



What are CDC Prevention Research Centers?

PRCs are academic research centers that study how people and their communities can avoid or minimize the risk for chronic illnesses and other leading causes of death and disability. PRCs engage local communities to develop, test, and evaluate solutions to public health problems. These solutions are intended to be applied widely, particularly in populations experiencing health disparities.

PREVENTION RESEARCH CENTERS FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

Mental health and the management of mental health crises play an essential role in the overall health of individuals and their communities. Prevention Research Centers (PRCs) study how people and their communities can avoid or minimize the risk for chronic illnesses and improve health, including mental health. PRCs engage with their communities to develop and carry out evidence-based programs to increase the awareness of mental health as a public health issue and to benefit the communities they serve.

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

The PRCs have centered some of their work around improving mental health equity, examining mental health and health care issues, and improving skill and competency through training in the [2019-2024 funding cycle](#).¹ In May 2020, the PRC Network also formed a Mental Health Workgroup to encourage coordination and collaboration across PRCs working on improving mental health resources, as well as identifying and establishing best practices in their communities.

The workgroup leveraged intervention models and shared resources, such as existing intervention models that were successful in other countries, and established a shared database for outcome data. Workgroup members also developed health promotion educational resources, mental health toolkits, and educational programs. These tools and resources better equip communities to identify and effectively assist a person experiencing a mental health crisis.



149 million people live in a designated Mental Health Professional Shortage Area.²



1 in 5 U.S. adults experience mental illness each year.³



Postpartum depression (PPD) affects up to **15%** of mothers.⁴



More than **50%** of LGBTQ and transgender adults are battling poor mental health.⁵



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Read more about the PRCs' work to improve mental health in their communities below.

EARLY DETECTION OF MENTAL HEALTH CRISES AND TRAINING

[Morehouse School of Medicine's PRC](#)⁶ developed a "Mental Health First Aid" course that addresses disparities in access and use of mental health services in communities of color. The goal is to ensure that community members can identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders so they can help their fellow community members during a crisis. The course teaches common signs of mental health crises and discusses how to connect a person in crisis to resources. Upon completion, participants receive a certificate in mental health education that is valid for 3 years.

ASSESSING COMPETENCY SKILLS OF MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

The [University of Maryland's](#)⁷ "Simulated Patient Assessment and Feedback for Mental Health Provider LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual) Cultural Sensitivity" study highlights the need for an assessment of LGBTQ+ cultural competency skills of mental health clinicians who receive Sexual and Gender Diversity Learning Community (SGDLC) training versus those who do not. The outcome of the assessment will help to develop an evaluation tool for assessing LGBTQ+ cultural competencies among mental health professionals.



LEVERAGING A COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH TO DEPRESSION CARE

Addressing Postpartum Depression in Wisconsin

The University of Wisconsin PRC's [Addressing Postpartum Depression in Wisconsin Home Visiting Programs](#)⁸ uses a novel two-generational, parent-infant relationship focused, community-based approach to reduce the risks associated with maternal depression. The PRC, along with national and international experts and partners, is researching an existing Mother-Infant Therapy Group program to better reach and address the needs of women experiencing depression in the postpartum period, their infants, and families. Their goal is to adapt the existing program for widespread dissemination, adoption, and implementation in Wisconsin, as well as nationally.

Helping Older Adults Create Happier, Healthier Lives

The [University of Washington PRC's](#)⁹ evidence-based Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives (PEARLS) Equity, expands access to depression care for older adults in disproportionately affected communities by partnering with organizations that are already serving these communities to ensure [PEARLS](#)¹⁰ is adapted to meet the individual needs of each community. PEARLS is adaptable to various community needs and helps expand access to depression care in underserved communities, including rural ones. The program is for older adults, especially those who have limited access to depression care because of systemic racism, trauma, language barriers, low income, or place of residence. PEARLS Equity is a powerful tool for making depression care accessible to under-resourced communities, because organizations can tailor it to individual community needs. Individual communities celebrate their elders in different ways; PEARLS is designed to build on those strengths.



THE FUTURE OF PRCs AND MENTAL HEALTH

Addressing the mental health needs of communities is and will continue to be a priority focus area for the PRC Program. The PRCs will continue to focus on research that is tailored to the communities they serve. The outcomes and interventions PRCs produce help them develop tools that can be used to improve overall community and public health.

References

- ¹ 2019-2024 funding cycle, <https://www.cdc.gov/prc/center-descriptions/index.htm>
- ² Shortage Areas, <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/shortage-areas>
- ³ Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt35325/NSDUHFFR1PDFHTMLFiles2020/2020NSDUHFFR1PDFW102121.pdf>
- ⁴ Postpartum depression—PMC, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3918890/>
- ⁵ LGBTQ mental health brief, <https://hrc-prod-requests.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/files/documents/LGBTQ-MentalHealth-brief-022221.pdf>
- ⁶ Morehouse School of Medicine's PRC, https://www.msm.edu/Research/research_centersandinstitutes/PRC/index.php
- ⁷ University of Maryland's, <https://sph.umd.edu/research-impact/research-centers/university-maryland-prevention-research-center>
- ⁸ Addressing Postpartum Depression in Wisconsin Home Visiting Program, <https://prc.wisc.edu/research/core-research-project/>
- ⁹ University of Washington PRC's, <http://depts.washington.edu/hprc/programs-tools/pearls/>
- ¹⁰ PEARLS, <http://depts.washington.edu/hprc/programs-tools/pearls/>

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE PRC PROGRAM AND OUR ONGOING PROJECTS

Visit our website at www.cdc.gov/prc and explore the [PRC Project Database](#) for details on past and current projects.