

FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS

Welcome to the Quarterly HeadsUp Newsletter. As we reflect on 2024 and launch the new year, we would like to point your attention to our collective accomplishments and plans for exciting new activities in 2025!

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 ENGAGE Westmoreland, one of our more recently funded programs, near Pittsburgh. In November and December, HeadsUp offered 2 weeks on our yearly Annual Early Psychosis Conference to offer interactive educational activities, both for beginning and also for more advanced providers. As in 2023, we offered an in-person training day, this year in Harrisburg, where we were able to meet some of you and Dawn Comly, from PA OMHSAS, in person. After so many virtual meetings, it is refreshing to be able to meet in person allowing for more personable interaction and also small talk. To facilitate mental health referrals, HeadsUp has worked on several initiatives, which are now operational and will hopefully expand in 2025. These include the statewide Referral and Outreach Resource Tool to locate local mental health providers, [PAWell campaign](#) which provide free and confidential online mental health support to young persons, and Penn Integrated Care, which as of Summer 2024 includes psychosis screening in primary care office and referrals to HeadsUp, which assists people in connecting with care.

At the close of 2024, we reflect on a year that has further strengthened our partnerships in providing first-episode care and expanded to new initiatives, including primary care and social media, to facilitate access to care and increase knowledge on early psychosis. (continued on page 2)

FEATURED CENTER ENGAGE Westmoreland County

Established in 2021, [ENGAGE Westmoreland](#), located in New Kensington, PA serves individuals in Westmoreland County between the ages of 15-30, and is one of two ENGAGE programs in the state of Pennsylvania. ENGAGE programs provide personalized treatment and attention to maintain client independence and autonomy, enhance quality of life in social, employment, and educational settings, and provide family and caregiver support. The ENGAGE Westmoreland team collaborates to meet participant goals with the hope of decreasing the duration of untreated psychosis and preventing a second psychotic episode through early intervention.



9TH ANNUAL PA EARLY PSYCHOSIS CONFERENCE

This [year's annual conference](#) was a tremendous success! During two weeks of sessions, we welcomed over 200 attendees in-person and virtually. 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 and timely treatment topics including evidence-based clinical treatment integration strategies, substance use, cultural sensitivity, ethical issues, engagement, psychopharmacology, and recovery-oriented cognitive therapy (CT-R) for providers of First Episode Psychosis care.

Through our robust learning program, and together with our thought leaders, we remain committed to the learning objectives of our conference which include: promoting development of innovative and responsive services in CSC programs; improving overall quality of services delivered and increasing competencies of clinicians and CSC team members; assisting organizations and practitioners with the vision, knowledge and skills needed to shape new and emerging CSC teams; and enhancing understanding and supported use of research obtained from CSC teams and participants.

While all HeadsUp staff collaborated in the event, we are especially grateful to our Education and Tele-Health Manager, Crystal Vatz, MS, LPC, NCC, BC-TMH, for her time and energy as host and conference developer. We thank our funders and presenters for their support as we look forward to continuing to serve our Pennsylvania early psychosis community together.

PATHWAYS TO FINDING CARE EARLY

A central component of our organization's mission is to reduce the amount of time that passes between when a young person or their family notices psychosis symptoms and when they reach out for help. While the reasons for the lag are numerous and complex, we have centered our outreach efforts on tools to help educate, destigmatize, and empower connections between those seeking help and high-quality providers. While we continue to bolster all avenues of community engagement, we are especially excited to integrate three new offerings into our efforts.

The first is an interactive online [Referral and Outreach Resource Tool for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#). We understand finding local resources can be challenging and we hope this new initiative offers young adults and caregivers across Pennsylvania a better way to access mental health support. This list is ever-changing and growing. Your feedback, which can be provided once linked to our tool, is especially important and useful to maintain accuracy.

Secondly, we have partnered with [Strong365](#) and [Northwell Health](#) to launch the [PAWell campaign](#) providing free, confidential, online mental health support to teens, young adults, and their allies through a simple and confidential online mental health quiz and, if needed and desired, a match with a mental health provider, program, or resource to meet their needs and preferences. This includes free and low-cost options.

