



FROM THE DIRECTORS

Welcome to the quarterly HeadsUp Newsletter! Since our last newsletter, Pennsylvania has experienced regional fluctuations in COVID-19 cases, requiring prompt and flexible responses to changing situations. The PA First-Episode Psychosis (FEP) Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) programs have continued to rise to the challenge of providing care during this transitional time through flexibility, creativity and adaptability, frequently offering a hybrid schedule of in-person and telehealth visits.

In this edition of our newsletter we are excited to feature ENGAGE Westmoreland, a newly OMHSAS-funded Pennsylvania FEP program of Wesley Family Services located in the town of New Kensington, PA. We are highlighting Marci Sturgeon-Rusiewicz, the Director of ENGAGE FEP Programs in Westmoreland and Allegheny Counties, and Melissa McKowen, the Team Leader of ENGAGE FEP Program Westmoreland County. ENGAGE Westmoreland is one of three newly funded programs starting in the summer of 2021, along with CHOP FEP (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia) and On My Way Northampton (Child and Family Focus, Inc.), which brings the number of PA FEP programs to 17.

To support our new and existing centers, our annual fall training program, which may include an in-person component based on the feedback we have received, 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. Please stay tuned for more information this summer.

Despite new program additions, there are still large expanses of PA where FEP CSC care is not available. Last year, we launched our [HeadsUp Early Psychosis Mentor](https://www.headsup-pa.org/headsup-mentor) program, a consultative service linking PA clinicians working with individuals experiencing early psychosis to a panel of experts in the field by calling 1-833-933-2816 or visiting <https://www.headsup-pa.org/headsup-mentor>. We encourage you to make use or disseminate the information to interested parties.

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FEATURED CENTER

Established in 2021, ENGAGE Westmoreland is one of two ENGAGE programs serving the state of Pennsylvania. Located in the town of New Kensington, serving individuals in Westmoreland County between the ages of 15-30.

The ENGAGE program works to provide personalized treatment and attention to maintain client independence and autonomy, enhance quality of life in social and employment and educational settings, and provide support for families and caregivers. The ENGAGE Westmoreland team consists of: a psychiatrist, therapist, case manager, vocational/educational specialist and a certified peer specialist who work together to meet all needs of our participants with the goal of decreasing the duration of untreated psychosis to prevent a second psychotic episode through early intervention.

ENGAGE Westmoreland helps to educate the community about the importance of early intervention through our multidisciplinary coordinated specialty care team and the evidenced based practices that we rely upon.

EPINET UPDATES

Since fall 2020, our Pennsylvania First Episode Psychosis (FEP) sites have been collaborating with Maryland FEP sites in the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) funded Early Psychosis Intervention Network (EPINET) project. Led by Monica Calkins, PhD for Eastern PA sites and Deepak Sarpal, MD for Western PA sites, HeadsUp is now part of the Connection Learning Healthcare System (Connection LHS), an EPINET Regional Hub centered at the University of Maryland and led by Melanie Bennett, PhD. As an EPINET Regional Hub, Connection LHS uses data to improve early psychosis services and to promote a culture of collaborative learning and continuous quality improvement across 20+ programs delivering Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) for youth and young adults experiencing early psychosis and their families.

Connection LHS has a new website!

[New Website](#)

Clinical and Researcher Tools online

Ask Connection LHS Investigators is a great new tool for clinicians working with people experiencing first episode psychosis to submit questions about FEP care. EPINET will use their collected data to generate answers to those questions with the goal of positively impact clinical practice.

ENGAGE-WESTMORELAND



MELISSA MCKOWEN, TEAM
LEADER ENGAGE FEP
PROGRAM WESTMORELAND



Melissa is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and Certified Peer Specialist Supervisor (CPSS) who received her master's in Marriage and Family Therapy from Seton Hill University. Melissa has over 18 years of experience working with individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. She is the Team Lead for Wesley Family Service's ENGAGE First Episode Psychosis team in Westmoreland County, PA and prior to this role, Melissa led Assertive Community Treatment teams for about five years. Melissa's passion revolves around helping others to develop to their fullest potentials and she believes that utilizing individuals' strengths and experiences is the best way to help them successfully make positive, lasting changes in their lives.



MARCI STURGEON-RUSIEWICZ,
DIRECTOR OF ENGAGE FEP
PROGRAMS WESTMORELAND AND
ALLEGHENY COUNTIES

Marci is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), a Nationally Certified Counselor (NCC) and a Doctoral Candidate of Counseling Psychology. Her clinical work involves both assessment and psychotherapy to youth and young adults within a university counseling center as well as adults and older adults in a community behavioral healthcare setting. Marci has a background in program development within the community based behavioral healthcare setting. Her work emphasizes a bio/psycho/social support system for youth and adults. She holds an undergraduate degree in art education from Carlow College and a Master of Science from Carlow University.

