

PEARLS: Program to Encourage Active and Rewarding Lives

PEARLS is a short-term, practical, client-driven program designed to reduce the symptoms of depression through problem-solving skills and increasing physical, social and pleasurable activities.

Description of Program:

- Developed by the University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center
- Evidence-based program shown to reduce depression symptoms in older adults.
- Short-term program that is offered free/no cost to the clients:
 - 6-8 sessions, over a course of 5-6 months that will take place in the client's home, at the COA office, out in the community, virtually, or by phone
- Limited scope, structured program focused on problem solving and behavioral activation
- Client-driven with PEARLS coaches facilitating and supporting client's choices, practice, and use of the PEARLS skills and tools.
- PEARLS coaches are trained and certified by the University of Washington.
- PEARLS is a practical, here and now program, not therapy. Clients do not need to share their personal life or trauma history.
- Client interest, commitment, and ability to engage the program is essential.

PEARLS Eligibility

- Adults 50 years and up who are experiencing depression, depression symptoms or social isolation.
 - Minor depression
 - Major depression
 - Persistent Depressive Disorder (PDD)
 - An ongoing, low-grade depression of 2 or more years.

Symptoms and Signs of Depression (based on PHQ-9 Questionnaire used throughout the PEARLS program)

- Little interest or pleasure in doing things
- Feeling down, sad or hopeless
- Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or sleeping too much
- Feeling tired or having little energy
- Poor appetite or overeating
- Feeling bad about oneself, or that one is a failure or have let oneself or one's family down
- Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television
- Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed; or the opposite, being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual
- Thoughts that one would be better off dead or of harming oneself in some way

Clients do not need to have a clinical diagnosis of depression. PEARLS is based on symptoms of depression that the coach and client follow-up with over the course of 6-8 sessions. PEARLS coaches are not mental health professionals and the sessions are not therapy. PEARLS coaches are overseen by a Clinical Supervisor.

Exclusionary Conditions

Conditions that may make a client ineligible for COA's PEARLS program include:

- Psychosis
- Schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder
- Bipolar Disorder
- Substance Abuse or Alcoholism
- Cognitive Impairment and/or a type of dementia

Continued on other side

Note: A client might still be eligible if their mental health condition is *not active* and/or *not impairing their functioning and ability* to engage the specifics of the program.

Three Core PEARLS Principals

- 1) Symptoms experienced are due to depression
- 2) There is a known link between depression and unsolved problems
- 3) Increasing activity decreases depression

Multiple Components

- 1) Problem Solving Tool: Use a 7-step approach to identify and solve problems
- 2) Behavioral Activation: Planning and Engaging to increase physical, social and pleasurable activities
- 3) Clinical Supervision and Case Review

When people feel bad, they do less. PEARLS is designed to help clients break this cycle.

COA PEARLS Referral Process for Community Partners

If a person is experiencing one or more symptoms of depression listed above, inform them about the PEARLS program and ask if they would like to be referred to the COA PEARLS Program.

Potential clients are also welcome to contact PEARLS Coaches directly.

Please feel free to request PEARLS flyers from the Council on Aging so that you can have them on hand for your clients.

PEARLS Coaches will be in contact with the client to complete eligibility screening. If the client meets eligibility criteria and agrees to participate, they will be enrolled in the program.

Suggested Referral Script

Often the losses we endure as we age (for example, loss of loved ones, independence, physical health, or social isolation) can lead to feelings of loneliness, sadness, frustration, anxiousness, or restlessness. Gone unattended, these feelings can lead to a common medical condition known as depression.

Council on Aging is now offering a no-cost in-home and virtual coaching program called PEARLS (Program to Encourage Active and Rewarding Lives).

The PEARLS program teaches you skills to address these unpleasant feelings and improve your quality of life. If you would like to learn more about this program, I can send over your contact information to one of the PEARLS Coaches and they will reach out to you.

If you want to make a client referral, need clarification about eligibility, or have more specific questions about the PEARLS program, please feel free to contact Gloria Ramirez, PEARLS Program Navigator at 707-525-0143 ext. 139 or gramirez@councilonaging.com.