

## NLCDD Research in Action: Leadership Development Strengthens Teams and Creates Organizational Cohesion!

Developing the leadership strengths and skills of DSPs and frontline leaders improves communication, follow through, and interpersonal skills throughout organizations. Participants of NLCDD’s Leadership, Empowerment, Advancement & Development (LEAD) program, an intensive leadership training for frontline employees, report team improvements and operational benefits after applying what they learned from LEAD. Their supervisors note organizational improvements such as better teamwork and stronger conflict resolution skills. Ultimately, building the leadership capacity of frontline leaders has organizational impact that leads to higher quality services for the people with disabilities they support.

*“Communicating is not like a big mountain, it’s just a small thing, just telling a person, ‘Hey, I noticed this, and the client was saying this...’ before it turns into this big blame game of ‘I told this one, and this one told that one...’” –Summer 2025 Participant*

This research brief highlights the results of pre- and post-evaluations, participant interviews, and participant supervisor surveys that demonstrate the LEAD program’s organizational impact.

May 13, 2026

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### Questions? Comments? Contact Us!

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96%

of LEAD participants **AGREED** that what they learned about **Building Collaborative Teams** will impact the services they provide to people with IDD

100%

of LEAD participants **STRONGLY AGREED** that what they learned about **Leading Through Conflict** will impact the services they provide to people with IDD



98%

of LEAD participants **AGREED** that what they learned about **Transforming Organizational Culture** will impact the services they provide to people with IDD

## Past LEAD participants had positive things to say about how their new skills contribute to better team and organizational functioning:

*"I feel like my ears are open more to what my staff have to say about their concerns, and I can see what I could do better to help them... I'm a little more vigilant to what my staff is telling me about what's going on with them in the work environment."* –2025 Participant

*"I'm more at ease at taking on responsibilities and trying to respond to issues myself."* –2023 Participant

## Supervisors also saw positive changes in their LEAD trainees that impacted the organization.

When asked two months after the LEAD program which new skills stood out, supervisors noted: Stronger communication skills

- Better listening skills
- Stronger conflict resolution skills
- Ability to work with different or difficult people
- Better teamwork
- Taking on more responsibility



# 92%

of Supervisors of LEAD participants **STRONGLY AGREED** that the information, knowledge, and skills learned from the training has improved the organization overall

*"We enjoy seeing the eagerness of staff from our organization in wanting to grow not just for themselves but for the clients we serve. Having a highly functioning team is of importance to our organization to reflect the caliber of staff we have, and it benefits the communities we serve that entrust us to meet their needs."* –Supervisor of 2023 LEAD Participant

*"We were very impressed with this training and the opportunities it presented [our LEAD participant]. She came back very excited about what she learned and was excited to share. She was actually promoted to Assistant Program Manager and is already a shining star! I am confident her learned skills will add to the new role."* –Supervisor of 2024 LEAD Participant

## How can organizations translate employee growth into organizational change?

- » **Sustain culture change through values and practices alignment:** Train all levels of employees consistently to reinforce the same values and practices, leading to organizational consistency and employee retention.
- » **Promote cross-team collaboration and knowledge sharing:** Create structured opportunities for participants and their coworkers to share strategies and successes across teams and departments.
- » **Leverage trained staff as peer leaders and mentors:** Position frontline employees to lead by example by modeling effective practices learned from the training so they have more direct influence on team culture.
- » **Create opportunities for skill application:** Align job responsibilities or committee roles with the leadership skills participants developed at the training so learning is consistently reinforced in daily operations.
- » **Track and communicate organizational impact:** Regularly measure and share outcomes related to team functioning, staff retention, and service quality indicators to demonstrate how leadership development contributes to organizational improvement.