NEWEST PUBLICATION

Early Intervention
IN PSYCHIATRY



In March, 2022 we published our most recent article in Early Intervention in Psychiatry, "[Development of empirically derived brief program evaluation measures in Pennsylvania first-episode psychosis coordinated specialty care programs.](#)" With the goal of reducing administrative time and maximizing clinical utility, we aimed to generate a short form using item response theory (IRT)-based computer-adaptive test (CAT) simulation and analyze the implementation and acceptability of the short form among providers from PA-CSC.

The empirical derivation and implementation of abbreviated measures of key domains and constructs in FEP care have streamlined and facilitated PA-FEP program evaluation. Our work supports potential application of IRT based methods to empirically reduce core assessment battery measures in large-scale data collection efforts such as in the Early Psychosis Intervention Network.

RESEARCH NEWS

HEADSUP EARLY PSYCHOSIS MENTOR

BY CRYSTAL VATZA, MS, LPC, NCC, BC-TMH
HEADSUP EDUCATION
& TELEHEALTH MANAGER

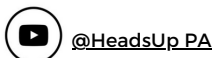
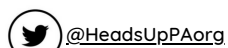
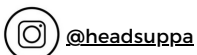
HeadsUp Early Psychosis Mentor is a free resource provided by HeadsUp for health professionals in Pennsylvania treating individuals experiencing first episode and early psychosis. We are a team of experts who specialize in the areas of first episode and early psychosis, which allows us to provide educational resources and up to date research tailored to support early psychosis treatment. Common categories of inquiry include therapy, recovery, referrals, psychopharmacology, education, and family support and engagement; but no topic is off limits, so ask us anything! Inquiries can be made via our web portal or by calling 1-833-933-2816 and responses will be provided based on the route of inquiry.

We are excited to offer this service free of charge to any and all physical and mental healthcare professionals in Pennsylvania via the support of the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Grant Award Number SM063411-01, distributed through the Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS).

Our goal at HeadsUp is to decrease the duration of untreated psychosis, improve care for those in treatment, and assist with getting individuals' lives back on track. The HeadsUp Early Psychosis Mentor is just one way we strive to meet this goal. Support us in this mission by helping your program participants, clients, and patients the best you can and allow us to support you by providing you information and resources on the treatment of first episode and early psychosis. Ask us a question today, we are always here to help!

FOLLOW US!

Stay up-to-date by following and sharing our content on social media.



FROM THE DIRECTORS CONT...

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.

In 2021, we launched role-specific monthly 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).

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.

HEADSUP-PA.ORG

As we push forward, 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. In these times of change we hope you find ways to promote health and balance, not only to your clients, but also yourselves and your teams.

With Best Wishes from HeadsUp for Spring and Summer 2022!



Christian Kohler, MD
Co-Director



Monica E. Calkins, PhD
Co-Director

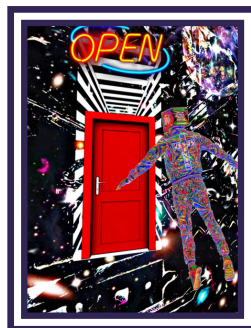
WE CONTINUE TO GROW OUR ONLINE PRESENCE, HIGHLIGHTING IMPORTANT NEWS AND INTRODUCING RESOURCES FOR USE AMONG ALL OF OUR MANY ADVOCATES AND STAKEHOLDERS.

TESTIMONIAL GALLERY

Sharing 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 offer a secure online platform to highlight the empowering and amazing words and work of the individuals in our programs.

HAVE SOMETHING TO SUBMIT?
VISIT OUR SUBMISSION FORM HERE.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE LATEST ARTWORK SUBMISSIONS!



Open the Door to Your Heart
by Damian Sitongia from Clifton
Heights, PA Age 22



The Autistic Pride Symbol
by Kyler Daniels-Shouldis from
Swoyersville, PA Age 19



ONLINE RESOURCES

"FIND A CENTER" LOCATOR

Our website offers an easy-to-use interactive map on our "Find a Center" page to help Pennsylvania residents locate a First Episode Psychosis (FEP) center nearest to them.

RESOURCE MATERIALS

Educational materials are available to share with our community collaborators to help spread information about identification and treatment options for early psychosis.

NEW MATERIALS NOW AVAILABLE FOR:

- Religious and Spiritual Leaders
- Pediatricians and Primary Care Physicians
- Caregivers who may be supporting someone they love with symptoms of psychosis
- School and University Staff

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.