

FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS

Welcome to the Quarterly HeadsUp Newsletter! As the steamy and stormy summer arrives across Pennsylvania, we are pleased to share updates of HeadsUp activities during the last several cooler months. 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 are delighted to highlight the PEACE program, one of Pennsylvania's largest and longest standing First Episode Psychosis Coordinated Specialty Care programs. Established in 2015, PEACE is highly regarded in the Philadelphia region for providing exceptional individualized, recovery oriented, community-based services in an urban setting.

HeadsUp had an eventful late winter and spring! We provided numerous free learning and training opportunities across the commonwealth, including our well attended Grand Rounds Series focused on Trauma Informed Care, featured in this newsletter. In furtherance of our mission to help end the stigma around psychosis through education, advocacy and support, we participated in meetings of the National Council for Mental Wellbeing (NatCon25), Higher Education Suicide Prevention Coalition, and the Pennsylvania Psychological Association.

Recognizing that family support and engagement are critical to recovery from psychosis, we provided outreach, trainings and/or resources in partnership with the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) Montgomery County (Wellness Wednesday Resource Fair), NAMI Keystone (Youth Mental Health Conference; Mental Health and Wellness Conference), UPENN Perelman School of Medicine NAMI Chapter, and NAMI Maryland (43rd Annual Conference). We were excited to also launch a new free virtual Family Focused Speaker Series, featuring topics selected by families of young people experiencing early psychosis, as part of our Connection Learning Healthcare System (CLHS) collaboration. (continued on page 2)

FEATURED CENTER **PEACE** Philadelphia County

From its inception in 2015, the [PEACE program](#) has successfully provided services to individuals in Philadelphia County aged 15-30 who have had a recent first experience with psychosis. All PEACE participants are receiving or eligible for Medicaid. PEACE is affiliated with Horizon House which serves more than 5,000 adults annually in Pennsylvania and Delaware. PEACE is a welcoming center where participants can visit during business hours and have access to an art room, a quiet space, desktop computers, educational groups, and classes and engagement with other PEACE participants.



PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF THE PEACE PROGRAM, NINA KOCH



Nina joined the team in 2019 as a Resilience Counselor, later stepping into a Lead role before becoming Director. She holds a master's in social work from the Bryn Mawr Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research. Nina has a clinical background and has supported individuals using a range of trauma-informed approaches, including CBT, psychodynamic, relational, and motivational interviewing. A native Philadelphian, she brings over a decade of experience supporting youth and advocating for Black, Brown, and marginalized communities, grounded in a lifelong commitment to community advocacy—including access to food, care, and healing from the impact of community violence. She is passionate about social justice, reducing mental health stigma, and encouraging the PEACE team to bring fresh, creative, and non-traditional approaches to their work. Nina brings that same spirit to her own life, staying grounded through local volunteering, time in nature, and listening to live music.

CLINICAL CARE IN FIRST EPISODE PSYCHOSIS GRAND ROUNDS SERIES 2025: TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

The HeadsUp 2025 Grand Rounds series was a great success with over 400 attendees from around the United States. Our speaker, Kristen Wright, Licensed Clinical Professional, Counselor, and Clinical Supervisor, offered an informative, intensive dive into Trauma Informed Care for First Episode Psychosis providers. These free, virtual sessions included topics such as trauma considerations for working on employment and education goals, identifying and addressing compassion fatigue in providers who do trauma work, and mind-body coping skills and strategies for trauma informed providers. We are grateful to Crystal Vatz, MS, our Education & Tele-Health Manager, for organizing this robust training and look forward to next year's offerings. For more information about this or other HeadsUp trainings, including how to request custom trainings, visit our [Training and Education](#) webpage.

THE FAMILY'S ROLE IN PSYCHOSIS RECOVERY

From the earliest signs of mental health changes to the ongoing journey of recovery, families can play a powerful and lasting role in supporting a loved one experiencing psychosis. When support is wanted and welcomed, caregivers can act as trusted allies, offering a steady hand during a time that can feel ungrounded and disorienting.

Initial symptoms of psychosis often begin in adolescence or early adulthood, a time when a young person's exploration of independence and personal identity are central to their development. During this period, relationships with family can be complex. Family support is most helpful when it's offered with consent, sensitivity, and flexibility. Every young person's needs are different; some may want close involvement, while others may need more space.

