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Continuing to Improve Health Care for Children With Special Needs

Center for Persons With Disabilities

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CONTINUING TO IMPROVE HEALTH CARE FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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URLEND training session

The Utah Regional Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (URLEND) program has been refunded for the next five years, announced Dr. Judith Holt, co-director of the program.

URLEND is one of the 43 LEND programs across the nation that the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) awarded $28.3 million for to the improvement of the health of infants, children, adolescents and young adults with special health care needs.

LEND programs across the United States prepare trainees from a wide variety of professional disciplines to become leaders in the health care arena and develop interdisciplinary, family-friendly, integrated and culturally sensitive approaches to serving children with disabilities.

"The national competition is a tough one," noted Dr. Holt.

As the URLEND enters its second decade of preparing competent health care leaders, six new Lends are just beginning their journey. The Utah Regional LEND has been funded since 2001 and is administered by the University of Utah's Department of Pediatrics and the CPD.

This year there are a total of 31 new trainees participating in the URLEND training from the five states of ID, MT, ND, WY, and UT.

Since 2002, the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND), located at the University of Wyoming, has participated in the URLEND program, providing over 13 trainees through the years.

"Participation in URLEND provides our students with experience in interdisciplinary health care settings that serve children with special health care needs and their families. Given our small population and the lack of an academic medical center, there are limited opportunities for Wyoming students to obtain clinical experience..." states William MacLean, Jr., URLEND Wyoming Distance Coordinator.

URLEND also provides a strong family-parent perspective and provides exposure to outstanding program faculty and a broad curriculum on topics relevant to neurodevelopmental disabilities. "The focus on leadership education is vital to building infrastructure for our state," MacLean summarizes.

Idaho students have also taken advantage of the URLEND's focus on multidisciplinary services for children with special health care needs. Since 2006 there have been ten URLEND trainees.

These trainees have "increased their knowledge and skills in working with diverse cultures and had opportunities to see how the medical home model can be of great benefit for children with disabilities, their families, as well as their health care team," says URLEND Idaho Distance Coordinator, Gwen Mitchell.

For these Idaho trainees, "URLEND has provided connections and resources for service care that extends beyond state lines. Living in a rural setting, URLEND has opened the door to many opportunities for service care for the people in Idaho that we may not have had without LEND training," Mitchell continues.

URLEND faculty look forward to five more years of doing their part to shape future leaders in health care and to improve health care for children and families.