Perelman School of Medicine University of Pennsylvania

HeadsUp

Changing Minds, Empowering Lives

Newsletter 14
November, 2026

From our Co-directors

Happy fall!

We hope you have been able to enjoy the change in the seasons this year. We have had some spectacular days with beautiful sunshine and colorful foliage in and around Philadelphia!

As we come towards the end of 2026, we are looking forward to the 11th Annual PA Early Psychosis Conference, which will start off on November 16th. Our team has assembled a schedule of established and novel presentations that we hope will provide you with new perspectives and tools in supporting young persons with psychosis and their families. As always, we focus on the availability of Coordinated Specialty Care for early psychosis services in Pennsylvania.

This newsletter highlights the STEP program in Pittsburgh, one of the largest and oldest First Episode Psychosis programs in PA, and, operating for over 30 years, also one of the oldest in the United States.

HeadsUp continues to be an active supporter of connecting young people to care. As part of these activities, we will describe our pilot program screening young persons for psychosis symptoms in the Penn primary care network. We hope to be able to present data on this effort soon to motivate other programs to pursue this linkage in an effort to reduce untreated psychosis.

We remain grateful for your efforts and motivation to provide first-episode services and the continued commitment and support by OMHSAS.



Christian Kohler, MD
Co-Director



Monica E. Calkins, PhD
Co-Director

FEATURED PROGRAM — Services for the Treatment of Early Psychosis (STEP) *Pittsburgh, PA*

Services for the Treatment of Early Psychosis (STEP) is part of the Comprehensive Recovery Services (CRS) division of UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital. STEP is an outpatient clinical program for the evaluation, treatment, and rehabilitation of people who may be experiencing early symptoms and signs of psychotic illness in a recovery-oriented setting. Located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, their goal is to determine how early symptoms may contribute to the onset and course of psychotic disorders so we may then make better treatment decisions.

STEP provides evaluation and treatment services for individuals, ages 14 to 40, who experience psychosis symptoms or difficulties separating reality from unreal experiences or false beliefs within the past 5 years and reside in the state of Pennsylvania.

UPMC
LIFE CHANGING MEDICINE



CHRISTIE KELLY, MA, LPC

Program Supervisor at the UPMC Services for the Treatment of Early Psychosis (STEP) clinic

Christie Kelly, MA, LPC, is a licensed professional counselor with 20 years of experience in varying settings of the mental and behavioral health field. Christie received her undergraduate degrees in Criminal Justice and Psychology and Masters degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling and Business Administration. Previous experience includes supervising outpatient mental health and school-based mental health programs, supervising one of the largest research-based summer treatment programs in the country, and owning a small, private practice in the Pittsburgh area. Christie is passionate about learning new therapeutic techniques and offering guidance and supervision to the future counselors of Pennsylvania. Christie has extensive training and experience in treating various mental health populations including psychosis, autism-spectrum, intellectual disabilities, anxiety disorders, tic disorder and ADHD, including being trained in the administration of the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) and Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA). Through her work within school settings across Pennsylvania, she has gained a grounded perspective in the unique challenges affecting children, adolescents, and transition-aged youth.

11th Annual

HeadsUp PA Early Psychosis Conference

Week 1: November 16-20, 2026 **Week 2: December 14-18, 2026**

Now in its 11th year, the annual HeadsUp PA Early Psychosis Conference is designed for professionals and practitioners treating early psychosis. It provides a FREE, dynamic opportunity to strengthen skill sets, share best practices with colleagues, and implement new strategies, research and trends into practice.

Anyone interested in learning more about early psychosis care is welcome to join this event virtually via Zoom Events. In addition, we are excited to offer an in-person opportunity for connection to our Pennsylvania First Episode Psychosis team members on November 16th. Visit the annual training page on our website to learn more and to register.

This training is made possible through a 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).

THANK YOU!

We would like to express our gratitude and extend our best wishes to George Corona, LSW, CPRP, who has moved on from his role as Director of the ENGAGE programs.

Throughout his time with ENGAGE, George brought positivity, compassion, and hope to his work supporting young people and staff at the program's two locations serving Allegheny and Westmoreland County residents.

We thank George for his contributions and ongoing consultation and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.



Featured *FREE* VIRTUAL resources

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.

"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.

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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Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

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Outreach Psychosis Facts Quiz

We are continuously working to bring early psychosis education into our communities, with the goal of reducing stigma and decreasing the time between when someone first notices psychosis symptoms and when they reach out for help. With feedback and support from our amazing Steering Committee, we've launched a new outreach quiz! This short, interactive quiz tests mental health professional's knowledge about some of the most frequently asked questions we've gathered over the years.
Our hope is that it gets people thinking about psychosis and encourages them to keep learning, whether through one of our free trainings or other resources.

Want to test your knowledge? Take the quiz here



HeadsUp Out in the World



After a quieter summer, fall kicks off a busy season for HeadsUp! In addition to our annual HeadsUp Pennsylvania Early Psychosis Conference, our team will be out and about across Pennsylvania—connecting with professionals, advocates, families, and communities at conferences, community events, fundraisers, and networking opportunities.

HeadsUp fall 2026 activities include:

- NAMIWalks Chester County Pennsylvania
- Pennsylvania Association of Community Health Centers (PACHC)
- NAMI Lehigh Valley Pennsylvania Pickleball for a Purpose
- The Philadelphia Psychology Network Mental Health Providers Networking Event
- Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania Conference
- Benefit for the Brain – NAMI Montgomery County Pennsylvania

We're looking forward to sharing resources, building new connections, and continuing conversations about early psychosis and the importance of reaching young people early. If you'll be at one of these events, come find us and say hello!

Early Psychosis Screening: Penn Integrated Care (PIC)

Too often, identification of early psychosis symptoms is delayed because there are frequently no systems in place to screen for psychosis symptoms. While screening for mental health experiences such as anxiety, depression, and suicidality has become more commonplace in primary care, routine psychosis screening remains rare in the U.S. However, brief screening in primary care settings can facilitate early identification and access to care, ultimately improving outcomes, especially for historically underserved youth. To this end, HeadsUp is grateful to partner with Penn Integrated Care (PIC) of the University of Pennsylvania Health System in just such an early psychosis screening project.

PIC employs a collaborative care model to increase access to and engagement with mental health care to improve mental and physical health outcomes. In June 2024, PIC added a brief early psychosis screening tool to their existing clinical measures. Since that time, HeadsUp has assisted over 180 young people in connecting to appropriate mental health care options, including referrals to specialized early psychosis care throughout Pennsylvania. HeadsUp looks forward to this ongoing collaboration, and future expansion of this screening model.

Connection Learning Healthcare System (CLHS) Early Psychosis Intervention Network Updates

We continue to utilize and build upon our collaboration with other organizations through the Connection Learning Healthcare System (Connection LHS), an Early Psychosis Intervention Network (EPINET) Regional Hub. Connection LHS, represents a collaboration of investigators in early psychosis services. 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 more than 20 programs delivering Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) for youth and young adults experiencing early psychosis and their families.

EPINET
Early Psychosis Intervention Network

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