

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.

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

- PEARLS participant

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

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)

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)