

Key:

Speaker No. 1 – Bill Pollock

Speaker No. 2 – Mike Abrams

Transcript

Speaker 1

This is Show Me Today. We're highlighting EPC Missouri, a statewide initiative focused on identifying and treating early psychosis as quickly as possible. Early care can stabilize symptoms, but long-term recovery is about more than treatment. It's also about building confidence, restoring purpose, and finding a sense of belonging in the community. That is where programs like the clubhouse model play a powerful role alongside coordinated specialty care. Joining us is Mike Abrams with Independence Center. He works with the clubhouse model and collaborates within the coordinated specialty care framework to help individuals move beyond stabilization and toward meaningful recovery.

Speaker 2

The Independence Center has been around since 1981. We were founded by a group of families who were worried about their, you know, adult children with severe mental illness leaving state hospital and not having anything to do and nowhere to go to support them. And so they started the Clubhouse program. So the Clubhouse model in St. Louis at Independence Center. And the Clubhouse model is an evidence-based practice that you know, where staff and members are working side by side together to build like an intentional community where people with a serious mental illness can feel, you know, dignity and respect. You know, it's a place where people can come to feel needed, wanted and expected. You know, it helps people with, you know, kind of like a, you know, a purpose in their life. So.

Speaker 1

Yeah.

Speaker 2

That is kind of how we got started.

Speaker 1

Okay.

Speaker 2

And along the line, we've added a bunch of other services that we thought would have been helpful to our members. And that's what we call our clients, which are members. Yeah. So we've added community support, outpatient psychiatric clinic. employment supports.

Speaker 1

How do you tie in with early psychosis care?

Speaker 2

We have a coordinated specialty care team for first episode psychosis at Independence Center.

Speaker 1

Okay.

Speaker 2

That is how we tie in with early psychosis care is that we're actually providing it. And that is the team. So my title is young adult supervisor, but I'm like the team lead for our our CSC team.

Speaker 1

You address critical needs and recovery also includes purpose and belonging. Can you go a little bit more into your clubhouse model?

Speaker 2

That's a really good question. What the clubhouse can do is it really provides the three P's, you know, a place, people, and purpose, which kind of lays the foundation for someone's potential, which is like hope in their future. It gives people the opportunity to have somewhere to go, have people that they can be with, that they care about and that care about them. And it gives them, you know, a purpose, some kind of meaning in their life. They have to like show up at a particular time to get here. They have specific. I mean, so for example, we have one member who like their purpose every day is that they come in and they complete the attendance from the day before. Like that is that is their job at Clubhouse. They come in and get that done every single day. And if they don't come in one day, I mean, we're, members are calling them, calling that member and asking, where are you? Is everything okay? That kind of stuff.

Speaker 1

Yeah. Mike Abrams is with us from the Independence Center. The first episode of Psychosis happens typically with young adults, correct?

Speaker 2

Yes.

Speaker 1

What happens to these young adults or teens or if they're struggling returning to work or school after their first episode, how does Independence Center help individuals regain confidence in those areas?

Speaker 2

Good question. So we, a component of both our kind of our first episode psychosis program as well as the clubhouse are employment supports. And so we use a model called IPS. Um, and so we have a staff member, uh, who works with an individual with early psychosis and, and they just the, the member and the staff person, they do the whole process of employment together from like thinking about what kind of jobs they want to do and what they want to do for a career. Then building a resume and applying for jobs, interview skills and interviewing. then they get this job and then it's all about like, well, now you have to like show up at a specific time, that kind of stuff, like show up at a specific time, get your work done, talk to your coworkers and such. And then kind of, you know, and then our staff person, her name's Abby. Abby will support, see them once a week while they have a job the whole time. And I think that's kind of how we help build that confidence. And that's really how we help them with employment. And then they get that employment, they keep that job for a significant amount of time or even no time at all. Even just that, like getting a job adds so much confidence to them and then increases their self-esteem and, you know, they start to see that even though I have this new diagnosis that I can still kind of do the things that I wanted to do before.

Speaker 1

Independence Center is located in St. Louis. How far or how far of a reach do you serve people in the community?

Speaker 2

We serve St. Louis City and St. Louis County.

Speaker 1

Okay. Yeah. You know, for families, that may be going through this and they wonder what recovery looks like. From your perspective, what are signs that someone is moving from stabilization to thriving?

Speaker 2

When someone is diagnosed with a mental illness, and especially, and I'm going to talk mainly about like early psychosis because that's like what I do every day, it's very disruptive to someone's life. It's very disruptive like symptoms that someone will have. And typically, on average, someone doesn't get their first treatment for schizophrenia for like six years. And that's also incredibly disruptive. You know, when I think of someone like as stabilized, what I think of is like, oh, well, they're, you know, they're taking medication and they don't really have any more what we call active symptoms, so like the hallucinations or anything. But they may still be struggling with, you know, social withdrawal with, you know, you know, not, not being able to keep a job. And I think when someone is thriving, right, when they move to thriving, it's like, okay, so before my, and you have to think about, cause the average age of like onset, at least for men is 22 years old. So you think about what you were doing at 22, like I was like, graduating college, looking for a job for the first time, getting my own apartment. To me, thriving is that like they get back on track to those goals?

Speaker 1

Yeah.

Speaker 2

Does that make sense?

Speaker 1

Yeah. No, it does.

Speaker 2

So whatever they wanted to do, whatever they wanted to do before they had their first episode, they start doing again. And I can give an example of one, a young man in our program right now who always wanted to get a CDL and then, you know, his diagnosis kind of derailed that plans and disrupted it. And now, since being in our program, he is back on track to going to get his CDL. I mean, that's kind of the stories that we all have with people.

Speaker 1

Yeah. Yeah. A success story at Independence Center. Yeah. So, Mike, are you going to be attending the 2026 Early Psychosis Care Conference?

Speaker 2

I will be in Kansas City attending that conference. And in fact, Independence Center we're actually going to be giving like a presentation, kind of all about our CSC team and how we worked with Clubhouse to kind of help improve the social functioning and provide more opportunities for young people to like hang out together through Clubhouse.

Speaker 1

So that's the 24th and 25th of this month at Sheridan Kansas City at Crown Center. And if you go to EPCMissouri.org, you can register for the event. Mike Abrams from the Independence Center, thank you so much for joining us. This is Show Me Today, the Voice of Missouri.