

Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (LEND) Program

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Zoo Troop For All

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BACKGROUND: Nationally, there are few examples of ongoing zoo programs that fit the needs of children with developmental disabilities (DD). The few zoos who do offer inclusive programming often do not measure their outcomes in a meaningful way. The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden (CZBG), located adjacent to Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC), has the largest membership of any cultural institution in the Cincinnati area. Recent data indicate that 19.4% of students enrolled in the Cincinnati Public School (CPS) District receive services for a disability. Nationally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that about one in six children in the United States have one or more developmental disabilities. **OBJECTIVE:** Zoo Troop For All (ZTFA) goals are to involve more children with DD in zoo programming, create training for staff to increase confidence in working with children with DD, and develop measures to evaluate program outcomes. **TRAINING:** CZBG staff leaders attended an eight-hour training session. The training topics included an overview of DD, disability etiquette, communication systems, behavior management, and visual supports. Interactive training components included discussion groups, informative DD videos, a parent panel, and interaction with children with DD. **MEASURE DEVELOPMENT:** Three measures to evaluate future ZTFA programming and training outcomes were developed. Measures include Zoo Troop Self-Efficacy Scales (completed pre- and post-training), Caregiver Satisfaction Questionnaire, and Zoo Troop Student Observation Scale. **DISCUSSION:** Next steps include training all ZTFA and CZBG staff according to department needs, implementing inclusive ZTFA classes for children with DD, and evaluating outcomes of programming and training.