

CHARGE UP by UNLV PRACTICE

Collaborative Healthcare Advancing Resilience, Growth & Empowerment to Unlock Potential
(CHARGE UP)

An Early Intervention Program

Mailing Address: 4505 S. Maryland Parkway • Box 453033 • Las Vegas, NV

89154-3033 Main: 702-895-5555 • Fax 702-895-1530

CHARGE-UP@UNLV.EDU

Early Psychosis for Primary Care Physicians

“Psychosis” refers to disturbances involving delusions (fixed beliefs that resist conflicting evidence), hallucinations (perceptual experiences that occur without an external stimulus), disorganized thinking or speech (rapidly switching between topics, tangential responses, incoherence), or grossly abnormal psychomotor behavior (ranging from developmentally inappropriate silliness, to agitation, to catatonia- a marked decrease in reactivity to the environment).

These symptoms can manifest in a variety of ways over the course of the illness. While everyone may have a different experience, psychosis is often described as being confusing and scary.

Early Warning Signs Before Psychosis:

Early psychosis typically has gradual, non-specific changes in thoughts and perceptions that may not always be understood by the individual experiencing them. These changes can be difficult to distinguish from typical adolescent behavior—which is why early detection, assessment and treatment is important.

Early warning signs may include:

- A significant decline in academic or work performance
- Difficulties thinking and concentrating
- Uneasiness or suspiciousness around others
- A decline in self-care routines (e.g. showering, brushing teeth, etc)
- Isolating behaviors
- Experiencing intense, inappropriate emotions or numbness

Signs of Early or First Episode Psychosis:

Although detection of a first episode psychotic episode can be difficult, these are the most common symptoms associated with early psychosis:

- Hearing, tasting, feeling, or seeing things that other people do not
- Experiencing intense, inappropriate emotions or numbness
- Withdrawing from any social support system (e.g. family, friends, etc)
- Persistent, unusual thoughts or beliefs that are unwavering regardless of what others think
- Trouble thinking clearly or concentrating
- A sudden decline in self-care routines (e.g. showering, brushing teeth, etc)

Symptoms of Psychosis:

Psychosis includes a range of symptoms, but generally involves one of two major experiences - hallucinations and delusions.

HALLUCINATIONS

Seeing, hearing or feeling things that are not there. For example:

- Hearing voices (auditory hallucinations)
- Unexplainable, strange sensations or feelings
- Seeing glimpses of objects or people that are not there or distortions

DELUSIONS

Strong beliefs that are not consistent with the person's culture, are likely untrue, and may seem irrational to others. For example:

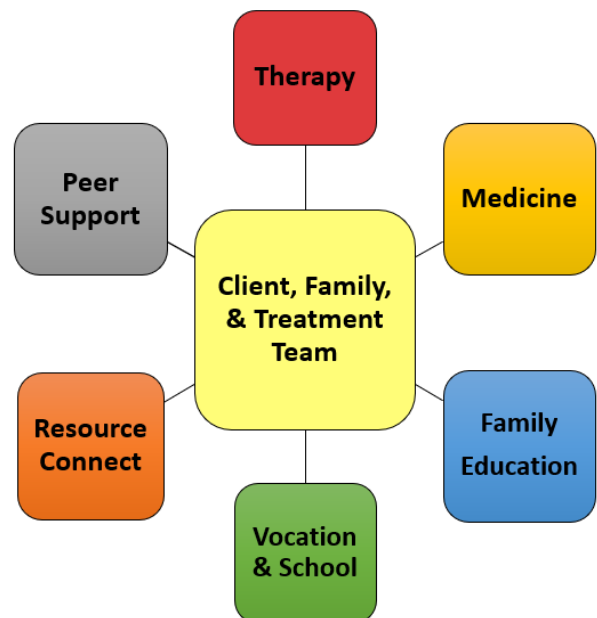
- Believing that external forces are driving thoughts, emotions and behaviors
- Believing that trivial events, remarks or objects have remarkable significance
- Thinking you have special powers, or are some sort of God.

