

# NJLEND ANNUAL REPORT



**2020 - 2021**

# 5 YEARS OF NJLEND

# FY17 - FY21

**NJLEND** is New Jersey's Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities program, housed at The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities and part of a national network of LEND programs. New Jersey's LEND program was initially funded in 2016 to address what has been consistently reported as the highest prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in the nation. NJLEND prepares future and practicing health professionals to work collaboratively to meet the needs of children and young adults with ASD and other developmental disabilities through pre-service training, continuing education, and consultation and technical assistance to improve systems of care. This snapshot provides an overview of NJLEND in its first 5 years.

## PRE-SERVICE TRAINING OF FUTURE PROFESSIONALS

Since 2016, **67 Long-Term Trainees** in **8 disciplines** have completed more than **300 hours** of NJLEND training each:



64

Medium-Term Trainees in **11 disciplines** completed between 40 and 299 hours of NJLEND training

712

Short-Term Trainees in **4 disciplines** completed up to 40 hours of NJLEND training

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

Since 2016, NJLEND has reached **2,909 people** through **47 continuing education opportunities** for practicing maternal and child health professionals and families.



## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Since 2016, NJLEND faculty provided **364 hours** of technical assistance to improve systems of care, including:

- NJ FamilyCare Autism Stakeholder Executive Planning Committee
- NJ Medical Assistance Advisory Committee
- Community of Care Consortium
- Infant Child Health Committee
- Governor's Council on the Prevention of Developmental Disabilities



# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Friends,

As we send you this 2020-2021 Annual Report, we celebrate our fifth year as New Jersey's Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities program - NJLEND.

The NJLEND fellows in this year's leadership cohort you will meet in this report combine educational background and lived experience. As individuals and as a group they are dedicated to improving opportunities for people with autism, related disabilities, other vulnerabilities, and needs for support. Meeting only virtually due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, this interdisciplinary group has come together, sharing their experience, and supporting each other as they have learned together. Since NJLEND's initial funding in 2016 to address New Jersey's highest reported prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder in the nation, we have trained 67 fellows, each of whom has completed the rigorous 300 hours of the NJLEND program. Genetic Counseling and Public Health have been added as disciplines, broadening the interdisciplinary nature of the program. The Alumni updates highlight the impact NJLEND has had in expanding services.

The families who open their homes to mentor each LEND fellow and the medical students of Robert Wood Johnson Medical School are at the heart of NJLEND. Our deep appreciation for their grace and grit in embracing the challenges of virtual visits to continue to educate our students. Heartfelt thanks to all our faculty, guest lecturers, and community partners and collaborators.

With gratitude and wishes for good health,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Deborah M. Spitalnik". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Deborah M. Spitalnik, PhD  
Professor of Pediatrics and Family Medicine and Community Health  
Director, NJLEND

# NJLEND CLASS OF 2020-2021



**Angie Alberti, MEd, BSN, RN**  
**NJLEND Nursing Fellow**

Angie Alberti is a nursing PhD candidate at Rutgers University. From a young age, Angie has been exploring the interconnections of mind, body, and spirit in promoting wellbeing and longevity. She received her bachelor's degree in sports management and her master's degree in exercise psychology, both at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. She spent the early part of her professional career in healthcare consulting where she helped companies design and measure the effectiveness of employee wellness and chronic condition management programs. She entered the nursing profession as a second career student then spent time at home building her family and is now researching mental health and quality of life issues of family caregivers of children with disabilities.

**Sharon Artz, PsyD**  
**NJLEND Family Fellow**

Sharon Artz is a mom, community advocate, and a consultant for transition-related issues in an educational law firm. Originally trained as a clinical psychologist, Sharon chose to be a stay-at-home mother for her three amazing sons, two of whom have autism. Her journey as a disability parent and advocate eventually led her to The Boggs Center to further develop her advocacy skills in Partners in Policymaking and NJLEND. In her free time, Sharon loves to travel, read, and knit.



**Samantha Breitbart, BSN, RN**  
**NJLEND Nursing Fellow**

Samantha is a DNP student in the Pediatric Nurse Practitioner program at Rutgers University. Her research focus is on Pediatric Obesity treatment. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Rutgers University in 2016 and has experience working with children as a Registered Nurse in both the Neonatal and Pediatric Intensive Care settings. Her past personal and professional experiences have led her to pursue a career in working with children who have developmental disabilities. Additionally, Samantha has a strong interest in pediatric obesity prevention and disability policy.

