



# Pitt RISE-MH Lived Experience Research Academy (LERA)

**Overview:** A virtual 8-week part-time summer program for students with lived experience of significant psychiatric disabilities intended to strengthen preparation and planning for doctoral programs in mental health-related fields. This 8-week program will combine didactics and hands-on learning and is designed to strengthen research skills and contribute to professional development. Sponsors at the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work and the Center for Research on Innovations, Services and Equity in Mental Health (RISE-MH) in the School of Social Work.

**Stipend:** Fellows will receive a \$1500 stipend for their participation in the program. 6 Fellows will be selected for the inaugural (2023) cohort.

**Eligibility:** We are looking for current undergraduates (any major), recent graduates and/or MSW students who have faced significant challenges in pursuing their education that have been tied to psychiatric disabilities and who are interested in applying to doctoral programs in the future. Rather than checkbox criteria, our application process (details below) prompts applicants for an open-ended discussion of information they choose to share regarding challenges they have faced. Examples include hospitalizations that have interrupted educational trajectories, highly stigmatized diagnoses (e.g. psychosis, schizophrenia, borderline pd) that have led to discrimination or otherwise limited opportunities, and disability-related challenges that may have made it difficult to acquire the research experience that doctoral admissions committees generally require.

## People

**Core Faculty.** Pitt: [Nev Jones PhD](#), [Katie Greeno PhD](#), [Shaun Eack PhD](#); RAND: [Josh Breslau PhD](#)  
**Graduate Assistants.** Shannon Pagdon, Sam Murphy, Ana Flores

## Program and Expectations

**Friday Professional Development & State of the Science Seminars.** Every Friday afternoon (6/2 – 7/28), Fellows will be expected to attend a seminar series that will alternate between professional development topics (for example, navigating disclosure of a psychiatric disability in doctoral programs, current doctoral students with lived experience sharing their insights, preparing doctoral program applications), and “State of the Science” lectures, featuring cutting

edge work in the area of clinical and services research (for example, stakeholder-involvement in the development of artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms).

***Biweekly Research Methods Seminars.*** Alternating weeks there will be a two-hour research methods seminar, including introductions to psych epidemiology, mixed methods, qualitative and participatory methods, and clinical trials research. Assignments tied to each module will help Fellows absorb and apply key research concepts.

***Developing and presenting research plans.*** LERA's signature capstone component involves the development of a detailed research plan (qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods) tied to a set of datasets maintained by the LERA team. Weekly meetings will include initial overviews of dataset options, and then mentored hands-on sessions focused on (1) developing research questions or hypotheses; (2) developing detailed plans for data analysis. Where time permits, each fellow will "get their feet wet," working collaboratively on preliminary analyses and/or qualitative coding. *Fellows interested in continuing this work through to publication will be encouraged and supported to do so; however, in our experience this would involve a more significant long-term time commitment and LERA cannot provide ongoing financial support.*

### **Application Instructions**

Please email the following (and any questions) to Dr. Jones at [nevjones@pitt.edu](mailto:nevjones@pitt.edu), putting "LERA APPLICATION" in the subject line:

- Approximately 2-3 page personal statement that describes your short- and long-term career goals, reasons for interest in the program, and that addresses eligibility (as below)
  - o For eligibility, please describe challenges you have faced due to personal experience of significant mental health challenges / psychiatric disabilities.
  - o We appreciate the importance of intersectionality and encourage discussion of challenges that are intersectional in nature, i.e. involving psychiatric disabilities / mental health challenges compounded by other minoritized social identities or experiences (race/ethnicity, socioeconomic, LGBTQ+, formerly incarcerated).
  - o *Please note that while eligibility is not limited based on nationality or residency status, the program and program faculty are based in the United States, professional development will focus on the US context, including US graduate admissions, and the data fellows will use was collected in and focuses on the US public mental health system. Meetings will be scheduled based on EDST time zones, and participation from some global regions would likely be infeasible due to time zone differences. Please contact us with any questions related to these limitations.*
- Your contact information (email and phone for follow-up)
- Copy of your most recent (unofficial) transcript

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023, 7PM EST**