

# Levels of Care for Psychosis in MA

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mapnet

## What is Psychosis?

“Psychosis” is a medical term describing a loss of contact with reality or difficulty telling what is real from what is not.<sup>1</sup> You may feel like your mind is “playing tricks” on you. It can be hard to tell the difference between your own thoughts and perceptions and those that come from the outside world. While these experiences are very real to you, they are not experienced as real to others, even the people closest to you. These experiences may come and go, or be relatively constant.

Although psychosis is often associated with mental health disorders, other things like substance use, lack of sleep, brain injury, or seizure disorders can show similar symptoms. Most importantly, psychosis is **treatable**, and in some cases, it may be **preventable**. It is important to talk to a healthcare provider if you think that you or a loved one might be experiencing psychosis.<sup>1</sup>

## What are my Treatment Options?

There are many different levels of care for psychosis. In this brief, we describe everything from online support groups to emergency hospitalization. The level of care that is best for you will depend on your situation, needs, and preferences. Current research tells us that specialized psychosis treatment is the best option to recover from a first episode of psychosis and to prevent future episodes. However, care is available even if you haven’t had a “first episode”. Standard treatment for psychosis typically includes:



**Medication:** Medications are often used to relieve symptoms and to prevent them from returning in the future.



**Psychotherapy:** Individual and family therapy can help to reduce distressing symptoms and learn coping techniques.



**Support:** Your personal life & goals can have a big impact on your mental health. Many programs offer practical support with school, work, and other life problems to help you get back on track.

### Right now I am looking for...

Community Support	Ongoing Care	Extra Support	Emergency Help
<p><u>Non-clinical</u> options for connection, support, and information from others in your community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Psychoeducation</li> <li>– Peer &amp; Family Support Groups</li> <li>– Faith Counseling</li> <li>– Mental Health Apps</li> <li>– Employee Assistance Plans (EAPs)</li> <li>– Research Studies</li> </ul>	<p>Standard outpatient mental health treatment options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Primary Care</li> <li>– General Outpatient Mental Healthcare</li> <li>– CBHCs</li> <li>– Specialized Psychosis Treatment</li> <li>– Home-Based Service</li> </ul>	<p>Options that are a step above outpatient care but less restrictive than hospitalization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Partial Hospitalization or Day Program</li> <li>– Private Residential Treatment</li> </ul>	<p>Steps to take if your immediate health and safety are at risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Crisis Hotlines &amp; 988</li> <li>– Mobile Crisis Team</li> <li>– Respite Care</li> <li>– Crisis Stabilization Unit</li> <li>– Inpatient Hospitalization</li> </ul>

*If you aren’t sure which of these is right for you, the specialists at the **MA Psychosis Access & Triage Hub (M-PATH)** can help you to connect with appropriate care ([www.mpathcares.org](http://www.mpathcares.org)).*

<sup>1</sup>Information adapted from [PsychosisScreening.org](http://PsychosisScreening.org)

## For Community Support



### Psychoeducation

The first thing that anyone can do is learn more about the symptoms and treatment options for psychosis. Helpful resources are available through groups like [SAMHSA](#), [NAMI](#), [NIMH](#), and [Strong365](#) — a library of our recommended resources is available at the end of this guide. You can also call M-PATH (the MA Psychosis Access & Triage Hub) to learn more about psychosis from a trained mental health professional ([www.mpathcares.org](http://www.mpathcares.org)).



### Peer & Family Support Groups

Many people find peer support to be a helpful part of their recovery. A number of groups are available to young people who experience psychosis and their families in MA, both online and in-person:

Peer-Led Groups & Chat Services:

- [McLean WellSpace](#)
- [Depression & Bipolar Support Alliance \(DBSA\)](#)
- [Students with Psychosis](#)
- [Strong365 Support Chat](#) (code: STRONG)

Family-Led Groups:

- [NAMI Family to Family](#)
- [Wayside Parent-Peer Partnership Program](#)



### Faith Counseling

Faith and spirituality are often an important source of support for people who are struggling with their mental health. Faith organizations can be a helpful starting point to talk about your experiences. It is important to note, however, that not all faith leaders are knowledgeable about mental health and current treatment options. Below are some faith-specific resources that support people with mental illness:

- **INTER-FAITH:** [NAMI FaithNet](#)
- **CATHOLICISM:** [Caring for the Soul Support Group](#) (Cambridge, MA)
- **JUDAISM:** [The Blue Dove Foundation](#), [Aleph Institute](#), [RUACH Support](#)
- **ISLAM:** [Khalil Center](#), [Yaqeen Institute](#)



### Mental Health Apps

Apps can be a convenient, accessible way to start getting support for your mental health. Although there are now thousands of options available, most apps are unregulated and not FDA-approved. It is important to double check the privacy and credibility that an app offers to make sure that it is a good fit for your needs. Check out this helpful guide from NAMI on how to find the right mental health app: [www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/June-2021/How-To-Navigate-the-Overwhelming-Volume-of-Mental-Health-Apps](http://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/June-2021/How-To-Navigate-the-Overwhelming-Volume-of-Mental-Health-Apps)



## Employee Assistance Plans (EAPs)

Many benefit plans provided by employers include resources for mental health evaluation and support, called an Employee Assistance Plan (EAP). These are generally free and confidential, and often provide short-term counseling along with support in figuring out next steps for your mental health needs.