**Susan Colacello**  
**NJLEND Family Fellow**

Susan Colacello is an accomplished education and inclusion specialist focused on creating accessible, equitable and empowering opportunities for students of all abilities to learn, lead, and grow to their full potential. She is passionate about the power and potential of youth of all abilities to be the changemakers in building more inclusive schools and communities. Colacello is currently the Director of School and Community Partnerships at Special Olympics New Jersey where she's led the design and implementation of Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools initiative. In that role, she's provided grants, training and resources to over 150 schools, K-12, to build socially inclusive schools through Unified Sports and inclusive youth leadership activities. She is the Co-Author of "Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED Guide to Inclusive Physical Education and Sports Activities" and has produced classroom resources on topics ranging from the environment and science, the arts, global studies and disability awareness. Colacello is writer, speaker, and convener dedicated to cultivating strategic partnerships to promote awareness and recognize of the rights and gifts of people with disabilities. As the parent of a young man with Down Syndrome, she is a steadfast advocate for people with disabilities and their families. She currently sits on the New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Advisory Committee.



**Odeilis Dominguez, MD**  
**NJLEND Medicine Fellow**

Odeilis Dominguez is from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. She is currently a fellow for Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics at Children's Specialized Hospital and RWJMS. She attended medical school in the Dominican Republic and graduated from Instituto Tecnologico de Santo Domingo. Dr. Dominguez graduated from pediatric residency at Lincoln Medical and Medical Health Center in New York in June 2020.

**Ana Carolina Ford, BSN, RN**  
**NJLEND Nursing Fellow**

Ana Carolina Ford is a student in the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Pediatric Nurse Practitioner (PNP) program at Rutgers School of Nursing. She was born in Brazil and moved to the U.S. with her family at the age of ten. To help a friend with English, she enrolled along with her in a nursing assistant program. Through this experience, she discovered her passion for helping people through nursing. Following this experience, she enrolled in and completed her Associate of Science in Nursing in 2010 from Advent Health University, formerly Florida Hospital College, being the first in her family to graduate college. After obtained her registered nurse license, she worked as an Emergency and Trauma nurse in a level 1 trauma center in Connecticut while going back to school to complete her Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Over the past ten years, she has expanded her nursing experience by serving as a Neonatal Intensive Care Nurse for the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and then at Penn Medicine as both a Labor and Delivery and a NICU nurse. She is a two-time DAISY award honoree and volunteers helping children and families of immigrant communities in the U.S. and Brazil. Ana's career goals are to inspire all children to live their best healthy and intentional lives and advocate for their needs.





**Alexandra Gil, MA**  
**NJLEND Psychology Fellow**

Alexandra is a doctoral candidate at Kean University in the School and Clinical Psychology program in addition to completing the coursework for an applied behavior analysis certificate. Throughout her education, she has worked with children 0-18 and their families in various capacities. She has completed practicum hours in the child study team in Union School District, Mount Sinai Hospital Neuropsychology Center while also assisting with research in the Seaver Center, and Children's Specialized Hospital. Currently, she is completing her pre-doctoral internship at Fishbird Neuropsychology where she conducts neuropsychological evaluations of children with autism and other developmental disabilities, learning disabilities, and numerous other disorders. Alexandra has been working with individuals with ASD/DD for over seven years now and is dedicated to serving that population. Being a Newark, NJ resident, she is interested in ensuring that the underserved population is exposed to opportunities that would enhance their daily lives. She is currently an adjunct faculty member at Kean University and Caldwell University. In addition, Alexandra also serves as the social advocacy chair and 2020 Diversity Delegate for the NJ Psychological Association amongst various other positions. Aside from her professional life, she plays soccer, rides a motorcycle, sings, loves board games and is a Grey's Anatomy and Friends fanatic. Alexandra is delighted to be a part of the NJLEND program and is excited to see this what this year brings!