Treatment

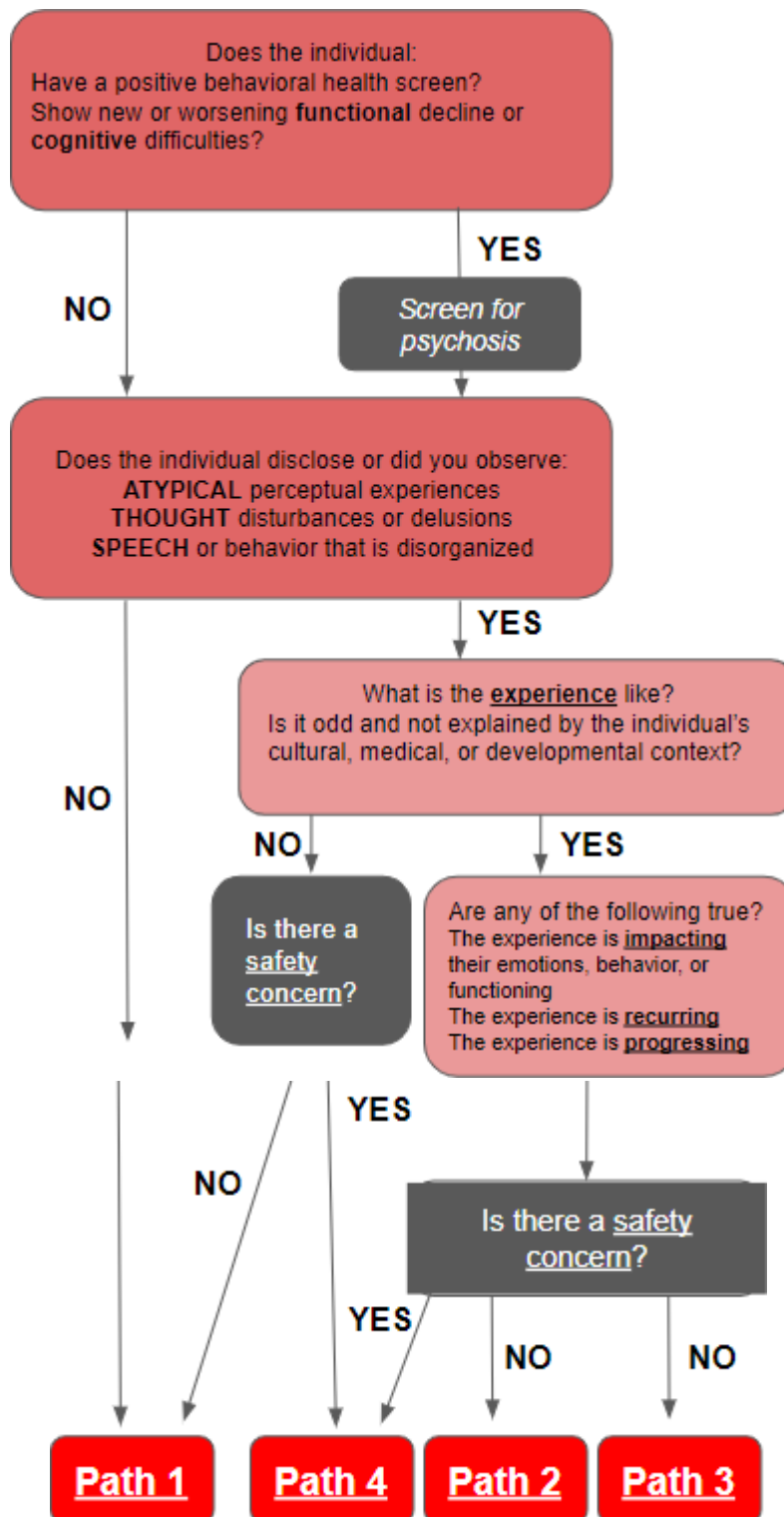
Early treatment of psychosis, at the earliest signs of illness, is crucial in supporting the best outcomes for individuals. Research has shown that the best approach to early psychosis treatment is by the use of *Coordinated Specialty Care* (CSC). CSC is formed of a team of different health professionals and specialists who work with the individual and their families to create a treatment plan based on personal life goals.

Key Components of CSC:

- Psychotherapy
- Peer support
- Family support and education
- Case management & Resource Connect
- Medication management
- Vocation and School Support



Decision-Making Flowchart for Patients ages 12-35:



PATH 1

Reassure the individual by helping them put their experiences into context and know they are not alone.

Redirect the individual to appropriate mental health treatment as well as connect them to relevant educational resources.

PATH 2

Monitor the individual's symptoms and screen regularly for additional psychotic-like experiences.

Educate the individual and family on general mental health resources and direct them to reach out if symptoms increase or intensify.

PATH 3

Refer the individual to **specialized assessment** of psychosis and/or psychosis risk.

Seek **consultation/specialized treatment** options

PATH 4

Same Day Assessment:

Seek consultation from a mental health professional that is trained to address this level of need.

Respond to risk of harm using established protocols.

Consider contacting a mobile crisis team or recommending a visit to a psychiatric emergency room.

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Useful Links:

<https://www.unlv.edu/medicine/fep>

<https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Mental-Health-Conditions/Psychosis>

<https://www.samhsa.gov/esmi-treatment-locator>

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/understanding-psychosis>

<https://childmind.org/article/watching-for-signs-of-psychosis-in-teens/#:~:text=Early%20signs%20of%20psychosis%20are,would%20probably%20be%20very%20noticeable.>