## Research Studies

Many research studies offer comprehensive assessment for psychosis, which is often available sooner than it would be at a standard clinical program. Some also offer limited treatment. A list of research studies in MA that focus on psychosis is available through [Mass General Brigham's Rally](#) site and at [www.mapnet.online/research](http://www.mapnet.online/research).

## For Ongoing Care



### Primary Care

LEVEL: LOW

Primary care providers (e.g., pediatricians, family doctors, integrated behavioral health providers) can identify early signs of mental illness and prescribe/monitor psychiatric medications. We recommend connecting with more intensive care if your mental health experiences are particularly distressing, repeating themselves, or getting worse.



### General Outpatient Mental Healthcare

LEVEL: LOW

Outpatient mental health clinics can provide treatment for a number of psychiatric concerns, including psychosis. You can search for providers in MA on the [Network of Care](#) website, or access one of the "Community Behavioral Health Centers" described below.



### Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs)

LEVEL: LOW

CBHCs are a type of outpatient service in MA that provide comprehensive mental health and substance use treatment to people with MassHealth insurance (some also contract with private insurance; ask your local CBHC for details). The statewide network of CBHCs are a front door to timely, high-quality mental health care in MA. Anyone can call the MA Behavioral Health Helpline to get connected with a CBHC ([www.masshelpline.com](http://www.masshelpline.com)).



### Specialized Psychosis Treatment

LEVEL: MEDIUM

[Coordinated Specialty Care \(CSC\)](#) is currently the leading evidence-based treatment for young people experiencing a first episode of psychosis. Visit the [MAPNET Program Directory](#) for a list of specialized psychosis clinics in MA or [Strong365](#) for a national list.



## Home-Based Service

LEVEL: MEDIUM

Home-based services, such as those offered by the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI), provide multidisciplinary mental healthcare to individuals at home or in the community. Examples of home-based care in MA include [CBHI In-Home Therapy](#) and the PACT teams at [McLean Hospital](#) and the [MA Department of Mental Health](#).

## For Extra Support



### Partial Hospitalization or Day Program

LEVEL: HIGH

A partial hospitalization program (PHP) is a step between inpatient and outpatient services. These are voluntary, short-term programs that support people with elevated mental health needs. PHPs are available in many major medical systems across MA.



### Private Residential Treatment

LEVEL: HIGH

Residential treatment programs provide a protected environment where people can improve their mental health, often while participating in a variety of structured activities centered on recovery. Examples of residential care in MA include [Appleton](#) at McLean Hospital, the [Wellmet Project](#), [Ellenhorn](#), and [Gould Farm](#).

## For Emergencies



### Crisis Hotlines & 988

LEVEL: LOW

988 is a crisis hotline that offers 24/7 access to trained counselors who provide empathic support to people experiencing mental health-related distress. You can call, text, or chat 988 ([988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)) for yourself or a loved one. 988 is a universal number, so you can reach a trained crisis counselor no matter where you live in the US.

The MA Behavioral Health Helpline (BHHL) is another resource that can help you to connect with emergency mental health treatment. Whereas 988 provides in-the-moment emotional support, the BHHL is in touch with the larger system of mental health services in MA and can connect you directly with care ([www.masshelpline.com](https://www.masshelpline.com)). See “Mobile Crisis Team” below for more information about potential follow-up services during a crisis.



## Mobile Crisis Team

LEVEL: HIGH

Mobile crisis teams provide rapid on-site response to psychiatric emergencies. In MA, a network of community clinics provide crisis response services through the [Emergency Services Program/Mobile Crisis Intervention \(ESP/MCI\)](#) system in connection with the BHHL ([www.masshelpline.com](http://www.masshelpline.com), 833-773-2445). Mental health crisis lines like the BHHL are the best option to receive specialized, empathic care during crises and are available across MA. If for any reason you need to call 911 instead, [NAMI](#) recommends telling the operator that this is a “mental health emergency” and requesting responders who have received Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training.



## Respite Care

LEVEL: HIGH

Respite care centers are short-term community crisis centers, sometimes run by peers, which can be visited as an alternative to an emergency room or hospital. These centers offer a safe place to rest and recover, including support from others who have personally experienced mental illness as well as trained counselors. Examples of respite care in MA include [Afiya Peer Respite](#) and the [Living Room at Advocates](#).



