

# FEC Fact Sheet

## Our Mission

At the First Episode Clinic (FEC), it is our goal to provide the highest quality of care available in order to reduce the symptoms that are interrupting your life, to prevent lengthy and expensive hospital stays, and to find the correct diagnosis so that we can treat you in the best possible way.

It is also our goal to improve social, academic and occupational functioning, and to increase your ability to live your life the way you want to.

## First Episode Management

There are two basic principles that most experts in the field of first episode psychosis management and treatment agree upon:

**Firstly**, the sooner treatment begins after the first psychotic break, the shorter the duration of untreated psychosis will be. The longer psychosis is left untreated, the more severe one's negative symptoms may become.

**Secondly**, a comprehensive treatment approach betters one's chances for recovery. Antipsychotic medications reduce symptoms, reduce disability associated with symptoms, and reduce chances for relapse. Long-term management of side effects of antipsychotic medication is required in most patients. Comprehensive therapy and psychosocial support improve recovery, reduce disability associated with symptoms and improve family, social, and employment success.

## Comprehensive Treatment

At the First Episode Clinic, our multi-disciplinary staff provides care of the highest level - we couple individualized therapy sessions with psychiatric monitoring and group therapy sessions, and provide employment and family support. The goals of treatment at the FEC are to have our patients' social and occupational functioning restored. We consider our patients "fully recovered" when they return to school and/or find permanent employment. We also seek to help our patients restore social and family relationships.

## Therapy

Patients are generally seen once a week by their assigned therapist. Additional appointments can be scheduled for family sessions and to suit other patient needs. Regular visits are reduced as the patient becomes more stable. Visits can be reduced to one every three months.

## Psychiatric Care

A psychiatrist meets with patients on an as-needed basis, generally starting at one visit every one or two weeks. Visits can be reduced to every month for some patients and even longer for most patients after they are stable.

## Group Sessions

Group therapy sessions are optional, and offered to most clinic patients depending on treatment goals. Family group therapy sessions are also available.

## Other Benefits

At the First Episode Clinic, we closely involve families, caregivers, and other significant persons in the patient's life during the initial evaluation process to allow for the best possible results.

Costs are subsidized through the state, and through research funding. This means that it is OK if you do not have insurance.

## Research Component

The First Episode Clinic is operated at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center. We encourage patients to participate in research if they are stable and if we feel that participation would not hinder specific treatment and therapeutic goals. Though it is always stressed that participation is *voluntary*, we believe that participation in research of utmost importance because study outcomes equip us with knowledge that may lead to more effective treatment approaches.

Research participation is separate from treatment at the FEC, and it will not impact how your psychiatrist or therapist treats you. Below are some examples of research studies patients may be asked to participate in:

**Family Imaging Study:** fMRI technology is used to study genetics and family history, in addition to brain changes associated with a first psychotic break

**Smoking Study:** Why do individuals with schizophrenia or psychosis smoke more?

**Learning and Memory Study:** This MRI study aims to examine differences in learning and memory in patients and their family members

## Referrals

Please contact Beth Steger, LCSW-C if you would like to make a referral or set up an initial consultation.

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