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## Partnership of NH-ME LEND and New Mainers Public Health Initiative to Offer Training Experiences With Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Populations

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Susan M. Russell, M.S. and Betsy P. Humphreys, Ph.D.

## Overview

With support from a 2018 Focused Assistance to Support Training Project (FAST) grant, the NH-ME LEND partnered with New Mainers Public Health Initiative (NMPHI) in Lewiston, Maine, to build the LEND's capacity to offer training or fieldwork experiences with culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Lewiston is Maine's second largest city and a secondary resettlement area for Somali refugees. NMPHI served as a translator for and cultural broker with the Somali families.



## Successes

- Responsive listening sessions developed by the NH-ME LEND trainees to more fully understand how culturally and linguistically diverse parents of children with disabilities often have difficulty comprehending the U.S. education system.
- Use of oral culture-centered strategies served the dual purpose of relationship building and effective data gathering.
- Development and use of materials for the NH-ME LEND seminars to provide trainees with requisite background on Somali populations in Maine and New Hampshire.
- Development and implementation of leadership placements for NH-ME LEND trainees with NMPHI.

**Culturally and linguistically appropriate services are lacking in the school systems. We hope to support and provide resources for community members to lead their own trainings, using their expertise about their community and their unique needs.**

*NH-ME LEND trainees Crystal Cron and April Fournier*



## Challenges

- Project recruitment would not have been successful without [NMPHI Director] Hibo Omer serving as a translator for and cultural broker with the Somali community.
- Lack of reliable transportation occasionally had an adverse impact on parents' participation.



As a NH-ME LEND partner, the Maine UCEDD was currently partnering with New Mainers Public Health Initiative to develop, deliver and evaluate parent advocacy training modules (emphasizing Individualized Education Programs and advocacy within the K-12 system) for Somali parents with children on the autism spectrum.



During the Spring 2019 Kickoff, NH-ME LEND faculty and trainees participated in Barnaga, a simulation game that encourages participants to critically consider normative assumptions and cross-cultural communication.



Khadija (left) and Sirad (right) with NH-ME LEND trainee, Crystal Cron, during a break in the parent advocacy training led by Marnie Morneau from the Maine UCEDD and Hibo Omer, program director of NMPHI.

Marnie Morneau looks on as Mahatho (standing) helps to distribute handouts during the parent advocacy training.



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