## Crisis Stabilization Unit

LEVEL: HIGH

Crisis stabilization units are available in many communities and hospital systems as a short-term alternative to inpatient hospitalization. Similar to “Respite Care” described above, these settings are less restrictive than a hospital and are designed to help people stabilize from a crisis and return to their community as quickly as possible.



## Inpatient Hospitalization

LEVEL: HIGHEST

Intensive care and supervision in an overnight setting can be necessary in cases where a person's symptoms put their safety at risk. Hospitals are a safe, controlled setting meant to provide stabilization, observation, and treatment during emergencies. There are three types of hospitals that can treat mental health crises: private psychiatric hospitals, state psychiatric hospitals, and general hospitals with a psychiatric unit.

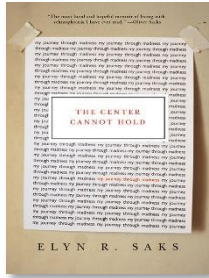
Before leaving the hospital, it is important to have a discharge plan with follow-up care in place. A good discharge plan will involve a person's support structure (e.g. family, partner) and provide clear next steps for continuous treatment with a community provider.



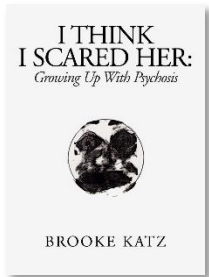
# Resource Library

## Books

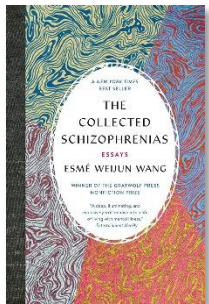
### MEMOIRS ON PSYCHOSIS



[The Center Cannot Hold](#)  
*Elyn R. Saks (2007)*

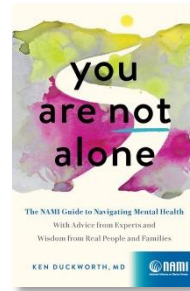


[I Think I Scared Her: Growing Up with Psychosis](#)  
*Brooke Katz (2004)*

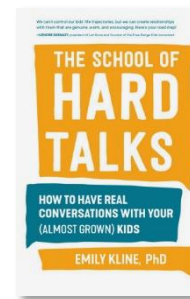


[The Collected Schizophrenias](#)  
*Esmé Weijun Wang (2019)*

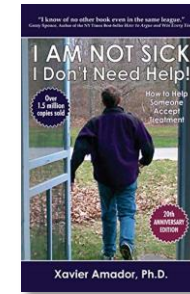
### GUIDES FOR FAMILIES



[You Are Not Alone: The NAMI Guide to Navigating Mental Health](#)  
*Ken Duckworth (2022)*



[The School of Hard Talks: How to Have Real Conversations with Your \(Almost Grown\) Kids](#)  
*Emily Kline (2023)*



[I Am Not Sick, I Don't Need Help! How to Help Someone with Mental Illness Accept Treatment](#)  
*Xavier Amador (2007)*

## Videos



[OntrackNY Video Library](#)



[Voices of Recovery](#)



[I Am Not a Monster](#)  
*Cecilia McGough*



[The Voices in my Head](#)  
*Eleanor Longden*

## Websites for People Experiencing Psychosis



### PEER SUPPORT GROUPS

Wellspace Groups

[See more](#)

Students With Psychosis

[See more](#)

The Wildflower Alliance

[See more](#)

Depression & Bipolar Support Alliance of Boston (DBSA)

[See more](#)



### CONTENT CREATORS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED PSYCHOSIS

Living Well with Schizophrenia

[See more](#)

Bethany Yeiser

[See more](#)

Schizophrenic Hottie

[See more](#)

SchizophrenicNYC

[See more](#)



### OTHER HELPFUL LINKS

Strong 365 Peer Support Chat

[See more](#)

Warmline.org

[See more](#)

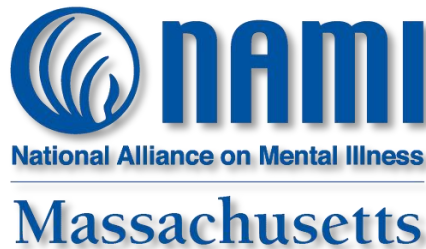
Active Minds

[See more](#)

Psychosis Outside the Box

[See more](#)

## Websites for Families



### FAMILY SUPPORT GROUPS

NAMI Programs & Support Groups

[See more](#)

Flourishing Families at Boston University's Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation

[See more](#)

Wayside Parent-Peer Partnership Program

[See more](#)

### OTHER HELPFUL LINKS

Handhold by the MA Department of Mental Health

[See more](#)

The School of Hard Talks (Online)

[See more](#)

Massachusetts Family Resource Centers

[See more](#)