The staff at our Pennsylvania First Episode Psychosis (FEP) Centers are trained for family integration into treatment in ways that align with the young person's preferences. Whether it's a parent attending appointments or joining a family peer group, a sibling checking in regularly, or a grandparent helping with structure at home, when families understand what psychosis is and isn't, they are better prepared to respond calmly and constructively, rather than with fear or confusion.

As with all aspects of the Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) model offered at a Pennsylvania early psychosis centers, family treatment interventions are varied and often individualized, but are always centered around improving understanding about psychosis, building coping skills for emotional impacts of symptoms, and integrating components to help minimize and respond to relapse.

In addition to the clinical support and training we offer Pennsylvania's FEP programs, HeadsUp is committed to providing families with relevant and practical educational tools. Our website features a '[Family and Friends](#)' section filled with curated resources to support loved ones through every stage of the recovery journey. By working together, we can help young people experiencing psychosis find hope and strength for a brighter future.

FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS CONT...

To learn more about CLHS and the Early Psychosis Intervention Network (EPINET), please read our recently published article featured in this newsletter. Especially in this time of looming threats to federal funding for mental health care and research, we seek to build and strengthen our partnerships and resilience to push forward in our shared missions to support the mental health and recovery of young people and their families. If you or your organization would like us to attend an event, conduct a training workshop, or partner with us in any way, please email: headsuppaorg@gmail.com.

HeadsUp continues to provide more rapid access to care and assistance with triaging and referring individuals experiencing early psychosis to PA FEP Centers or other appropriate resources. You can [Find a Center](#) using our interactive map or contact HeadsUp to help you connect. Our [Referral & Outreach Resource Tool](#) and [HeadsUp Early Psychosis Mentor](#) service are free resources available to support clinicians, young people and their families connect to mental health care. Professionals interested in joining an FEP center team can check out the [open positions](#) listing on the HeadsUp website.

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. We wish you a healthy and enjoyable summer season!



Monica E. Calkins, PhD
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Co-Director

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NEW PENNSYLVANIA REFERRAL & OUTREACH RESOURCE TOOL

HeadsUp is excited to share our new [virtual search engine](#), connecting people and mental health professionals in Pennsylvania. Whether you are an individual looking for mental health resources for yourself or a loved one, a referring mental health professional in Pennsylvania, or seeking to outreach to organizations serving young people, finding local resources can be time consuming and challenging. Our [PA Referral & Outreach Resource Tool](#) is a dynamic search engine designed to more easily connect people and professionals. This list is always growing, and we continually strive to improve upon how well this feature works. If you have resources to add, or edits to make, [click here](#). We review and compile all changes and update our list four times per year. Thank you for your help in keeping this important tool accurate.

EPINET & CONNECTION LEARNING HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

NEW EPINET Hub Characterization Paper



In April, the [Early Psychosis Intervention Network \(EPINET\) Connection Learning Healthcare System](#) (CLHS) Hub published an article on hub-wide program and participant characteristics. As of 2021, CLHS programs have enrolled 1059 new participants ranging widely in demographics and characteristics. The 25 Coordinated Specialty Care programs in the hub serve young people and their families experiencing first episode psychosis in Pennsylvania and Maryland. This publication serves as the first official report describing the hub, outlining successes, challenges, and recommendations for methodological considerations, all geared towards providing specialized, evidence-based care for individuals experiencing early psychosis. [Click here to read the article](#).

Hub-wide Family Focused Speaker Series

Based on participant, family, and program feedback, the Early Psychosis Intervention Network (EPINET) Connection Learning Healthcare System (CLHS) launched a virtual, once-monthly Family-Focused Speaker Series in April. Families, friends, and caregivers from across Pennsylvania and Maryland programs are invited to join other caregivers and healthcare professionals for educational and supportive sessions covering a wide variety of topics, such as Psychosis Coping & Communication and Inspiring Hope with Recovery Oriented Cognitive Therapy.

FEATURED FREE VIRTUAL 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.

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.

Headsup-pa.org



Pennsylvania
Department of Human Services
Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

If you are interested in contributing to our newsletter please email: headsuppaorg@gmail.com