



## FROM THE DIRECTORS

Welcome to the Fall HeadsUp Newsletter! Since our spring newsletter, Pennsylvania has slowly been adjusting to a “new normal” that for many includes a return to modified pre-pandemic activities with ongoing safety precautions and “hybrid” schedules. Our First-Episode Psychosis (FEP) Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) programs have risen to the challenge of providing care during this transitional time through flexibility, creativity and adaptability.

In this edition of our quarterly newsletter, we are pleased to feature Connect 2 Empower (C2E), a Pennsylvania FEP program which serves young people experiencing early psychosis who reside in PA’s Columbia, Montour, Snyder and Union Counties. Additionally, Mr. Nick Caranci from the On My Way FEP Team in Delaware County discusses his path to becoming a Recovery Oriented Counselor, and shares insights about utilizing Recovery-Oriented Cognitive Therapy, a foundational component of PA FEP programs.

With the support and guidance of the HeadsUp Steering Committee, we continue to expand and bolster the ways we pursue our mission to support PA FEP sites and decrease the stigma around psychosis through education and advocacy. This summer, we launched our HeadsUp Early Psychosis Mentor program, a consultative service linking PA clinicians working with individuals experiencing early psychosis to a panel of experts in the field. Through weekly “education blasts” and our online education and training calendar we provided or connected our FEP teams with numerous continuing education and training opportunities, and launched role specific meetings to further support the unique needs and interests of team members in our essential CSC roles. Collaborative learning opportunities such as these will continue to evolve as we expand joint activities with Maryland through the Connection Learning Health System hub of the Early Psychosis Intervention Network (EPINET).

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## FEATURED CENTER

## CONNECT 2 EMPOWER - DANVILLE

Connect 2 Empower (C2E) is a recovery-oriented, coordinated specialty care (CSC) program located in Danville, PA. Services are team-based and collaborative, emphasizing shared decision making as a means to address the unique needs, preferences, and life goals of young people who have experienced early psychosis. C2E serves young people ages 14-30 who reside in Columbia, Montour, Snyder, or Union counties and who have experienced psychosis for the first time within the past 24 months.

C2E provides clinical services including: individual therapy, medication management, case management, psychiatric rehabilitation, certified peer support, bi-weekly workshops, and monthly family connection groups.

Our workshops provide participants time to connect and work toward shared goals for independence such as driving, cooking, and, of course, “fun” as they practice social reintegration in a healthy manner and avoid reverting to isolation. Participants are encouraged to develop workshop topics and lead from time to time. Our family connection groups provide families and friends of participants a time to learn about self-care, crisis management, interpreting diagnosis, treatment options, symptoms, and expectations in the recovery process. They provide families a shared space to learn from one another and offer unique support as their loved ones are working on their own recovery.



## EPINET UPDATES

**Our Pennsylvania FEP Centers have joined with Maryland FEP Centers in the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) funded Early Psychosis Intervention Network (EPINET) project. [Click here to learn more and read below for featured updates.](#)**

### Marijuana use in FEP

Individuals experiencing early psychosis who also use marijuana may have negative outcomes. Our EPINET collaboration will research how educational information about the potential impact of marijuana use is presented and received throughout our 2-state network of FEP Centers, with the aim of improving understanding, reducing marijuana use, and incorporating family members into the discussion. For more information contact Donna Bencivengo @ [donna.bencivengo@penmedicine.upenn.edu](mailto:donna.bencivengo@penmedicine.upenn.edu).

### New Resource Documents about COVID-19 Vaccinations

Developed by our EPINET collaborators and easily accessible in the [clinician's section of our website](#) are new COVID-19 vaccination resources for individuals receiving support for early psychosis.

## HEADSUP EARLY PSYCHOSIS MENTOR

HeadsUp Early Psychosis Mentor is an exciting new addition to our organization’s offering, designed to increase the accessibility of specialized early psychosis care to all people in Pennsylvania. First Episode Psychosis (FEP) Centers are not always conveniently located to people who need them. If you are a Pennsylvania clinician working with a client who may be experiencing early psychosis, we are here to help connect you to information regarding specific care, research, and telehealth resources. For more information or to submit your first question visit the [HeadsUp Early Psychosis Mentor page](#) in the clinician's space of our website.

## RECOVERY BEGINS HERE

BY NICHOLAS CARANCI

Many young people experiencing a first episode of psychosis (FEP) not only view the experience as a traumatic event in their life, but also feel as if they cannot return to a previous level of functioning, happiness, and, sometimes, normalcy. Recovery-Oriented Cognitive Therapy (CT-R)\* is a treatment modality we use that aims to address much more about a young person than their identified symptoms of psychosis. CT-R activates and assists young people to rediscover meaning in their lives through the use of personal interests, hobbies, and passions. (continued on pg. 2)

## RECOVERY CONT...

CT-R is not typical talk therapy. It is an evidence-based treatment that motivates hope using creative strategies geared toward an individual's aspirations. Some sessions may include a 45-minute conversation about Japanese Anime, others may include jotting business ideas down in a Starbucks to pitch on Shark Tank.

