

Early psychosis in students a guide for school professionals

More common than we may think, ‘psychosis’ is not an illness but a broad clinical term that embodies a range of symptoms in which thoughts, perceptions, behaviors or feelings become disrupted. Psychosis can trigger misinterpretation or confusion when interacting with the world, which can feel disorienting and cause distress.

There are many common misconceptions about people who experience psychosis. It is important to know that it is no one’s fault. Experiencing psychosis may feel scary and isolating, but recovery is possible. The earlier people connect to care, the better the chances they will get back on track and achieve their life goals.

Know the Signs

Students may report, or you may notice, the following, which may indicate experiences of psychosis:



- Hallucinations such as hearing or seeing things that others don't
- Unusual or delusional thinking like believing things that are not true
- Withdrawing socially, seeming more isolated or disengaged from peers and/or teachers
- Cognitive disorganization, like appearing or feeling puzzled or confused, or talking in a way that is difficult for others to follow
- A decline in school performance, such as lower grades, missed assignments, decreasing class participation, or unexplained absences

Learn When and Where to Refer



Reference your school’s policies and guidelines on how and when to connect with the student and/or family members. Your school’s counselors and nursing/medical staff are great resources for this information.

- School-based counseling services
- Specialized Coordinated Specialty Care programs
- Emergency Services

Know How to Accommodate



Students experiencing psychosis may benefit from additional accommodations in the school setting.

- IDEA, IEP & 504
- RTI “Response to Intervention”
- Transitions from Hospital to School Plan

for more information visit our website

headsup-pa.org



REDUCING STIGMA IN SCHOOLS

School staff set the tone around mental health awareness. Delays in seeking care are often fueled by stigma, which includes misunderstandings, myths and stereotypes about mental illness, its causes and treatment. By providing students and parents access to learning resources with factual information about psychosis and improving mental health literacy, school leaders can help minimize feelings of fear and shame caused by stigma.

DON'T FORGET

PEOPLE WITH PSYCHOSIS ARE FAR MORE LIKELY TO BE THE VICTIM OF VIOLENCE OR BULLYING THAN TO BE PERPETRATORS.

What is HeadsUp?

HeadsUp is a collaborating organization whose mission is to help end the stigma around psychosis through education, advocacy, and support. We promote early intervention centered around personalized, accessible, and effective care for all people in Pennsylvania.

What is coordinated specialty care (CSC)?

No two stories are exactly the same. Treatment at one of our early psychosis centers is a collaboration between the individual and the team of professionals ready to help. Each person at our centers have access to a variety of services and options including:

- **Talk Therapy**
- **Supported Employment & Education**
- **Medication Management**
- **Peer Support**
- **Case Management**
- **Family Support and Education**

Our current PA First Episode Psychosis (FEP) sites are making tremendous strides to support recovery and avoid unnecessary trauma. *

- **91% Decrease in number of participant hospitalizations**
- **85% Increase in school enrollment in those over 18**
- **82% Decrease in suicide attempts**
- **76% Decrease in homelessness**

***At 24 months; Compared to before enrollment in an FEP center.**

to learn more or
find a center near you, visit:

heads-up-pa.org



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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
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