

Behavioral Health Resources for Schools

Evidence-Based Practice: First Episode Psychosis (FEP)

The word *psychosis* is used to describe conditions that affect the mind, where there has been some loss of contact with reality. It can be a symptom of a mental illness or a physical condition. It can also be caused by some medications, alcohol or drug abuse.

Mental health treatment practitioners have, over the years, observed that most individuals who have a serious mental illness (such as bipolar disorder, major depression, and schizophrenia) typically experience the first signs of illness during adolescence or early adulthood. Yet there are often long intervals between the onset of symptoms and diagnosis, referral, and treatment.

Early intervention strategies are seen as increasingly important because they reduce the likelihood of long-term disability that people with severe mental illness often experience. The goal is to help these individuals lead fulfilling, independent, and productive lives and reduce the crises that may accompany more advanced mental illness.

Research supports a variety of treatments for **First Episode Psychosis**, especially coordinated specialty care (CSC)¹ which provides:

- Individual or group psychotherapy
- Family support and education
- Medications (also called pharmacotherapy)
- Supported Employment/Education
- Case management



Know the Signs

These warning signs may signal early psychosis:

- Hearing, seeing, tasting or believing things that others don't
- Suspiciousness or extreme uneasiness with others
- 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

If you or someone you know is experiencing these warning signs, contact a healthcare professional or a first-episode psychosis program if one exists in your community. Early action keeps young lives on track.

In Nebraska, publically funded FEP

treatment is operational in two locations: **To Refer:**

On-Track of the Heartland: Region 6,
Omaha 402-552-7003

On-Track Central Nebraska: Region 3,
Kearney 308-237-5113

¹ National Institute of Mental Health