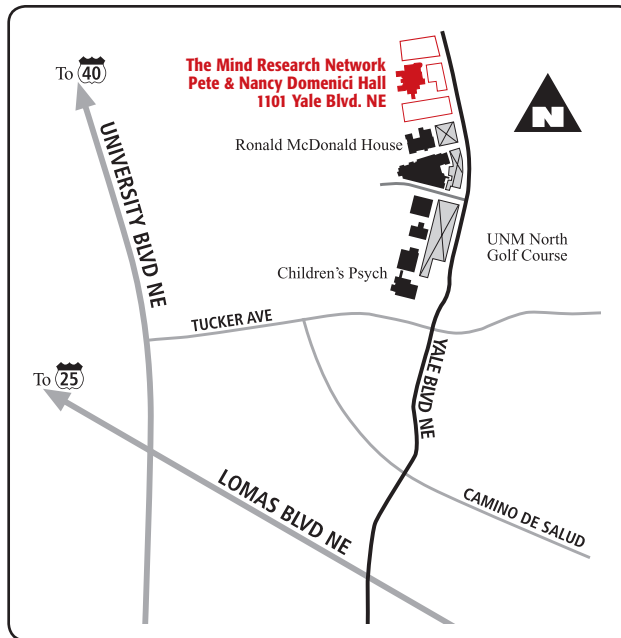


We Can't Do It Without You!

- Typically, psychotic illnesses first emerge in late adolescence or early adulthood.
- 3 out of 100 people will experience a psychotic episode in their lifetime.
- With treatment, many people can make a full recovery.
- Early recognition and treatment of psychotic disorders is an important way of preventing or minimizing disability.
- Recovery may be possible without medication or with low doses of medication if the delay between onset of symptoms and treatment is reduced.
- Early treatment offers the best chance for progression in school, work, and in the development of social connections.

Professionals working with youth and young adults play a crucial role in ensuring that early identification and intervention occurs for every young person at risk.



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 Professionals



EARLY

Early Assessment and Resource Linkage for Youth

1-888-NM-EARLY

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.

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

Treatment Program:

The EARLY Program is staffed by a multidisciplinary team with special training in the area of early identification and treatment of psychosis. Young people who are showing the warning signs of a psychotic illness and their families are offered services once the young person has met criteria for inclusion in the program.

Brain Imaging and Genetics Research:

Youth enrolled in the EARLY Program may choose to be part of brain imaging and genetics research initiatives. These initiatives use sophisticated non-invasive techniques to pinpoint brain regions that may be overactive or underactive in individuals experiencing the early warning signs of psychosis, and to investigate possible links between genes and psychosis.

Research Background:

The EARLY Program is based on studies in Australia, Scandinavia and the United States that focus on interrupting the very early progression of schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders. These studies demonstrate that it is possible to intervene in, and counteract, the acute onset of major psychotic disorders.



Early Assessment and Resource Linkage for Youth

EARLY provides confidential assessment, education, treatment and assistance for young people and their families, and conducts research about the benefits of early identification and intervention for symptoms of psychosis. Research shows that when the public, educators and health professionals have information about the early warning signs of psychosis, young people who are at risk get help earlier. As a result, their chances greatly improve for staying in school, working, maintaining relationships and planning for a successful future. EARLY services include:

Consultation: EARLY staff is available to families, individuals, teachers, doctors, and other professionals to help determine whether an assessment for early symptoms of mental illness is warranted.

Assessment: 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.

Treatment: Those who are at highest risk will be treated with an evidence-based package of psychosocial and psychopharmacological interventions.

Referral: If a young person is not found to be at risk for psychosis, but would benefit from treatment, team members will help the person find appropriate help elsewhere.

Collaboration with schools and community: EARLY trains teachers, school professionals and health organizations about psychosis, early warning signs, and how to access EARLY services. EARLY also works to educate about stigma, preventing mental illness, and best methods of treatment.

What is Psychosis?

Psychosis refers to changes in the brain that interfere with a person's experience of their world. Psychotic illnesses include schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and major depression. Characteristic symptoms of psychosis are:

- Hallucinations: hearing voices or seeing visions
- Delusions: false beliefs or irrational suspicions of others
- Confused thinking: jumbled thoughts or speech, difficulty concentrating

Early Identification and Treatment Can Result in:

- Preservation of psychosocial skills
- Preservation of family and social supports
- More rapid recovery
- Possibly reduced need for medication
- Preservation of brain function
- Decreased need for hospitalization

What are the Early Signs & Symptoms of Psychosis?

The pre-illness period, called the Prodromal Phase, encompasses the period of early symptoms or changes in functioning that precede psychosis. Symptoms during this phase may be quite obvious or hardly noticeable. They can occur over a matter of days or months.

Early signs and symptoms can occur on and off over time. It is the combination of several of these, rather than any one, that puts someone at risk.

- Social withdrawal
- A marked drop in functioning
- Increasing difficulty with concentration
- Heightened sensitivity to sights, sounds, smells or touch
- Loss of motivation or energy to participate in activities
- Dramatic sleep and appetite changes
- Suspiciousness of others
- Unusual or exaggerated beliefs about personal powers
- Hearing sounds/voices that are not there