

Leading Change in a Changing Community

In this presentation the speaker will discuss the role of occupational therapy in mental health and homeless services, the value of a justice and equity mindset when engaging the community, and steps that can be taken to expand occupational therapy's footprint in the mental health field.

Dr. Adam Pearson is a St. Louis native, raised in a family of educators. He grew up in Normandy, near Ferguson, where the 2014 uprising after the murder of Mike Brown led him to clarify his occupational therapy lens towards broader principles of housing equity and parity. Already engaged in providing occupational therapy services to unhoused individuals at a then-drop-in day shelter called The Bridge, he was hired to direct the development of Garfield Place Apartments, a permanent supportive housing program at Peter & Paul Community Services. He hired and led a team of clinicians and support staff to provide services for four years. Recognizing the need to learn more about the intersection of housing, disability, and policy, he then left to work as the strategy and development manager at the Centene Center for Health Transformation at the Washington University Social Policy Institute. In this role he managed the Center's national research portfolio, facilitated collaboration between the Center and Centene's National Disability Advisory Council, and assisted on several market-driven studies and initiatives centered on social determinants of health. Dr. Pearson then returned to PPCS as the chief operating officer, where he presently oversees the organization's seven programs and programmatic staff, strategic planning initiatives, and facilities. He is hoping to channel this work into targeted advocacy for local and national policies that advance affordable housing for everyone who wants it.

By the end of this course, participants will be able to:

1. Describe three clinical or programmatic benefits of OT as Qualified Mental Health Practitioners
2. Describe two examples of how OT engages individuals experiencing homelessness in the community
3. Identify three tangible action items to expand OT presence in community mental health

Course Timeline:

- Introduction (5 mins)
- Clinical engagement (15 mins)
- Policy engagement (15 mins)
- Mental health, justice, and equity work (15 mins)
- Next steps and closing (10 mins)

The content focus of this course is Occupational Therapy Professional Issues and Foundational Knowledge, and recognized by the Occupational Therapy Licensing board for one contact hour.

