



Clark County Commission on Aging  
Webex Remote Meeting  
Vancouver, Washington

## MEETING NOTES

Wednesday, August 17, 2022  
4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

**Members Present:** Cass Freedland, (Chair), Franklin Johnson (Vice Chair), Sue Cameron, Chuck Green, Meghan McCarthy, Mel Sanchez, Larry Smith, and Tanya Stewart

**Absent:** Amy Gross

Note: **highlighted text** indicates ideas to consider for the commission's annual major findings and recommendations.

### 1. Welcome and call to order

Chair Cass Freedland opened the meeting and completed a roll call of the Commission members.

#### Approval of agenda

Chuck Green requested the addition of an agenda item to write a thank you letter to the County Council. The agenda was approved with the addition.

#### Approval of July 20, 2022 work session and regular meeting notes

Chuck Green asked to have the meeting notes amended to add recognition for C-Tran as the 2022 North American Transit System of the Year by the American Public Transportation Association. The notes were unanimously approved with this addition.

### 2. Moderated Discussion "Fireside Chat": Innovation Through Connection with Peer-to-Peer Educators

Meghan McCarthy introduced the discussion and the guest, Chasity Charette, with the Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities of Southwest Washington, Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives (PEARLS).

#### Discussion highlights

##### *How do you connect most effectively with community members?*

The Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives (PEARLS) is a nationwide program that is adaptable to the needs of community members. It is most effective in connecting with the community because it is used by agencies that are already serving community members such as AAADSW, YMCA, or local senior centers. PEARLS is supervised by University of Washington's Health Promotion Research Center. They are always looking to expand PEARLS partnerships with community-based service agencies.



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***Of everything you would want the community to know, what is the communication you work hardest to share or that communication you think is most valuable to our community members?***

Chasity started by explaining that the PEARLS program is targeted to older adults. It is a community-based treatment program for adults with minor depression or on-going low-grade depression, which can be common in family care-givers and socially-isolated and physically-impaired older adults. It is a highly effective treatment program shown to reduce depressive symptoms and improve quality of life.

Chasity works in the health education department at AAADSW and is the organization's PEARLS coach. She is supervised by a licensed psychiatrist at University of Washington. The PEARLS coach facilitates six to eight sessions with a client with techniques to help empower individuals to take action and make lasting changes in their lives through problem solving therapy. The PEARLS program is built on evidence that home based treatment reduces depression symptoms and is most effective in socially-isolated older adults. As the PEARLS coach, she is able to have regular contact with clients. The number of participants has been low during the COVID-19 pandemic.

***Is there a cost to participate in the program or to receive services?***

There is not a cost to participate. It is available for clients that are already served by AAADSW. Clients can also be referred by a provider and she is able to take a client on if she has adequate funding.

***Do you have a success story or a story that might illustrate the benefits of the PEARLS program?***

Chasity has a client that is a care-giver for her husband with early onset Alzheimer's disease. Through five sessions the client improved significantly and is able to think of solutions to problems that arise. The client also sought treatment from a therapist. This was an early intervention opportunity for the client. Her case manager at AAADSW referred her to PEARLS.

***Are there other PEARLS Programs in Washington?***

PEARLS is nation-wide. The program is housed at University of Washington, but they reach out to many organizations throughout the nation.

***In the work that you do, can you think of any future technology or any innovations that might help you deepen your connections with aging adults or things you wish or dream for in the future?***

Chasity hopes for a way to better reach underserved populations with a program that can meet differing needs of cultural or religious populations and those in rural areas.

***Are you able to use tele-health options for meeting clients?***

She is able to meet in-person at a client's home or through tele-health options to reach more clients, although she is not able to show as much empathy as she would like through virtual visits. She would like to get the word out more about the program.

***Building trust is always a challenge in reaching communities. Is there anything when you visit a client in their home that you are not able to get from a screen?***

Absolutely. She is not able to show as much empathy as she would like through virtual visits. For instance, she is able to ask if a client would like to receive a hug if she meets with them in person.