Lastly, in recognition of the demonstrated benefits of integrating mental health care into the primary care setting, we recently joined a collaboration between Penn Medicine's Primary Care Service Line (PIC) and Department of Psychiatry. (continued on page 2)

HeadsUp 2024 Highlights

32,000

Number of Website users this year

3,600

Number of visits to our virtual "Find a Center" locator page

1,756

Individuals served by a PA FEP program as of 12/31/2024

65

Number of FREE educational trainings offered in 2024

18

Number of PA FEP Centers, including a NEW program launching in 2025 serving Lancaster County

FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS CONT...

Lastly, we want to mention that the Maryland – Pennsylvania EPINET Connection Learning Healthcare System has been awarded with continued NIMH funding for the next 5 years and, beyond education and advocacy, there is a lot of exciting data to highlight the effective care we provide to young persons living with early psychosis.

With this, as part of the HeadsUp team, we hope you had a happy and restful holiday season. We look forward to working together in 2025.



Christian Kohler, MD
Co-Director



Monica E. Calkins, PhD
Co-Director



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PATHWAYS TO FINDING CARE EARLY (CONT.)

In January 2018, Penn Medicine's Department of Psychiatry and their Primary Care Service Line launched [Penn Integrated Care \(PIC\)](#) to increase access to and engagement with mental health care to improve mental and physical health outcomes.

In June 2024, PIC added the PRIME-5 screener to the existing mental health screening toolkit, which assesses the presence of psychosis symptoms. Individuals scoring positively on the PRIME-5 screener are referred to HeadsUp for additional screening and referral to specialty care. Given promising results thus far, HeadsUp is exploring how similar screening and referral processes may be implemented in primary care settings across Pennsylvania. If you or an organization you know may be interested in developing this approach locally, please reach out to headsuppaorg@gmail.com.

It is our intention and hope that these combined efforts will create bridges of support and connect individuals with resources to best serve them. We hope you will benefit from these resources and share them with others.

THANK YOU!

We want to convey gratitude and well wishes to Nicholas A. Caranci, MA, LPC who has moved on from his role as Clinical Supervisor and therapist for the On My Way (OMW) Programs. Since 2019, Nick has been an exemplary leader and role model in PA early psychosis care, supporting OMW's 4 locations with optimism and care. He has been an incredible asset and advocate for the individuals and family members he served, and has uplifted our mission with a steadfast dedication to positivity and hope.

FEATURED FREE 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. 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.

HEADSUP MATERIALS

We offer a variety of [FREE sharable materials and resources](#) to spread awareness about early psychosis and the Coordinated Specialty Care treatment model. Together we can eliminate the stigma around psychosis and connect people to help early.

PENNSYLVANIA EARLY PSYCHOSIS PROGRAMS ARE GROWING!

We are happy to announce and welcome Lancaster County to the growing number of counties in Pennsylvania that will offer specialized early psychosis treatment using the Coordinated Specialty Care model. Stay tuned for updates on the site and launch date of this program. To view a full list of current counties and programs, visit our dynamic, "Find a Center" page on our website. Don't see a program in your county? Email us to find out ways to help advocate for program expansion to ensure all residents in PA have access.

CONNECTION LEARNING HEALTHCARE SYSTEM (CLHS)

We are excited to announce the renewal of funding from the National Institute of Mental Health for our Connection Learning Healthcare System (CLHS) hub of the Early Psychosis Intervention Network (EPINET)! EPINET links early psychosis clinics across the US through standard clinical measures, uniform data collection methods, and integration data. Our CLHS hub began in 2020, uniting over 23 Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) programs in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Funding has been renewed in 2024 as a P01 Center Grant so that the CLHS can expand our research-to-practice infrastructure; fully integrate lived experience, family members, and underrepresented minority stakeholders as active contributors to the CLHS; develop learning and career development opportunities for service users, family members, and early career staff/clinicians/researchers; and use our learning healthcare system to focus on reducing CSC disengagement. We look forward to our ongoing collaboration and improving CSC care in Maryland and Pennsylvania!



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.

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