



LoneStar LEND

Purpose

The **Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND)** program provides interdisciplinary training to healthcare providers and professionals.

LEND prepares trainees to **improve the lives of children and youth** with autism and other developmental disabilities (ASD/DD).

Texas is home to two LEND programs, located at UT Austin and UT Health Houston.

LEND programs are funded through the Autism CARES Act, originally passed in 2006 with **strong bipartisan support**.

The Act was authored by Republican Senator Rick Santorum and **aims to raise public awareness of autism and enhance services across the lifespan**.

The Autism CARES Act supports interdisciplinary **training and services for individuals with autism** and other developmental disabilities.

Texas LEND programs at UT Austin and UTHealth Houston **rely entirely on federal funding** to carry out their mission.



Statewide Impact in Texas

Since the Texas LEND programs started,

- **333 long-term trainees** have completed LEND training in Texas.
- Over **1,400 medium-** and short-term trainees have received interdisciplinary training.
- More than **1,900 professionals** have been trained across the lifespan of Texas LEND programs.
- Continuing education provided to thousands of additional professionals through webinars and conferences.
- Faculty from over **20 disciplines** have contributed to training, mentorship, and curriculum development.

Why This Matters for Texas

~20 months

Texas children are diagnosed with autism ~20 months later than the national average.

1 in 51 Texan Children

Only 1 in 51 Texas children are diagnosed, compared to 1 in 31 nationally. This means we are missing autism in 40% of the children in Texas who need a diagnosis to access appropriate interventions.

Access Barriers Across the State

- Rural areas lack providers trained in autism diagnosis.
- Families often face wait times over a year for assessments.
- Early detection offsets costs: Within 2 years, early diagnosis reduces the need for more expensive long-term services.

The Role of LEND

- Trains professionals across disciplines to improve early identification and care.
- Increases access to services in underserved regions.
- Develops leaders equipped to advance policy, practice, and research in autism care.
- With Texas's 2025 population projected at 31.85 million, an estimated 1+ million Texans may be on the autism spectrum.
- Sustaining federal funding through the Autism CARES Act is essential to close the diagnosis gap and support children and families across Texas.
- Early detection offsets costs: Within 2 years, early diagnosis reduces the need for more expensive long-term services.



Contact:

Dr. Sandy Magaña
Phone: 512-232-9216

Email: smagana@austin.utexas.edu