**Norna Jules, BS**  
**NJLEND Psychology Fellow**

Norna is a Psychology Fellow in her second year of studies in the Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program at the Graduate School of Applied Professional Psychology. She is a first-generation Haitian-American from Elizabeth, NJ. She achieved a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Minor in Philosophy from Delaware State University, a Historically Black University in Delaware. Norna began her career in Autism by providing behavioral therapy as a Registered Behavior Technician and found that there is a great need for accessible and affordable services for low-socioeconomic communities, black families, and families of color. Thus, she developed an interest in learning how to create and implement treatment programs for marginalized communities. Norna's interests include the assessment and treatment of various neurodevelopmental disorders.



**Brie Latini**  
**NJLEND Family Fellow**

Brie Latini lives in Marlton, NJ with her husband Pete, an ER Nurse, and their 10-year old son, PJ, a fifth grade student. PJ, who was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder at the age of two, is the catalyst for her journey into advocacy. A Parent Partner with Camden County Family Support Organization since 2016, Brie provides peer support for families of children with mental health struggles, behavioral concerns, and developmental disabilities. She hopes to carry her passion for positive behavior supports and inclusive education into meaningful change in policy and procedures for children with disabilities. In 2016, Brie was a featured storyteller in the live stage show "Listen To Your Mother," and shares her writings on her blog A Breezy Life at [briemarisa.com](http://briemarisa.com).

**Isabella Massaro, BA  
NJLEND Psychology Fellow**

Isabella is a PsyD student at Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology. She graduated from Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences in 2018 with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. She currently works in a specialized school that caters to individuals on the Autism spectrum with intellectual disabilities. Isabella's research interests are in the area of skill acquisition and program development for individuals with ASD. She hopes to become a consultant for public schools in order to develop better programs for their students with more challenging disabilities.



**Kelly McGrath, BA, CSW, LSW  
NJLEND Social Work Fellow**

Kelly McGrath earned her BASW with a minor in Sociology from Rutgers University in May 2020, and is currently pursuing her MSW at Rutgers with a May 2021 expected graduation date. After a decade in Hotel and Restaurant Management, Kelly moved to Social Work to better help others. Since childhood she has been committed to serving those with intellectual disabilities. She would often join her dad while he provided recreational therapy through group outings to this population. Since shifting her career, Kelly has gained experience in applied behavior analysis therapy, recreation therapy, respite care, yoga/movement therapies, and education in one-on-one and group settings for those with intellectual disabilities. She has career aspirations to provide mental health therapy to those with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**Stephanie Michael, BA, IMH-E  
NJLEND Social Work Fellow**

Stephanie Michael is a Rutgers School of Social Work student pursuing her Master of Social Work. Stephanie earned her bachelor's degree in Journalism from Baruch College, The City University of New York. She is the NJ Positive Behavior Support in Schools Data and Program Coordinator at The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities. Prior to joining The Boggs Center, she provided training and technical assistance at Prevent Child Abuse – New Jersey, supporting the agency's child abuse prevention education programs, increasing community involvement in child abuse prevention, and providing primary prevention for professionals, paraprofessionals, and parents. She hopes to use her role as a professional social worker to support children and families, particularly in the areas of reducing disparities in public education and promoting mental health.





**Alexis Morgan, BS**  
**NJLEND Genetic Counseling Fellow**

Alexis is a genetic counseling student in the Rutgers Genetic Counseling Masters' Program. She earned her BS in Biology from Wilkes University in PA with a minor in Neuroscience. Upon her completion of undergraduate studies, she worked as a genetic counseling assistant in cancer genetics and research in population health screening for genetic conditions. Her experience observing in a neurodevelopmental clinic piqued her interest in pursuing pediatric and neurogenetics. She hopes to help educate fellow health care providers about genetic resources as well as learn more about other disciplines to serve as a better advocate for her patients and their families.

**Angela Otto-Ryan, BSN, RN, CBC**  
**NJLEND Nursing Fellow**

Angela is a student at Rutgers School of Nursing enrolled in the Primary Care Pediatric Nurse Practitioner DNP program. After completing her first bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Texas Woman's University she decided to live abroad for a year in the Dominican Republic. During her time there, Angela volunteered at local hospitals and clinics where she witnessed the health disparities experienced among marginalized populations. These experiences inspired her to return to school to attain a nursing education to aid in combating the inequities experienced among at-risk groups. Angela received her Second-Degree BS in Nursing at Rutgers University in 2016 and has since worked solely with the pediatric population. Angela has a strong interest in serving and advocating for medically underserved maternal and child populations. In addition to being a wife, mother to a two-year old girl, and pursuing her Doctor in Nursing Practice, Angela spends her free time playing with her two rescue dogs, doing Zumba, and baking healthy treats.



