PIER MAY STUDY NEWSLETTER

FALL 2015

THE PIER MAY (MENTAL HEALTH ATTITUDES OF YOUTH) STUDY CONTINUES TO ACCEPT REFERRALS

School is back in session, so please keep the MAY Study in mind as the school year progresses! The MAY Study offers free educational presentations to community organizations about psychosis and the importance of referring early for screenings. Thanks to many of you, appropriate referrals to the study were steady during the 2014-2015 school year, leading to our present total of 33 subjects at the Maine site.

Until June 2016, the MAY Study will continue to offer free screening assessments to young people throughout the state of Maine between the ages of 12 and 35 who are showing the early signs of a psychotic illness (see attached symptoms handout). When someone is not eligible for the MAY Study, we communicate with his/her service providers, or connect the person/family to community services, such as the PIER Program (see below). The MAY Study also offers participation in a family psychoeducation multifamily group at Maine Medical Center, co-facilitated by Donna Downing and Sarah Lynch, LCSW.

To make a referral or if you have questions, please contact Donna Downing, MS, OTR/L, study coordinator, at 662-3681. The MAY Study website is being updated but is still available for information: www.mmc.org/MayStudy

PRELIMINARY MAY STUDY DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected from subjects from the three MAY Study sites (Maine, Harvard, Columbia) is being assessed to better understand youth attitudes about their experiences with mental changes, with plans to publish preliminary findings within the next 6 months. We will let you know when articles are available.

THE FORMER PIER PROGRAM HAS BEEN RESTARTED

With the aid of federal and state dollars, the Portland Identification and Early Referral (PIER) Program re-opened its doors in the middle of June 2015. A small multidisciplinary team is providing outreach to the community and accepting referrals for youth between the ages of 16 and 25 within Cumberland County. Starting October 1st, PIER will expand services to youth in the same age range in Androscoggin County. PIER continues to provide wrap-around services to young people in the early stages of a psychotic illness and their families. That includes collaboration with school and health professionals in the community to assist with optimal functioning. The former PIER Program focused on an emerging psychotic illness (prodromal phase), but the present PIER Program is also focused on youth within the first
year of psychosis. If you have questions, want to schedule an outreach presentation, or want to make a referral to PIER, please contact the Program Director, Sarah Lynch, LCSW, at 662-3162. A PIER Program brochure is attached for your convenience. Please share it with clients/colleagues. The PIER Program web page is under construction, but should be available soon.

**OUR JUNE 1ST CONFERENCE WAS VERY SUCCESSFUL, THANKS TO YOU!**

On Monday, June 1, 2015, the MAY Study and PIER Program staff hosted a ½-day conference at the University of Southern Maine Hannaford Hall for area school, health, and mental health practitioners. The focus was on alerting attendees about the early warning signs of psychosis and how to refer to the MAY Study or the PIER Program. More than 100 people participated and found the information helpful—feedback was very positive.

**SYMPTOMS THAT MIGHT PROMPT A REFERRAL TO THE MAY STUDY**

*Most of these symptoms would be a new occurrence during the past few months and would occur in combinations, with increasing frequency and distress for the person.*

- Worrisome decline in academic, work, or social functioning
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Jumbled thoughts and confusion
- Experiencing fear for no good reason and feeling uneasy around people
- Unusual ideas or behaviors
- Increased sensitivity to sights/sounds, or mistaking noises for voices or messages
- Feeling more anxious, depressed, or out of touch
- Feeling like the “mind is playing tricks” or “senses are playing tricks”
- Feeling suspicious or paranoid

A more extensive list of symptoms is outlined on the MAY Study website and is included in the attached handout.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Much of the early psychosis information developed by the former PIER Program can be found on the National Association for State Mental Health Program Directors website under the “Technical Assistance” tab: [www.nasmhpd.org](http://www.nasmhpd.org) Please take the time to review this information gathered from multiple international programs as well as the PIER Program.

Regards from the PIER Team,

*Donna, Bill, and Kathy*

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