

FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS

Welcome to the 12th edition of the HeadsUp Newsletter! We are now past Thanksgiving, and it feels a bit wintry as the first snowflakes have arrived and 2026 is around the corner.

We are pleased to share updates on HeadsUp activities during the last several 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 [Helping to Overcome Psychosis Early \(HOPE\)](#) program. Established in 2016, HOPE operates three programs that cover six counties, providing exceptional, individualized, recovery-oriented, community-based services in mostly rural areas. Rural areas represent a major part of Pennsylvania, and there are numerous challenges to providing our care model to young people in need of early psychosis care.

HeadsUp has been through a busy fall schedule. First and foremost, the first week of our yearly training in November, where we were fortunate to host many excellent talks on a variety of Coordinated Specialty Care-focused topics, which gathered a large audience. The first day was in-person in Harrisburg, and it felt very good to see so many attend! The second week followed in December, with a focus on psychotherapeutic approaches.

In addition, we provided numerous free learning and training opportunities across the Commonwealth, as well as a 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.

Recognizing that family support and engagement are critical to recovery from psychosis, we provided outreach, training, and/or resources in partnership with the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI).
(continued on page 2)

FEATURED PROGRAM

Helping to Overcome Psychosis Early (HOPE)

HOPE is an early intervention program offered through the [Children's Service Center](#) for individuals between the ages of 15-30 who are experiencing early signs of psychosis, or their first episode of psychosis, within the past 12 months. Treatment focuses on shared decision-making, recovery, resiliency, and achieving aspirations. The program's model is evidence-based, indicating that early intervention yields positive outcomes. The HOPE program has three locations serving residents of six different northeastern Pennsylvania counties, including Carbon, Monroe, Luzerne, Wyoming, Wayne, and Pike Counties.



10TH ANNUAL PENNSYLVANIA EARLY PSYCHOSIS CONFERENCE

Thank you to everyone who participated in the [10th Annual Pennsylvania Early Psychosis Conference](#)! Whether you joined us in person in Harrisburg or showed up virtually, your engagement made this year's gathering a powerful reminder of what is possible when we come together around a shared mission.

With over 300 attendees, 35 presenters, and 45 sessions, this year's conference highlighted important aspects of early psychosis treatment, including evidence-based clinical treatment integration options, family support, substance use, cultural sensitivity, ethical concerns, engagement, psychopharmacology, and Recovery-Oriented Cognitive Therapy (CT-R) for providers of First Episode Psychosis (FEP) care. Throughout the conference, sessions sparked meaningful dialogue, shared promising practices, and highlighted innovative approaches to early identification, treatment, and engagement.

We are grateful to our presenters, planning partners, and the entire HeadsUp team who, led by our Education and Tele-Health Manager, Crystal Vatz, MS, LPC, BC-TMH, made this event applicable and inspiring. Our collaboration highlights the strength of our statewide network and underscores the importance of ongoing learning and camaraderie. We look forward to building on this momentum by staying connected, sharing implementation strategies and outcomes, and coordinating additional opportunities for gathering. Together, we are building a stronger, compassionate system of care for youth and families.



HEADSUP END OF YEAR HIGHLIGHTS, 2025!

OUTREACH

85,000

Number of website users in 2025

PA FEP TREATMENT OUTCOMES

77%

Decrease in number of hospitalizations for program participants by 24-month follow-up*

PROFESSIONAL TRAININGS

1348

Number of people who participated in our 70 FREE educational trainings offered in 2025

ACCESS TO CARE

17
(soon to be 18)

Number of Pennsylvania FEP Centers

FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS CONT...

If you or your organization would like us to attend an event, conduct a training workshop, or partner with us in any way, please contact us at 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 early psychosis center team can review the [employment opportunities](#) listed on the HeadsUp website.

In this time of continued threat 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. 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.

From all of us at HeadsUp, we wish you a happy holiday season to hopefully spend with your loved ones and recharge for the start of 2026.



Christian Kohler, MD
Co-Director



Monica E. Calkins, PhD
Co-Director

FOLLOW US!

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



@headsuppa



@HeadsUpPAorg



@HeadsUp PA



@HeadsUp

Headsup-pa.org

HEADSUP IN THE COMMUNITY

As an integral part of our organizational mission, we participated in over 30 outreach events across the state of Pennsylvania this past calendar year. With the guidance of many of our community members, including our FEP program staff, we were able to make lasting connections and help spread awareness about psychosis and early intervention. Some highlights from the year include: the National Conference on Mental Wellbeing (NatCon) in Philadelphia, Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA) Strive to Thrive Conference in Hershey, the NAMI Keystone PA Mental Health and Wellness Conference in Harrisburg, the Pennsylvania Counseling Association Conference in Bethlehem, the Pennsylvania School Counselors Association Conference in State College, and the NAMI Green Light Gala in Pittsburgh. We appreciate all the wonderful organizations and their steadfast efforts, and look forward to many more opportunities ahead. If you have suggestions for events, HeadsUp sponsorship, training, or attendance in 2026, please email us: headsuppaorg@gmail.com.

NEW YEAR, NEW PENNSYLVANIA FIRST EPISODE PSYCHOSIS (FEP) CENTER: LANCASTER COUNTY, PATHWAYS TO HOPE - COMING SOON!

We are excited to announce the upcoming opening of **Pathways to Hope**, a specialized program offered through WellSpan Health, Philhaven, serving young people in Lancaster County. Designed to support individuals experiencing a first episode of psychosis and grounded in evidence-based practices, this program will provide early, intensive, and coordinated care to help individuals stabilize, recover, and move forward with their lives. The goal of Pathways to Hope is to reduce the long-term impact of psychosis by promoting early engagement, personalized treatment,

and community integration. The multidisciplinary team will partner with individuals and their families to support wellness, resilience, and hope from the very first step. For updates on Pathways to Hope, or to learn more about each of our PA FEP centers, including how to reach out for treatment, visit the dynamic Find a Center page on our website. We remain committed to supporting these invaluable PA early psychosis resources and advocating for the continued expansion of care to serve all Pennsylvania residents.

WELLSPAN®

CONNECTION LEARNING HEALTHCARE SYSTEM (CLHS) EARLY PSYCHOSIS INTERVENTION NETWORK UPDATES

CLHS is seeking input from current and former CSC participants about how to improve school and work services.

CLHS investigator Nev Jones is running a project called Understanding School, Work, and Disability-Benefit Decisions in Early Psychosis. Her team is interviewing participants and family members about the school and work services offered by early psychosis treatment programs – likes, dislikes, and ways to improve. So far, interviewees have described challenges faced when pursuing longer-term career planning versus short term job placement or community college access. Interviewees also highlight complexities faced by the current generation of youth/young adults, including the rise of AI, the gig economy, and decision making regarding higher education and student debt. The team hopes to learn more about how to ensure early psychosis program education

and employment services meet these challenges. To learn more, contact Nev Jones at nevjones@pitt.edu.

We have been updating the **CLHS Website!**

With input from the CLHS Family Member Collective, we have expanded content and made the site easier to navigate. Check out our Data Snapshots – 1-page summaries of findings on a range of topics related to early psychosis. We also have a new CLHS Email List allowing us to send information on new programs and opportunities directly to you! Please sign up [here](#) or contact Brian Brandler at bbrandler@som.umaryland.edu for more information.



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.

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



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