



## FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS

Welcome to the Quarterly HeadsUp Newsletter. As we leave the holiday season and enter in a new year, we hope to reflect on our collective accomplishments and share information about exciting new endeavors to come! HeadsUp is an integrated center at the University of Pennsylvania, funded by the Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (PA-OMHSAS), providing a full array of free services related to training, education, clinical care, and program evaluation in early psychosis intervention. HeadsUp aims to ensure that evidence based early intervention is accessible to all Pennsylvanians, and that providers receive comprehensive training and fidelity monitoring in early psychosis intervention. In this newsletter, we highlight the Pennsylvania First Episode Psychosis (FEP) [On My Way program](#) (OMW). OMW is part of Child and Family Focus, Inc., currently with four locations serving young people ages 15-30 that reside in Lehigh, Northampton, Delaware, Chester and Bucks County and who have been experiencing symptoms of psychosis for up to 18 months. Services and treatment are offered for up to 2 years. We are also excited to direct your attention to the testimonial by one of our First Episode Psychosis (FEP) graduates who describes the importance of peer support services in Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC).

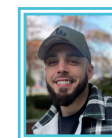
HeadsUp continues to provide more rapid access to care and assistance with triaging and referring individuals experiencing early psychosis to OMW and other PA FEP Centers of best-fit (i.e., geographic location) or to other appropriate resources. Contact HeadsUp to learn more or to connect a young person to a PA FEP Center. Professionals interested in joining an FEP center team can check out the [open positions listing on the HeadsUp website](#).

Despite the ongoing growth of FEP programs in the Commonwealth (now totaling 17 sites), many young Pennsylvanians reside in counties without an FEP program, and thus do not have access to this evidence-based best practice for early psychosis care. To help fill this gap, we are excited to announce that HeadsUp has been awarded funding from PA-OMHSAS and partnered with the Central East Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC) to expand our programming to include free workshops and trainings on early psychosis symptoms, screening, and management to community mental health providers, schools and colleges, and other interested stakeholder groups. We conducted a very successful training workshop "Recognizing and Responding to Emerging Psychosis in Adolescents and Young Adults: A Training Workshop for Community Mental Health Providers" in September 2023 where over 400 persons attended either in-person or virtually. After over 3 years of virtual meetings, it was a bonus experience for those of us who could interact in person. More free workshops and trainings will be available over the coming year, be sure to check out our [Training Calendar](#) and subscribe to our emails for program announcements. We can customize trainings for your staff/program. To learn more please contact us at 1-833-933-2816 or email: [headsupaorg@gmail.com](mailto:headsupaorg@gmail.com).

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## FEATURED CENTER

[On My Way](#) is a Pennsylvania First Episode Psychosis (FEP) program offering Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) to young adults ages 15-30 who have been experiencing symptoms of psychosis for up to 18 months and reside in Lehigh, Northampton, Delaware, Chester, and Bucks County. On My Way offers early psychosis treatment services including: low-dose medication management, individual and group therapy, family psychoeducation and support, case management, supported education and employment and peer support services. Services are guided by the young person's voice and choice. On My Way seeks to improve the quality of life of the individual by providing encouragement and support in guiding their own recovery, educating them about their psychosis, re-establishing and strengthening relationships, and re-integrating the young person into their community.



**Nicholas A. Caranci, MA, LPC**  
Clinical Supervisor  
On My Way Program  
Child and Family Focus, Inc.

Nick is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) who has over five years of experience serving adolescents, families, young and older adults struggling with a wide range of life challenges. Nick provides a safe and welcoming space for individuals to express themselves, be heard and identify the steps needed to reach their own definition of success and happiness. Nick's mission is to assist individuals in working through life challenges and mental health struggles in efforts of being able to navigate and view life with a new outlook that provides hope, optimism, and excitement. This can be accomplished through a variety of therapeutic modalities including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Recovery Oriented Cognitive Therapy for Psychosis, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Acceptance & Commitment Therapy and Mindfulness. Nick has been working as a member of On My Way's (OMW) Coordinated Specialty Care First Episode Psychosis Program for 4.5 years where he has served as a clinician and supervisor. Nick enjoys utilizing creative interventions to support individuals on their road to recovery. Humor, creativity, activity, and reflective listening encompass some of the strategies Nick implements to assist individuals in rediscovering meaning and quality of life.

## 8TH ANNUAL EARLY PSYCHOSIS CONFERENCE

This year's conference was a wonderful success! Over the two weeks of sessions, we welcomed over 200 attendees representing more than 9 states.

Our annual conference offers professionals and practitioners educational opportunities in early psychosis treatment and services. Through an intensive overview of early psychosis and Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC), conference participants had an opportunity to strengthen skill sets, share best practices with peers, and implement new strategies, research, and trends into practice. This year's conference highlighted important treatment aspects including step-down planning, substance use, cultural humility, ethical concerns, engagement, psychopharmacology, and recovery-oriented cognitive therapy (CT-R) for providers of First Episode Psychosis care.

**We are grateful to our conference funders, organizers, and presenters and look forward to continuing to help serve our Pennsylvania early psychosis community together!**



9th annual conference dates are set! Interested in presenting? [Submission form for presentation proposals](#) is now open.

