

## Appendix 6: Example Research Brief from PEARLS

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON  
Health Promotion Research Center

# Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives (PEARLS)



## WHAT & WHY

### What is PEARLS and why should I consider it for my organization?

- The Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives (PEARLS) **educates older adults** about what depression is (and is not) and helps them **develop the skills** they need for self-sufficiency and more active lives. It also helps address social isolation and loneliness.
- PEARLS can be a **tool for community-based organizations** to provide more holistic services by helping older adults address their mental health needs through **problem-solving, activity planning, and connecting them to additional services** within the same organization or others. PEARLS also allows for coordination with an older adult's health care providers.
- PEARLS is **adaptable to various community needs** and helps **expand access to mental health services in underserved communities**, including rural ones. And older adults **do not need to be diagnosed** with depression to participate in PEARLS.
- The program was designed in collaboration with the organizations that deliver it, validated in partnership with the communities who use it, and adaptable to the people who need it.

## WHO

### Who delivers the program?

- **Current staff can offer PEARLS** to new or existing clients. You don't have to hire new staff.
- **No counseling experience or a higher education is needed** to provide PEARLS. Clinical supervision provides oversight and typically requires a couple hours each month.

### Who can participate in PEARLS?

- **Older adults who you are currently serving or want to be serving**, especially those who have limited access to depression care because of systemic racism, trauma, language barriers, poverty, and/or where they live.
- Older adults **do not need a depression diagnosis**. PEARLS helps identify people living with depression using a questionnaire known as the PHQ-9.

### PEARLS Reach & Impact in the U.S.

- **9,400+** older adults
- **133** organizations
- **26** states

*"All these skills helped me realize I can have a life I enjoy. Before PEARLS, I did not see beyond a day."*

- PEARLS participant

## WHERE & WHEN

### Where does PEARLS happen?

- In an **older adult's home or a community setting**. These are more accessible and comfortable for older adults who do not see other mental health programs as a good fit.
- Offered successfully **during COVID on the phone** and through **video-conferencing**.

### How long does the program last?

- **Six to eight one-on-one sessions** that take place over the course of **four to five months**.

## HOW: COST & FUNDING

- **Costs vary**, and there is a template to facilitate budget planning.
- **Main cost is staff time** to do outreach, screening, clinical supervision, and PEARLS sessions.
- **One-time payment for PEARLS training** (see training details below).
- **No annual license or fee.**

### Multiple funding options, including:

- Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III Part D Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (III-D)
- State and Local Funding
  - o E.g., Veterans, Seniors & Human Services Levy (King County, Washington)
  - o E.g., Mental Health Services Act (California)
- Direct Billing or Fee-for-Service Payments
- Medicaid, Medicaid Waiver, Medicare Advantage Plans
- Grants and Foundations

**“The UW Health Promotion Research Center partnership provides accessible, non-judgmental support and expertise. They engage and brainstorm with us on ways to reduce barriers to offerings in our rural communities.”**

Susan, Rogue Valley Council of Governments Senior & Disability Services (Central Point, Oregon)

## HOW: TRAINING

- **Training provided by the University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center.** Details and costs can be found online ([www.pearlsprogram.org](http://www.pearlsprogram.org)).
  - o **Ongoing support with monthly group phone calls** (known as technical assistance) for organizations providing PEARLS.
- **Training available online** for people to take at their own pace during a time that works for them and their organization.
- A **PEARLS Train-the-Trainer course** is also available for people who are experienced in providing the program.

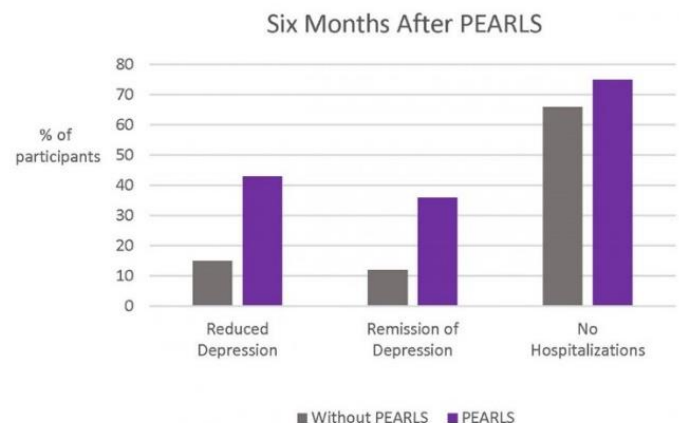
## EVIDENCE & OUTCOMES

- **PEARLS is proven effective in treating depression** for older adults. A recent PEARLS study also shows **promising data about addressing social isolation and loneliness.**
- PEARLS takes into account the **real-world strengths and challenges** organizations face when delivering the program, such as training current staff, aligning with the agency’s mission, and balancing competing priorities.
- Training, technical assistance, clinical supervision, and tracking older adults’ outcomes support a **consistent program model** (also known as program fidelity).

### Treating Depression

**Six months after older adults participated in PEARLS**, they were more likely to experience the following than those who did not participate in PEARLS:

- Have a **50% or more reduction in depression symptoms.**
- **Achieve complete remission** from depression symptoms.
- **Trend toward lower hospitalization rates**
- Have **greater health-related, quality-of-life in functional well-being** (e.g., improved sleep) and **emotional well-being** (e.g., less worried about health conditions).



### Continued Flexibility & Meaningful Results

- HPRC **works with communities to adapt PEARLS** and meet the needs of the community members they serve.
- Organizations **continue to see meaningful improvements** in depression and other outcomes thanks to PEARLS.
- People who benefit include **older adults who are experiencing poverty, are community members of color, have limited English proficiency, and/or live in rural areas.**

**“With the UW Health Promotion Research Center and PEARLS, we feel more confident. They enable us and empower us to continue our linkages with older folks and our veterans.”**

- Sluggo, Filipino Senior & Family Services (Seattle, WA)