

Schools/Universities role in FEP - Draft Guidelines

Focus Area: Early Detection and Rapid Access

Barriers:

- School staff are not trained and able to identify signs/symptoms of psychosis for students
- Students may not show up to school if they begin to experience symptoms
- Transition period from high school to college coincides with peak age of early onset

Schools

- School nurses should know the signs and symptoms of psychosis, including but not limited to:
 - Changes in thinking patterns such as unusual or irrational beliefs, paranoia, delusions
 - Hallucinations
 - Disorganized or confused thinking
 - Significant mood changes, extreme sadness or irritability
 - Withdrawal from family/friends/social activities
 - Reduced ability to function in daily life
- School nurses and appropriate staff know where to refer youth with signs of psychosis or serious mental illness
- Schools provide or have access to a directory of organizations providing mental health services that is updated on a regular basis with availability for new patients and services provided (Consider community organizations that can provide this service in your area)
- Implement educational interventions to address stigma in the school environment, and monitor for best practices/policies in the education space for these interventions

Universities/Colleges

- Train educators/staff to identify basic signs/symptoms of psychosis and where to refer students when concerns arise (e.g., onsite health center)
- For colleges/universities with onsite health centers and/or mental health centers, require training for mental health professionals on signs/symptoms of FEP and screen using validated tools. Create referral protocols that emphasize immediate connection to specialty mental health.

- Include CSC programs and other specialty mental health centers in referral resources for parents/caregivers, students and educators.

Brainstorm:

- training educators on recognition of psychosis signs and referral, building referral pathways to mental health professionals
- screening for mental health concerns,
- interventions to reduce stigma in the school environment, encouraging students to seek help promptly if needed
- work with CSC programs in your area to integrate support for students experiencing psychosis into school based education plans
- monitor for best practices/policies in education space for the other components

Johannessen JO, McGlashan TH, Larsen TK, Horneland M, Joa I, Mardal S, Kvebaek R, Friis S, Melle I, Opjordsmoen S, Simonsen E, Ulrik H, Vaglum P. Early detection strategies for untreated first-episode psychosis. *Schizophr Res.* 2001 Aug 1;51(1):39-46. doi: 10.1016/s0920-9964(01)00237-7. PMID: 11479064.

- Comprehensive early detection program reduced DUP and increased referrals to FEP treatment from schools, friends and families
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