## HEADSUP END OF YEAR HIGHLIGHTS!

**14,000**

Website users in 2023, up 141% from 2022

**450**

Views of our new video, "A Look Inside an PA Early Psychosis Center" released in July, 2023

**1552**

Individuals served by a PA FEP program as of 12/31/2023

**25**

Number of educational trainings offered in 2023

## FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS CONT...

In November, HeadsUp held week 1 of our yearly trainings and the first day was held in a hybrid format in Philadelphia that allowed for people to meet in person or connect virtually. Again, we appreciated the immediacy of in-person interactions, and we hope that we can continue to expand the in-person format. The remainder of week 1 went fabulously well, special thanks to our presenters for the informative and up to date content and to the audience for the great level of participation. Week 2 in December focused on the recovery-oriented cognitive therapy (CT-R) model and was very well received in a fully virtual format.

Our free [HeadsUp Early Psychosis Mentor](#) resource is always available for health professionals treating individuals experiencing first episode and early psychosis in Pennsylvania. HeadsUp Mentors are experts who support treating professionals by providing educational resources tailored to your question to aid you in caring for these individuals. If you have not yet found the time, please watch, and share this [brief video about our mentor program](#). Together, we intend these initiatives to support our mission to enhance the knowledge and skills of the Pennsylvania workforce of mental health care clinicians, centers, and advocates across Pennsylvania on the frontlines of education, treatment, and fighting the stigma of early psychosis.

In addition to our training and Mentor supports, we have launched an interactive referral and outreach resource tool, to assist in locating local support, particularly outside of the catchment areas for our PA FEP programs. Paired with this is a [feedback form](#) individuals can utilize to request support in locating local resources, and to share information with HeadsUp about where new FEP programs might be most helpful.

As we continue to expand in exciting new directions, 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. Wishing you the best for 2024!



Christian Kohler, MD  
Co-Director



Monica E. Calkins, PhD  
Co-Director

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## The Benefits of Certified Peer Specialists (CPS): A Personal Story

**Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) for first episode psychosis (FEP) is a team-based approach and is the foundation of all Pennsylvania early psychosis treatment programs. An integral part of the treatment team, a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) is someone who uses their own lived experience of recovery to assist in the recovery journey of others.**

**Christina Snyder received care at one of our Pennsylvania Early Psychosis programs and is sharing her story of recovery to help others feel less alone. We had the chance to ask her a few questions about her experience with a CPS during her time in treatment.**

**How would you define the role of a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) and why is it an important role on the team?** A Certified Peer Specialist plays a vital role - they have a shared experience that allows them to pair with and support current patients in recovery. I felt that my CPS offered something no one else on the team could - personal experience and understanding of what it's like to be a patient in recovery. My CPS had such empathy and could relate to me, and that's what I really needed from them.

**What are some of the things you and your peer discussed or did that really stuck out as impacting your recovery path?** My peer and I frequently chatted about creativity. This stood out to me because we both shared that making art and utilizing our creative skills helped us each in our recovery. I felt so understood and seen by my CPS. Being able to text and have occasional calls with my peer helped me immensely on my recovery journey.

**What did you personally find most beneficial about having a CPS as a part of your treatment team?** For me, having a CPS helped me know that I wasn't alone in my experiences. Prior to having a CPS, I felt very isolated and didn't know anyone who had experienced psychosis. I found it immensely helpful to be supported by a peer who truly understood what it was like to be in recovery. I also found that talking to my peer about everyday things, like fun weekends, movies, art, as well as my mood, sleep, and general recovery was so helpful. It helped me feel like a regular person again, and to accept my diagnosis and future life. My peer supported me, made me laugh, and was a huge part of my recovery. I am so grateful to them!

**You can learn more about Christina and her journey in her [video testimonial on our YouTube channel](#). To learn more about Certified Peer Specialists including how to begin the path of becoming one yourself visit the [Certified Peer Specialist page of our website](#).**



## RESEARCH UPDATES

## Newest Publications

**[Implementation of an Adapted Fidelity Scale for Pennsylvania Coordinated Specialty Care Programs for First Episode Psychosis](#)**, Jumper, M. B. E., Friedman, B. R., Becker-Haimes, E. M., Dong, F., Kohler, C. G., Hurford, I., & Calkins, M. E. (2023). Implementation of an Adapted Fidelity Scale for Pennsylvania Coordinated Specialty Care Programs for First Episode Psychosis. *Prevention Science* <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-023-01607-0>

**[COVID-19 Impacts on Pennsylvania Coordinated Specialty Care for Early Psychosis Participants](#)**, Jumper Westfall, M. B. E., Dong, F., Becker-Haimes, E. M., Miao, L., Conroy, C., Sarpal, D., Abegunde, C., Bennett, M., Kohler, C. G., & Calkins, M. E. (2023). COVID-19 Impacts on Pennsylvania Coordinated Specialty Care for Early Psychosis Participants. *Disaster medicine and public health preparedness*, 17, e488. <https://doi.org/10.1017/dmp.2023.151>

## FEATURED FREE ONLINE RESOURCES

We continue to grow our online presence, highlighting important news and introducing resources for use among all of our many advocates and stakeholders.

### "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. HeadsUp promotes personalized, accessible, and effective care for all people in Pennsylvania, and we can't do it alone! Providing your [feedback](#) to HeadsUp may help increase access to specialized early psychosis care in your area.

### PA FEP EMPLOYMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

First Episode Psychosis (FEP) care in Pennsylvania is exciting and dynamic work! We are happy to 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.

### HEADSUP EARLY PSYCHOSIS MENTOR

HeadsUp [Early Psychosis Mentor](#) is 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 [watch this brief video](#). To submit your first question visit the [HeadsUp Early Psychosis Mentor page](#) in the clinician's space of our website or reach out to us on our toll-free line 1-833-933-2816.

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