**Tara Palamarik**  
**NJLEND Family Fellow**

Tara is a Family Fellow and graduate of NJ Partners in Policymaking, where her advocacy project was a parent guide to transition. Tara's son Patrick graduated from the education system this summer, and is planning to attend a day program with supported employment. Tara has been involved in supporting the autism community for many years through organizations such as Eden Autism Services and Autism New Jersey, volunteering at their office and Annual Conference. She has contributed to the Association for Science in Autism Treatment (ASAT) newsletter, and has facilitated support groups at the JFK Pediatric Rehab. She was recently elected to the Eden Board of Trustees. Tara is a former aerospace engineer at Lockheed Martin, performing Mission Design for communications and science spacecraft. She has a BS in Engineering Mechanics from Columbia University and attended graduate school at Princeton University.



**John Palatucci, MPA  
NJLEND Public Health Fellow**

John is a third-year PhD student at Rutgers School of Public Health, where he is focusing on mental health services research. He holds a bachelor's degree in mathematics and economics from American University (DC), and an MPA in healthcare administration from Rutgers School of Public Affairs and Administration. After completing his undergraduate degree, he was an AmeriCorps volunteer in Washington, DC where he tutored elementary students from the Congress Heights neighborhood. His research focuses on maternal and child mental health services affecting underserved populations.



**Lena Qasem, BSN, RN  
NJLEND Nursing Fellow**

Lena is a registered nurse and a DNP student at Rutgers School of Nursing. She received a BSN from William Paterson University in 2016. She worked as an RN at a pediatric primary care office for one year. She currently works at Palisades Medical Center in North Bergen, NJ. She decided to continue her career to become a pediatric nurse practitioner. She currently lives with her family and loves to volunteer during her free time.

**Michelle Shulman-Repole, MSN, MPH, APN, CPNP-PC  
NJLEND Nursing Fellow**

Michelle Shulman-Repole is Children's Specialized Hospital's (CSH) Developmental Behavioral Nursing Fellow for 2020, and a recent graduate of Seton Hall's CPNP-PC program. She graduated from Downstate School of Nursing with a BSN in 1988 and has a diverse pediatric nursing background. Michelle has worked as a PICU nurse at New York-Presbyterian/Weil Cornell Medical Center, a general pediatric nurse and manager at Beth Israel Medical Center in NYC, and served as an adjunct faculty member at the NYU School of Nursing. After moving to NJ, Michelle worked as a pediatric nurse in a variety of settings, including Monmouth Medical Center's pediatric unit, Pine Grove Day Camp, Lacey School District, Delta T Group, and a busy pediatric office. She instructed students at Ocean County College and worked for the Monmouth County Health Department under a federal grant to research lead toxicity in children under the age of 5 due to the effects of Hurricane Sandy in low socioeconomic Mexican communities. During her education at Seton Hall, Michelle rotated through CSH in Toms River. Having two young adults who have received exceptional care at CSH along with her unparalleled student experience launched her desire to apply as a DNP fellow at CSH.





**Karen Stanfar, MPH, RDN, LD**  
**NJLEND Nutrition Fellow**

Karen is a registered and licensed dietitian nutritionist practicing privately in Cleveland, Ohio where she focuses upon the primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention of nutrition related chronic disease in community settings. She also serves as adjunct faculty for Cuyahoga Community College and Baldwin Wallace University.

She has an undergraduate degree in Dietetics from Miami University (Oxford, Ohio) and a graduate degree in Public Health Nutrition from the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill, North Carolina). She has completed both a general dietetics internship (Presbyterian Hospital, Dallas, Texas) and a public health internship (State of North Carolina). Her experience is broad, ranging from acute to outpatient care, and from pediatrics to seniors. Karen is currently a student in the Doctor of Clinical Nutrition Program at Rutgers University where she hopes to learn more about the prevention and management of physical disabilities.

**Nadia Tomarev, MD**  
**NJLEND Medicine Fellow**

Nadia was born and raised in Russia. She has always had an inclination toward natural science. After graduating from high school, she was accepted to Russian State Medical University to study medicine. After finishing in six years, she was granted a degree of Doctor of Medicine specializing in pediatrics.



