

# Children's Mental Health Matters!

a Maryland public awareness campaign

## Facts For Educators

### Psychosis

Psychosis occurs when an individual loses contact with reality, resulting in severe disruptions in thinking, emotion and behavior. Psychosis can have a serious impact on a person's life. Relationships, work, school, other usual activities and self-care can be difficult to initiate or maintain. Psychosis can be present with many disorders including post-traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia, psychotic depression, bipolar disorder, schizoaffective disorder and drug-induced psychosis. Symptoms for psychosis usually begin in late adolescence or early adulthood.

Psychosis affects the way a person thinks, feels and acts. Symptoms include:

- Hallucinations (hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling or feeling things that are not there)
- Delusions (fixed beliefs that are false, such as that one is being watched or followed)
- Disordered/confused thinking and difficulty concentrating
- Rapid changes in mood/feelings
- Behavior changes, including not taking care of or grooming oneself as usual or laughing at inappropriate times

One of the problems in psychosis is that the condition causes the brain to take in too much information all at once, which can leave a person feeling very overwhelmed. Also, the brain has a hard time seeing the differences between what is "real," what is a "dream," and what is a "fantasy." Individuals can believe that the information that their brains are giving them is real and occurring, even when it is clear to others that it is not.

#### Why is this important?

Experiencing symptoms of psychosis may disrupt a child's life. When psychosis is detected early, many problems can be prevented and the greater the chances are of a successful recovery. Mental illnesses with psychosis often develop between ages 15 to 25. This is a critical stage of life when teens and young adults are developing their identities, forming relationships, and planning for their future.

#### At school, a young person may

- Appear unmotivated
- Distance themselves from peers
- Show a decline in completing work, not do as good a job as they used to, or miss school
- Have inappropriate or no reactions to others
- Do things to drown out auditory hallucinations (e.g. listening to music on headphones in class)

These behaviors can all have an impact on school achievement, and some may result in disciplinary responses.

#### What can educators do about it?

Treatment for psychosis often involves the following:

- Learning treatment options and working with professionals
- Working with a mental health professional to learn coping skills
- Working with a physician to determine how medications can help
- Working with professionals that specialize in helping youth and young adults to manage relationships and jobs

Children's  
Mental  
Health  
Matters.org

A MARYLAND PUBLIC  
AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

coordinated by

mhamd   
MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF MARYLAND

MCF  
maryland coalition of families

[www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org](http://www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org)

## **Resources/Links**

### **Maryland Early Intervention Program (EIP)**

Offers specialized programs with expertise in early identification, evaluation, and comprehensive psychiatric treatment of adolescents and young adults at risk for, or in the early states of mental illness with psychosis.

[www.marylandeip.com](http://www.marylandeip.com)

### **ReachOut**

<http://www.reachoutpsychosis.com/family/psychosis-a-medical-illness-of-the-brain-how-to-spot-and-stop-psychosis-early/>

### **National Association of Special Education Teachers**

<https://www.naset.org/>

### **Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, Early Psychosis**

**Intervention Clinic.** Treats adolescents and young adults ages 14 to 24. 410-955-5212

[http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/psychiatry/specialty\\_areas/schizophrenia/patient\\_information/treatment\\_services/early\\_psychosis.html](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/psychiatry/specialty_areas/schizophrenia/patient_information/treatment_services/early_psychosis.html)

MHAMD ~ 443-901-1550 ~ [www.mhamd.org](http://www.mhamd.org)

MCF ~ 410-730-8267 ~ [www.mdcoalition.org](http://www.mdcoalition.org)

The Children's Mental Health Matters! Campaign is a collaboration of the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMd) and the Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) with support from the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene - Behavioral Health Administration. The Campaign goal, with over 250 partners and schools across the state, is to raise public awareness of the importance of children's mental health. For more information, please visit [www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org](http://www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org).