I personally first heard of CT-R during my initial job interview to join the On My Way (OMW) FEP team in Delaware County, PA. Though I began feeling a bit lost and, honestly, worried entering this foreign treatment territory, it wasn't too long before I started to feel more comfortable applying CT-R. The model has assisted me not only as a clinician, but also as inspiration to become a more passionate and mindful person when having conversations with peers and participants. This has led me and my team members to play a pivotal role in expanding our services within the FEP community.

As trailblazers in this field, we get to explore the effectiveness and expand upon the important components of treatment such as: team structure, groups, outreach, support for team members, and management of COVID-19 and its effects on our population. To be a part of this growth feels as if I am a part of a family that continues to recognize the importance of a recovery-oriented approach to care, helping our program participants get back to the lives they want to lead.

\*Training in CT-R is provided annually to PA FEP Centers by Aaron Brinen, Psy.D. as part of HeadsUp services. For more information visit Dr. Brinen's [website](#).



Nicholas Caranci, M.A.  
Clinical Team Lead/Recovery  
Oriented Counselor On My  
Way Program Child and  
Family Focus Inc.



My experience of working for over two years as a Recovery Oriented Counselor and, recently, as a Clinical Team Lead for the On My Way (OMW) program in Delaware County has been like no other. Growing up, it was difficult to pinpoint what I wanted my career to look like. I knew I wanted to help people, but there were questions of how, in what capacity, where, and to whom. I decided to pursue the route of becoming a clinician to assist people in overcoming mental health challenges. When asked by colleagues, friends, family and even acquaintances, "Why do you do the work you do?" my response is usually something like this: Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you needed help, support, a lending hand, or someone just to listen and you couldn't get it? Words are powerful and I will continue using mine as a gateway to empower and change lives.

## FROM THE DIRECTORS CONT...

We continue to expand our social media outreach through our website, YouTube videos, and other social media platforms (Twitter, Instagram) and encourage community support of these efforts through following, liking, and sharing!

Despite the many challenges of the ongoing pandemic, fall 2021 promises to bring exciting new developments. We are delighted to welcome three newly funded FEP centers (CHOP FEP in Philadelphia County, ENGAGE in Westmoreland County, On My Way in Northampton County), increasing the number of PA FEP programs to 17. We encourage prospective applicants to visit the Employment Opportunities section of our website for up-to-date job listings for both our new and existing centers. Despite these additions, there are still large expanses of PA where FEP CSC care is not available. We seek to promote filling this gap through education and guidance for counties interested in developing programs, as well as through our Early Psychosis Mentor program. To support our new and existing centers, our annual fall virtual training program will include training on core CSC components as well as new offerings developed with participants' input, conducted by experienced providers and trainers representing programs across the commonwealth. For our providers and participants, we are soon launching new tools that will assist stakeholders in accessing and viewing information about participant progress and outcomes.

We hope that these combined efforts will continue to grow our collective capacity to provide high quality evidence-based care for Pennsylvania residents experiencing early psychosis.

As we push forward in these uncertain times, we are ever grateful for the support and guidance from OMHSAS, SAMHSA (through the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, US Department of Health and Human Services), the HeadsUp Steering Committee, and providers, participants, families and mental health advocates for our collaborative efforts as we strive to achieve the HeadsUp mission.

Monica E. Calkins, PhD  
Co-Director



Christian G. Kohler, MD  
Co-Director



[HEADSUP-PA.ORG](https://HEADSUP-PA.ORG)

### EDUCATION & TRAINING CALENDAR

There are a growing number of resources and opportunities for clinicians to learn more about early psychosis as it pertains to diagnosis and treatment. HeadsUp offers a curated calendar of past, current, and future educational resources and trainings to help enhance the quality and efficacy of treatment for those experiencing early psychosis.

### PA FEP EMPLOYMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

First Episode Psychosis (FEP) care in Pennsylvania is exciting and dynamic work! We are happy to now offer an employment section on our website listing open positions at all of our First Episode Psychosis Centers. If you are interested or know someone interested in joining one of our PA FEP teams, visit our employment listing.

### TESTIMONIAL GALLERY

Sharing our personal stories of recovery can help others feel less alone, shift attitudes about what it means to experience psychosis, and make seeking mental health care seem less scary. We are excited to now offer a secure platform to highlight the empowering and amazing words and work of the individuals in our programs. Stories do not have to be in written or spoken form, they can be expressed through a painting, drawing, comic, sound bite of music, or other mediums. Have something to share? Easily submit your testimonial or artwork [HERE!](#)

We take confidentiality seriously! You may opt to link your name to your testimonial, artwork, and/or media submission, or not. If you are receiving mental health services through a PA FEP Center, or other Center, staff at that Center will not be aware of your submission unless you decide to share that information with your team and/or link your name with your submission

NOW AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE

If you are interested in contributing to our newsletter please email: [headsuppaorg@gmail.com](mailto:headsuppaorg@gmail.com)



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