Nadia has lived in the United States for 20 years, and during that time has completed pediatric residency and practiced general pediatrics for 10 years. At some point, she realized that she wanted to obtain expertise in Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics. There is a growing number of developmental disabilities, behavioral and psychiatric conditions in kids, but resources and access to help are limited and often not available/known to a general pediatrician. Nadia's goal is to provide complete care to her patients, not only doing well checks, shots, and treating ill children, which she loves, but in addition, be able to recognize and diagnose behavioral/developmental problems early, treat if possible, and provide her patients with necessary resources to help them develop skills of resilience, self-advocacy, and motivation to succeed in life in spite of having a developmental/behavioral condition. That is what brought her to Rutgers. Nadia is now a DBP fellow and is enjoying her learning and research career here. She believes LEND is a great opportunity for her to connect with fellows from other fields, hear their perspective on a problem, and develop new knowledge and skills.

# BOGGS CENTER INTERDISCIPLINARY TRAINEES



## **Ariana Gover-Chamlou**

Ariana Gover-Chamlou is a fourth-year medical student at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (RWJMS). She graduated in 2014 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Politics from Princeton University, and spent three years working in clinical research at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center prior to attending medical school. While at RWJMS, Ariana has led student groups focused on advocating for children with disabilities. She is currently working on a project to encourage more disability-focused

teaching in medical education. Having grown up with family members with autism, Ariana knew that she wanted to work with children with developmental disabilities in her medical career. Ariana plans to pursue a career in Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics with the support of her wonderful spouse and their wonder-pup, Woody.

## **Marina Khrizman, DO**

Marina is a child neurologist with a special interest in taking care of children with neurodevelopmental disabilities. She completed her undergraduate education in neuroscience at Brandeis University and studied medicine at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-School of Osteopathic Medicine, now known as Rowan School of Osteopathic Medicine. She recently completed a pediatrics and child neurology training program at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, and is now back in her home state of NJ practicing as a child neurologist at K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital, a part of Hackensack Meridian Hospital system.

Marina's passion is to ensure better medical care and quality of life for those children and families who are struggling with the difficulties of a neurodevelopmental disability, often with another neurological condition such as epilepsy, migraines, tics, or ADHD. Thus, she is participating in LEND in order to educate herself on the public health and school resources available on a national, state, and local level so she can be a better physician and advocate for her patients.



## **Morgan Faith Neumann**

Morgan Faith Neumann will be graduating summa cum laude from Ramapo College in May 2021 with a B.A. in Communications and a minor in Civics and Community Leadership. During her junior and senior year, she worked with The Boggs Center as an Interdisciplinary Trainee. Under the direction of Dr. Caroline Coffield, she conducted research on technology utilization for individuals with disabilities and identifying solutions to enhance their lives. Morgan plans on pursuing a graduate degree in Disabilities Studies in the Fall to continue her research and passion to improve the lives of people like herself with physical and mental challenges.



## **Dillon Reitmeyer, MSW**

Dillon earned his MSW from Rutgers in May of 2020, and his BA in Philosophy from Rutgers in 2016. Dillon is a Daniel Jordan Fiddle Adult Autism Family Support Fellowship award recipient, and is currently a PhD student at the Rutgers School of Social Work where his research interests involve healthcare and employment policy, and disability. He has a younger brother with Autism who is a constant source of both academic and professional inspiration to pursue training in working with people with developmental disabilities. As a result of his background, Dillon has strong interests in ethical and political philosophy, and disability policy. Dillon hopes to use his NJLEND experience to inform his research and practice as a social worker in an effort to improve the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Dillon is currently serving as a graduate assistant at The Boggs Center under the supervision of Dr. Deborah Spitalnik.

# NJLEND ALUMNI UPDATES

## Class of 2016-2017

**Mikala Hanson, PsyD, BCBA**, 2016-2017 NJLEND Psychology Fellow, completed her postdoctoral fellowship at the Kennedy Krieger Institute/Johns Hopkins School of Medicine at the end of August 2020. Mikala will be working as a Clinical Psychologist and a BCBA in a private group practice in Flower Mound, Texas this upcoming November. The practice, Real Hope Real Help, has both an ABA Center and a Counseling and Testing Center. She is currently licensed to practice in Maryland and has obtained Provisional Status to practice Psychology in Texas while she is in the process of attaining full licensure there. She is excited to be able to continue her work with children, adolescents, and their families diagnosed with Autism and other Developmental Disabilities.

