

Interview Protocol for Interdisciplinary Training Resource Center (ITRC) on Autism and Developmental Disabilities at AUCD

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. My name is [interviewer name] and I'm a researcher at [Westat/Westat Insight]. I'm joined on the call by [names/affiliations of other team members, if applicable] and [note taker name, if applicable], who will be taking notes during the call.

We are part of a team hired by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) to evaluate the Autism CARES (Collaboration, Accountability, Research, Education, and Support) Act Initiative. The purpose of today's interview is to learn about the resource center's activities and experiences – including accomplishments and challenges – and understand the data collected by your program.

We will focus on a few key topic areas—

- ▶ Technical assistance you provide to the LEND and DBP programs
- ▶ How you foster collaboration among Autism CARES grantees, external organizations, and engage with the autism/DD community
- ▶ The data management and analysis services you provide

For the interview, we will focus on activities or outcomes that have occurred since fall 2020.

With your permission, we would like to audio record the interview for note-taking purposes. Other project team members may listen to the recording later, but we will store the recording on a secure directory and delete it after preparing summaries of the interviews. Would it be okay to record the call?

[If verbal agreement received, begin recording.]

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interviewee Introduction

Could you start by introducing yourself/yourselves with your name and role(s)/responsibility(ies)?

Technical Assistance and Resource Dissemination

First, we would like to talk about the technical assistance (TA) your center provides to LEND and DBP training programs under the ITRC.

1. How do you identify areas of need for TA among LEND and DBP programs?
 - a. What channels of communication are available for LEND and DBP grantees to request TA?
 - b. How do you monitor emerging public health risks facing individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities? How do you work to address these risks as you develop TA strategies?

- c. Could you give an example of a TA/training product from identifying a need to disseminating the product?
2. What topics has your center focused on over the past two years?
Probe: If this is too broad, which topics have grantees engaged with the most actively? What topics are drawing the attention of LEND and DBP grantees?
 - a. Have you developed TA for new topics since the start of the current grant cycle? Have you phased out any topics since then?
 - b. We are particularly interested in any resources you offer grantees to help them advance more equitable training and service provision. Can you speak on any TA resources provided to help LEND and DBP grantees improve diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in their work?
 - c. We are also interested in how LEND and DBP programs are working to support individuals with autism and developmental disabilities beyond childhood and throughout their lives. Do any of your TA resources specifically aim to help training programs foster better transition/lifelong support?
3. What TA product formats do you offer to LEND and DBP grantees?
Probe: Webinars, Zoom calls, conferences, in-person and virtual networking events, text or video training guides, etc.
 - a. Are there particular TA formats that tend to receive the best feedback or otherwise seem to be the most impactful for grantees?
 - b. Looking forward, are there any TA product formats not yet offered that you think could benefit LEND/DBP programs?
 - c. How have you adapted the format of your TA offerings during the pandemic? Are there areas where COVID remains especially challenging to these efforts?
4. How do you promote your TA offerings to LEND and DBP programs? What strategies have been most effective in driving engagement with TA?
5. What strategies or metrics do you use to gather feedback and gauge satisfaction with your TA offerings?
 - a. Can you provide an example of how feedback from LEND and DBP programs guided your team to modify, improve, or expand the availability of a TA product?
6. Without needing to be precise, about how many TA activities have you conducted since the start of the current grant cycle?
 - a. About how many LEND/DBP grantees took advantage of these activities?
7. Beyond the TA products developed in-house, how do you disseminate new and relevant research results, tools, and other outside resources to grantees?

- a. Your FY21 progress report mentions several newsletters distributed to inform training programs of developing research. Can you speak to the goals, impact, and reach of these newsletters?

Partnerships and Collaboration

Next, we would like to talk about the ways you foster collaboration among Autism CARES grantees, and partner with external organizations.

- 8. What opportunities do you offer for representatives of different LEND and DBP programs to meet (virtually or in-person) to collaborate?
 - Probe: Annual Autism CARES meeting, issue-specific workgroups, and quality improvement efforts*
 - a. When you bring grantees together, which challenges and programming efforts seem to come up the most often?
 - b. How have you seen LEND and DBP representatives help each other to overcome challenges and advance toward their goals?
 - c. How have you adapted your offerings to keep grantees communicating and collaborating during the COVID-19 pandemic? What strategies have you found to be effective, and where do pandemic-related barriers persist?
 - d. How do you work to make these meetings accessible to individuals and/or organizations that may face economic, geographic, ability-based or other systematic barriers to attendance?
- 9. We recognize that your center does not exist in a vacuum. How do you build and maintain relationships with Federal and nongovernmental organizations to expand the knowledge and resources available to CARES grantees?
 - a. I know that you have worked with the State Public Health Coordinating Center for Autism, or SPHARC, to plan the annual Autism CARES meeting in past years. Is this still the case, and on what (if any) other efforts do you work with SPHARC?
 - b. Are there any specific partnerships that have been particularly integral to your operations or have allowed you to provide new resources and opportunities to Autism CARES grantees?
 - c. How do you connect LEND and DBP programs with national disability leadership networks?
- 10. How do you encourage and support the inclusion of people with autism and their families in the decision-making processes of LEND and DBP programs?
 - a. Do people with lived experience ever have direct input into the development of TA tools and resources provided by your center? If so, how?
 - b. What resources or events have you created to help LEND/DBP programs understand how to communicate with and incorporate the input of people with lived experience?
- 11. How would you describe the diversity of your team (racial and ethnic diversity, geographic diversity, neurodiversity/inclusion of individuals with autism)?

- a. What is their demographic makeup (e.g., what proportion are from non-white racial/ethnic groups)?
- b. What is the geographic diversity of faculty and trainees (e.g., are most rural, urban)?
- c. Have there been any specific hiring efforts to promote diversity among the center's staff?

Wrap up

- 12. Is there anything else you would like to share about your program at this time?
- 13. Is there anything else you would like to add that I did not ask about?

Thank you very much for speaking with us today. If you have questions about this interview or additional information you would like to share, please reach out to Katherine Flaherty (KatherineFlaherty@westat.com) or Carla Bozzolo (cbozzolo@insightpolicyresearch.com)