



nh healthy families.

2 Executive Park Drive
Bedford, NH 03110

First Episode Psychosis and Early Serious Mental Illness

Psychosis temporarily interferes with the brain's ability to make out reality and causes disruptions in thoughts and perceptions. Everyone's experience with psychosis is different and psychosis often comes and goes in episodes. Psychosis is more common than most people think; affecting about 3 in 100 people during their lives.

Individuals who experience a first onset of serious mental illness - which can include a first episode of psychosis - may experience symptoms that include:

- Suspiciousness or extreme uneasiness with others
- Hearing, seeing, tasting or believing things that others don't
- Persistent, unusual thoughts or beliefs
- Strong and inappropriate emotions or no emotions at all
- Withdrawing from family or friends
- A sudden decline in self-care
- Trouble thinking clearly or concentrating

Help is available

Like other chronic health conditions, the sooner symptoms are identified and a treatment program is put into action, the more likely it is for a patient's overall condition and health status to improve. There are effective treatments available and the earlier that an individual receives treatment, the greater likelihood that these treatments can lead to better outcomes and enable people to live full and productive lives with their family and friends.

The most effective treatment for early psychosis is Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC). The earlier a person experiencing psychosis receives CSC, the better his or her quality of life. CSC uses a team-based approach with shared decision-making that focuses on working with individuals to reach their recovery goals.

More specifically, coordinated specialty care programs function with five key provisions:

- **Case Management:** Person-centered care, assisted by a care manager who helps clients and family members to navigate among treatment options.
- **Medication/Primary Care:** Communication about the importance of medication and potential value even after symptom improvement is critical in early discussion.

- **Psychotherapy:** Cognitive behavioral therapy as an evidence-based intervention for psychosis.
- **Family Education and Support:** Family psychoeducation so that consumers choose the support people they want involved in their recovery, and families/supports get information that helps them play an active role in the recovery process.
- **Supported Employment and Education:** Fostering autonomy and setting goals, including returning to school or work, developing new interests, meeting new people, and making new friends.

Programs that provide CSC are often called first-episode psychosis or FEP programs. These programs are available in a growing number of areas.

See the links below for additional resources and information:

References:

https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/pep19-pl-guide-3_0.pdf

<https://www.nasmhpd.org/content/information-providers>

<https://www.naminh.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Tipsheet-What-is-Early-and-First-Episode-Psychosis.pdf>