**Sapna R. Kakwani, DNP, BSN**, 2016-2017 Nursing Fellow, is currently a Developmental Behavioral & Neurology Pediatric Nurse Practitioner at Phoenix Children's Hospital in Phoenix, AZ. She is also an adjunct Clinical Nursing Instructor with Carrington College in Phoenix. Sapna now lives in Scottsdale AZ.

**Deepa Srinivasavaradan**, 2016-2017 NJLEND Family Fellow, is the recipient of the 2020 Merle McPherson Award for her exemplary contributions to further family-professional collaborations within state Title V programs and the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP). Deepa continues to serve as New Jersey's AMCHP Family Delegate, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Learn the Signs. Act Early" Ambassador, and the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices Ambassador. Deepa and Carrie Coffield are co-leading the CDC/AUCD funded Act Early Response to COVID-19 project to promote early identification of developmental concerns and to enhance the resiliency of families. Deepa is a Family Reviewer for the Title V Maternal & Child Health Block Grant Applications and also supports family engagement across many statewide early childhood initiatives through her role at SPAN Parent Advocacy Network.

## Class of 2017-2018

**Rachael Hanson, BA**, 2017-2018 NJLEND Psychology Fellow, is in her second year as a clinical PsyD student at Widener University and plans on specializing in pediatric neuropsychology and autism. Rachael is working at Bancroft's Residential program in Cherry Hill, NJ where she is responsible for: administering assessments, conducting evaluations then writing diagnostic reports, and providing psychotherapy as well as behavioral therapy. She is hoping to begin administering the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) in the near future.

**Maria Leary, BA**, 2017-2018 NJLEND Family Fellow, completed her second LEND Family Fellowship at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). Maria is now a CHOP representative on the Genomic Information Commons (GIC) Patient Advisory Panel; and has recently accepted a position as a Special Project Consultant at the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD) working on their Health and Wellness Initiatives. Maria remains connected to The Boggs Center in her role as NJLEND Alumni Coordinator.

## Class of 2018-2019

**Grace Ibitamuno, BS**, 2018-2019 Medicine Fellow, has received a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Policy Research Scholars Fellowship to support her work advancing health equity. Her research focuses on access to health services and the attainment of health equity for vulnerable and marginalized populations including racial/ethnic minorities, individuals with lower socioeconomic status, maternal and child populations, and children with special healthcare needs and their families.

**Emma Shaffer, APN, RN-BC, C-PNP**, 2018-2019 Nursing Fellow, is currently conducting a research study on “Material Hardship Among Families with a Child with a Disability” to gauge the impact of material hardship on children and their families, as her DNP dissertation project.

**Kirin Suri, MD, MPH**, 2018-2019 DBP Fellow, is Chief of Pediatrics at Hospital for Special Care in New Britain, CT. Kirin’s role involves a mix of inpatient care, outpatient clinical work in autism, administration and research opportunities. Kirin has also continued to stay connected to LEND by speaking to the Connecticut LEND Program in November of 2020.

## Class of 2019-2020

**Aimee Ascolese, MSW**, 2019-2020 Social Work Fellow, has accepted a position as a Mental Health Case Manager at the Kennedy Krieger High School in Baltimore, MD.

**Madison Perry, PsyM**, 2019-2020 Psychology Fellow, is a predoctoral intern in pediatric integrated care psychology at Texas Child Study Center and Dell Children’s Medical Center in Austin, TX.

**Patricia Shelton, BA**, 2019-2020 Boggs Center Trainee, is a first-year medical student at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. Patricia hopes to serve people with disabilities as a physician in the future.

**Lily Yip, BS, MS**, 2019-2020 Family Fellow, is currently leading a parent support group called New Jersey Parents of Exceptional Adults. Lily continues to expand her leadership skills by advocating and promoting social change, enhancing disability policy, helping families with resources, and providing family support.

