

Dispelling the Myths

MYTH: Teenagers don't suffer from "real" mental illnesses; they're just moody.

FACT: One in five children and adolescents suffers from mental illnesses. Most severe mental illnesses start in the teenage years.

MYTH: Talk about suicide is an idle threat that need not be taken seriously.

FACT: 90% or more of all suicide victims have a mental illness and/or a substance abuse problem. For people ages 15-24, suicide is the third leading cause of death.

MYTH: Mental health problems are really the result of poor parenting and lack of discipline in the home.

FACT: Mental illnesses can be inherited from one generation to another, and often have nothing to do with parenting.

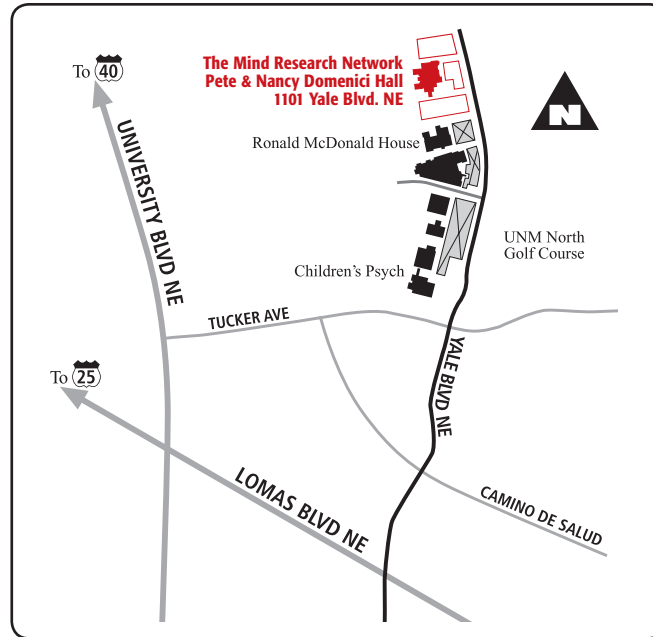
MYTH: Mental illnesses are not real and cannot be treated.

FACT: Mental disorders are diagnosed in similar ways as asthma, diabetes and cancer. Treatments of mental illness are effective 60%-80% of the time. This rate meets or exceeds success rates for cutting edge treatment for heart disease.

The National Mental Health Awareness Campaign

For alternative resources contact UNM CPC Programs for Children and Adolescents at (505) 272-2190 or UNM Psychiatric Center at (505) 272-2800.

If you are in crisis, or need immediate attention, call UNM Psychiatric Emergency Services at (505) 272-2920 or call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) 24 hours a day.



For more information, or to get help, contact:

EARLY@mrn.org
1-888-NM-EARLY
(1-888-663-2759)

www.earlyprogram.org



The EARLY Program is a treatment and research initiative with the mission of reducing the incidence of psychotic illness in Bernalillo County, New Mexico.

The **Mind**
RESEARCH NETWORK
FOR NEURODIAGNOSTIC DISCOVERY

 **UNM**
SCHOOL of MEDICINE

HRRC# 08-224

PREVENT MENTAL ILLNESS WITH EARLY DETECTION

Information for Youth and Families



EARLY

Early Assessment and Resource Linkage for Youth

The EARLY Program

The primary goal of the EARLY Program (Early Assessment and Resource Linkage for Youth) is to identify and treat adolescents and young adults who are experiencing changes in their thoughts, behavior or emotions that might be associated with developing a psychotic illness. Psychosis is a condition that may include hallucinations (hearing or seeing things that are not real), delusions (false beliefs) and confused thinking.

Early identification and intervention may prevent or delay the onset and decrease the severity of a serious mental illness.



About Mental Illness and the Pre-Illness Phase

Mental illnesses interfere with a person's experience of their world: disrupting their thinking, feeling, moods and ability to relate to others.

The pre-illness phase or prodrome, is a stage before psychosis. This critical phase can be a period of days, weeks or years. Early symptoms of psychosis may be quite obvious or hardly noticeable. For example, imagine how you feel before getting the flu. Often you just don't feel "right". You may sneeze once, feel more tired than usual or have a headache. In the same way, a person may have early symptoms of mental illness, and is "at risk" of developing something more serious.

What are the Early Symptoms of Psychosis?



Early symptoms or new experiences can occur on and off over time. It is the combination of several symptoms, rather than any one symptom, that puts an individual at risk.

- heightened sensitivity to sights, sounds, smells or touch
- suspiciousness of others
- having jumbled thoughts and confusion
- feeling "something's not quite right"
- hearing sounds/voices that are not there
- being fearful for no good reason
- declining interest in people, activities and self care
- trouble speaking or writing clearly
- dramatic changes in sleep or appetite

When to Call EARLY

When in doubt, call EARLY, even if it is just to talk with a clinician over the phone about your concerns. There is convincing evidence that early intervention reduces the impact and disruption in a person's life and may prevent the onset of psychosis altogether.

Do not take the "wait and see" approach.

For more information or to get help call EARLY at 1-888-NM-EARLY (1-888-663-2759)

Services Provided by EARLY

Identify, and help others identify, young people who are showing pre-illness signs or active symptoms of a psychotic illness.

Evaluate an individual's risk for psychosis.

Treat those who are at highest risk with psycho-social and medication interventions.

Maintain a long-term relationship with individuals and their families to provide the clinical and personal support needed to attain the full benefit of the program.

In addition, youth enrolled in the EARLY Program may choose to be part of a **Brain Imaging** initiative that uses sophisticated non-invasive techniques to pinpoint brain regions that may be overactive or underactive in individuals experiencing the early warning signs of psychosis.

What Happens When You Contact EARLY

Young people are initially screened to determine if the symptoms or problems they are having may be caused by early psychosis. If the screen is positive, a more in-depth assessment will follow to ascertain level of risk. This process is very useful to young people because it can often ease their mind by helping them, their families and their doctors understand what is happening and by receiving advice as to what can be done. If someone is found to be at risk, he/she is offered services and immediate medical treatment to begin the road to recovery.