's appointments, trips to the grocery store, IEP meetings, or a leisurely walk in the park. The PAM program helps trainees develop a better appreciation for what it is like to have a child with special needs.



Training the next generation of Iowa healthcare leaders...

Iowa's Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (ILEND) program is funded by a grant from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the United States Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

The PAM program is an integral part of the ILEND program. ILEND training develops leadership qualities in university trainees who come from a wide array of healthcare fields including: medicine, nursing, public health, social work, physical therapy, occupational therapy, clinical psychology, speech/language pathology, education, nutrition, audiology, and healthcare administration. The training fosters effective community-based and family-centered care for children with disabilities and their families. Trainees develop their clinical skills as members of interdisciplinary teams to provide children and families with the best possible outcomes.

ILEND Trainees keep a journal of reflections from their visits and write a final paper to be shared with their family. Families also give feedback and submit a final evaluation. Ideally, everyone steps away from the experience with new friends, new knowledge and a new perspective on caring for children with disabilities.

What do participants say about the Parents as Mentors program?

"I hoped to give her a realistic picture of day-to-day life with a child who has many disabilities and medical conditions. I hoped also to help her see my child as a unique, interesting person with her own charm and personality, in spite of her level of disability."

- PARENT

"One of the most important lessons I learned from this experience was about the intensity of the demands placed on parents of children with disabilities."

- TRAINEE

"I wanted our trainee to understand the difficulties of navigating through the system of health care and other resources, and that my priorities as a parent may be different than those of a professional!"

- PARENT



A guiding principle of the Parents as Mentors program is for trainees to learn directly from a family; and to appreciate what it means to raise a child with special needs through a variety of experiences in the home and the community.



For more information about the Parents as Mentors program, please contact:

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