## Welcome to the NJLEND Family!

**The NJLEND Family is expanding!** Several of our NJLEND graduates have welcomed babies within the last few years! We can’t wait to see the impact the next generation of NJLENDers will have on our world! Congratulations to graduates, **Anne Lyle**, **Emma Shaffer**, **Shayleigh Dickson Page**, and **Gabie Fernandez**.

# NJLEND FACULTY AND STAFF

## **Deborah M. Spitalnik, PhD**

Executive Director, The Boggs Center on  
Developmental Disabilities  
Director, NJLEND  
Professor of Pediatrics  
Professor of Family Medicine & Community Health

## **Nicole Royer, MSW, LSW**

NJLEND Program and Data Coordinator

## **NJLEND Faculty Discipline Coordinators**

### **Patricia Findley, DrPH, MSW, LSW**

NJLEND Discipline Coordinator, Social Work  
Associate Professor of Social Work  
MSW Director  
Rutgers School of Social Work

### **Jill Harris, PhD**

NJLEND Coordinator,  
Children's Specialized Hospital (CSH)  
Director of Research Development, CSH

### **Manuel Jimenez, MD, MS, FAAP**

NJLEND Discipline Coordinator, Medicine  
Director of Developmental and  
Behavioral Pediatrics Education  
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics &  
Family Medicine and Community Health

### **Jessica Rispoli Joines, MGC, CGC**

NJLEND Discipline Coordinator, Genetics  
Director, Rutgers Genetic Counseling Master's Program

### **Amy Kratchman, BA**

NJLEND Discipline Coordinator, Family  
Senior Research Family Consultant, CHOP

### **Bob LaRue, PhD, BCBA-D**

NJLEND Discipline Coordinator, Psychology  
Clinical Professor  
Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and  
Professional Psychology  
Director of Behavioral and Research Services,  
Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center

## **NJLEND Affiliated Faculty**

### **Vanessa Bal, PhD, MSc**

Karmazin and Lillard Chair in Adult Autism  
Associate Professor, Rutgers Graduate School of  
Applied and Professional Psychology

## **Caroline N. Coffield, PhD**

Director of Pre-service Training, The Boggs Center on  
Developmental Disabilities  
Training Director, NJLEND  
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics

## **Maria Leary, BA**

NJLEND Alumni Coordinator

## **Thomas I. Mackie, PhD, MPH**

NJLEND Discipline Coordinator, Public Health  
Assistant Professor, Department of Health, Behavior,  
Society, and Policy, Rutgers School of Public Health  
Core Faculty, Institute for Health, Health Care Policy,  
and Aging Research

## **Sallie Porter, DNP, PhD, APN, RN-BC, CPNP**

NJLEND Discipline Coordinator, Nursing  
Associate Professor  
Division of Advanced Nursing Practice  
Rutgers School of Nursing

## **Evan Spivack, DDS**

NJLEND Discipline Coordinator, Dentistry  
Professor of Pediatric Dentistry  
Rutgers School of Dental Medicine  
Director, Special Care Treatment Center

## **William Waldman, CSWM**

NJLEND Leadership Faculty  
Professor of Professional Practice Emeritus,  
Rutgers School of Social Work

## **Jane Ziegler, DCN, RD, LDN**

NJLEND Discipline Coordinator, Nutrition  
Associate Professor, Nutritional Sciences  
Rutgers School of Health Professions (SHP)  
Program Director, Rutgers SHP Doctorate in Clinical  
Nutrition Program

## **Naomi Pickholtz, PhD**

Inpatient Psychology Supervisor,  
Psychology Department  
Children's Specialized Hospital

# ABOUT NJLEND

NJLEND is New Jersey's Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities program, and is a component of The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. NJLEND provides graduate-level interdisciplinary, leadership training aimed at preparing the next generation of health and allied health leaders to deliver culturally competent care that addresses the needs of children and young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), health disparities, related developmental disabilities, and other maternal and child health populations. NJLEND Fellows and faculty represent eight disciplines across Rutgers and Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences. NJLEND also provides continuing education to families and Maternal and Child Health professionals and technical assistance to Title V and other community programs.

LEND programs are funded under the Autism Collaboration, Accountability, Research, Education, and Support (CARES) Act, and are administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB).

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March 2021

# RUTGERS

Robert Wood Johnson  
Medical School

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New Brunswick, NJ 08901

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