***Are there any other barriers or challenges that are you continuing to face in connecting with community members?***

There are a plethora of programs that can be helpful in a lot of different ways. Just reaching people and letting them know that it is not a problem if there are some services that they may not be interested in, and that there may be other programs that could be of interest. Those that might automatically say no to assistance may not know about all of the programs and services that are available.

**Questions/comments from COA members.**

- **Larry Smith:** Do you have a maximum number of clients you can serve at one time? Chasity outlined that she could serve a maximum of 24 clients at one time based on her time available and funding.
- **Mel Sanchez:** Are you at your maximum with clients at this time? How would someone refer a client to the program? Chasity currently has three clients, so she is not at her maximum. To participate in PEARLS, a client needs to be enrolled in another AAADSW program or be referred by their provider.
- **Tanya Stewart:** Are referrals from providers a large source of clients? How are you getting the word out about the program to providers? How is your team focusing on the growth and longevity of the program so it doesn't go away in a few years? Chasity commented that she does outreach events where she discusses the program and what she does as a health educator. Breanne Swanson, another AAADSW staff member, also works with providers to outline the programs that they offer and the referrals that can be made. Chasity does not currently get many referrals from providers. It is limited in the amount of funding she has for clients with referrals, but she could seek additional funding if she did see an uptick in the number of clients referred to PEARLS. In order to be referred to the program, clients need to give their consent. She thinks some potential referrals do not give their consent to be referred and therefore do not connect with the program.
- **Mel Sanchez:** Is there a minimum age for a client of the PEARLS program? The program can serve anyone over the age of 18. Can you provide us a list of providers of the different organizations from which clients can be referred? Chasity explained that a case manager or care coordinator within AAADSW can give a referral or a provider can give a referral. Following the fireside chat, Chasity clarified that someone who is interested in PEARLS that is not currently an AAADSW client, can contact the Aging and Disability Resource Center, ADRC, at 360-694-8144 or talk with their medical doctor.
- **Cass Freedland:** One of the things we have been exploring this year is the barriers for people reaching out and getting the services they need. What type of barriers would you love to be able to remove? Chasity mentioned the limit on funding would be the first barrier she would remove. She would also like to be able to connect more with providers to make more presentations to educate them on the program. Cass also asked if Chasity has the ability to partner with other teams or agencies to help communicate about PEARLS? Other staff in AAADSW work to get the word out about AAADSW programs including PEARLS. The Aging and Disability Resource Center employees cannot currently directly make referrals to the PEARLS program, and that would be helpful. That would potentially require additional funding and staff.

**Public comments**

- **Comment:** Christina Marneris with AAADSW commented on the capacity for expansion and sustainability of the PEARLS program. The AAADSW Director has an

understanding of how this type of program can contribute to the overall health of a community. As they see the need increase, they will look into expanding the program. The agency also tries to be very mindful of the longevity of programs so they can serve clients well.

#### **Commission Download**

- There were no comments from Commission members.

#### **3. General Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

#### **4. Letter to County Council**

- Franklin Johnson and Chuck Green requested to send a letter to the County Council for their support and approval of the Aging Readiness Plan Update project consultant and Public Participation Plan.
- A motion was made to approve the sending of a letter to the council and was unanimously approved.
- The Chair and Vice Chair will write a letter to send to the County Council on behalf of the Commission.

#### **5. Announcements**

- Nominations for the Silver Citizen Award are due by August 26 at 5 pm. Additional information is available at <https://clark.wa.gov/community-planning/silver-citizen-award> or by contacting staff.
- Cass Freedland described her attendance at a roundtable discussion with Senator Patty Murray regarding prescription drug pricing. Additional information is available here: <https://www.murray.senate.gov/senator-murray-hosts-roundtable-on-historic-measures-to-lower-drug-prices/>
- Larry Smith outlined that the City of Vancouver has been recognized as a veteran-friendly city by Stars and Stripes, a military related news organization. The award was presented on August 26 at 9:30 am at City Hall.
- Chuck Green mentioned that the consultant for the Aging Readiness Plan update project will attend the September 21, 2022 commission work session.

**6. Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 5:22 p.m.

***The Clark County Commission on Aging provides leadership and creates community engagement in addressing the needs and opportunities of aging.***