

What is the Early Detection and Intervention for the Prevention of Psychosis Program (EDIPPP):

Launched by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as part of its Vulnerable Populations Portfolio in April 2007, EDIPPP is a research and treatment initiative focused on gathering the evidence needed to better meet the mental health needs of adolescents and young adults at risk for severe mental illness - before the illness develops.

EDIPPP works with young people ages 12 to 25 and their families, using evidence-based interventions that can help them achieve their full potential without the trauma, stigma and negative effects of a fully developed mental illness.

The evidence-based treatment tools used in EDIPPP are:

- Family psychoeducation, which helps families understand the illness process and how to help their loved one.
- Education and employment support to ensure success in those life skill areas.
- Family-aided assertive community treatment, which provides rapid access to a multi-disciplinary team to assess and treat young people.
- Medication, as needed, to mediate the most extreme symptoms.

EDIPPP represents the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's single largest investment in mental health to date. As a national endeavor, six sites are using a combination of evidence-based practices to treat the early warning signs of serious mental illness (schizophrenia, bipolar disorder with psychosis and major depression with psychosis).

The six sites employing the EDIPPP approach are:

- Portland Identification and Early Referral (PIER) Program at The Maine Medical Center in Portland, Maine – also serving as the National Program Office for EDIPPP.
- Early Diagnosis and Preventative Treatment of Psychosis Illness (EDAPT) Program at the University of California, Davis Medical Center in Sacramento, California.
- Early Assessment and Support Team (EAST) Program at Mid-Valley Behavioral Care Network in Salem, Oregon.
- Michigan Prevents Prodromal Progression (M3P) Program at Washtenaw Community Health Organization in Ypsilanti, Michigan.
- Recognition and Prevention (RAP) Program at Zucker Hillside Hospital in Glen Oaks, New York.
- Early Assessment and Resource Linkage for Youth (EARLY) Program at the University of New Mexico and Mind Research Network in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Why was EDIPPP started?

EDIPPP grew out of the successful Portland Identification and Early Referral (PIER) Program, a treatment research effort at Maine Medical Center seeking to replicate major studies in the United Kingdom, Australia, Scandinavia, and Canada. The focus of those international efforts was to interrupt the very early progression of psychotic illnesses and their impact on individuals and communities.

As such, PIER was established to:

1. Educate and train the healthcare community, the school professional work force and other key professionals who might encounter young people in the early stages of psychosis.
2. Identify, and help others to identify, young people who are showing prodromal (early) symptoms and signs of schizophrenia or other major psychotic disorders.
3. Evaluate individuals' risk for actual psychosis.
4. Treat those who are at risk with psychosocial and psychopharmacological interventions.
5. Maintain a long-term relationship with individuals and their families to sustain appropriate support for prevention.

The PIER Program, while still ongoing, has achieved some remarkable successes and it was this early promise that attracted the interest of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

What does EDIPPP do?

At its heart, EDIPPP is a treatment and research study with a strong public health mission. EDIPPP not only works with young people exhibiting early symptoms of psychotic illnesses but also seeks to build community support for changing the way we approach severe mental illness – for good.

EDIPPP focuses on the early emergence of symptoms that might indicate the likelihood of a future mental illness without intervention. The initiative is studying the effects and effectiveness of early identification and treatment of prodromal symptoms as opposed to the historically conservative “wait and see” approach.

The ultimate success of EDIPPP is predicated on connecting with, engaging and educating social workers, doctors, nurses, students, teachers, parents, clergy, police officers, youth workers and other groups that have regular interactions with adolescents and young adults.

EDIPPP focuses on:

- The early identification of young people at risk for or showing early signs of psychosis.
- The reduction of barriers to treatment—in particular, reduction of stigma about mental illness and education to counter false beliefs about psychosis.
- The application of clinical service to engage and treat young people who are at risk, along with their families.
- Ongoing research that monitors whether young people convert to a prodromal stage.

Identifying and treating young people experiencing prodromal symptoms of serious mental illness has been made possible by major changes in the mental health field:

- The advent of clear premorbid indicators for the likely onset of psychosis.
- The development of highly effective drug treatments that can be tailored and used at dosage levels that do not subject young people and their families to unacceptable risks.
- The recognition and application of a psychosocial treatment approach.

This combination – better understanding of the early symptoms, pharmacologic treatments and evidence-based psychoeducation – has the potential to have a powerful effect on stopping the progression of psychotic illnesses.

While delivering treatment to individuals, evidence is being collected to better understand and ideally support a sustainable new approach to broad scale mental health improvement.