

## *Advancing Early Intervention After First Episode Psychosis in South Florida*

### THE PROBLEM

Delay of initial treatment is an area of unmet need for mental healthcare in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> For example, some evidence suggests that a longer duration of untreated psychosis in schizophrenia can be associated with a poorer response to treatment.<sup>2</sup> It is commonly thought that early identification and appropriate treatment of mental illness may improve outcomes for individuals with serious mental illness.<sup>3</sup>

### KEY SOLUTION: EARLY INTERVENTION

[Henderson Behavioral Health](#) (Henderson) is among organizations that believe a focus on early intervention may help alleviate some of the persistent challenges associated with undiagnosed, untreated or undertreated mental illness, such as increased emergency room visits and hospitalizations and increased risk of substance abuse, depression, homelessness, unemployment and legal involvement. In order to better understand, treat and serve those with mental illness in South Florida, Henderson participates in cutting-edge research, evaluating best practices and recovery-promoting services for individuals with serious mental illness.

- Since 2010, Henderson has participated as a behavioral health care study site in the National Institute of Mental Health's "**Recovery after Initial Schizophrenic Episode (RAISE)**" research project, designed to evaluate the potential benefits of a comprehensive pharmacological and psychosocial treatment package for individuals with first episode psychosis.<sup>4</sup>
- Early Intervention: Henderson also is developing its own evidence-based early intervention program focused on promoting recovery after a first episode of psychosis – the first program of its kind in the state of Florida. The program will feature psychoeducation support, outreach and engagement, relapse prevention planning and vocational support, among other elements. The hope is that early intervention programs have the potential to reduce the likelihood of long-term disability for those with serious mental illness as well as the financial impact on public systems that often must support these individuals.<sup>4</sup>

### SUCSESSES

- When surveyed for Henderson's 2011-2012 annual report, **98%** of Henderson's clients (n=1,491) reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with the services they received; **97%** reported that they were able to better manage their life as a result of the services they received at Henderson.<sup>5</sup>
- Henderson helps **more than 700** adults annually live an independent lifestyle through its supportive housing program.
- Henderson worked with several judges to establish the **first** Misdemeanor Mental Health Court in Florida and supports the court with a licensed clinician and designated residential treatment beds.

## ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

Henderson attributes its overall positive impact in South Florida to a number of other key strategies, in addition to early intervention. The following strategies help the organization provide high quality services and access to care for individuals with serious mental illness:

- A “Housing First” model that provides housing support to individuals as a first priority, followed by services and treatment support to encourage stability, as needed.
- Participating in behavioral health care research that aims to improve the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental illness and substance abuse disorders.
- Serving on Broward County’s Criminal Justice Mental Health Task Force to address broad concerns about the mentally ill in the criminal justice system, particularly those in local correctional facilities.

*“At Henderson, what we essentially try to be is a ‘community problem solver.’ Addressing our community’s behavioral health care needs pays big dividends — we improve quality of life, restore hope and even impact public safety. Our community has come to believe that we provide a ‘great return on investment,’ and has consistently stepped up to support us.”*

*—Dr. Steven Ronik, CEO, Henderson Behavioral Health*

## ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

Henderson was established in 1953 and has since evolved to become the largest, community-based non-profit behavioral health care system in South Florida. Henderson provides a comprehensive array of accessible, cost effective, evidence-based services to more than 23,000 individuals annually.

## References:

1. Wang, P., et al. (2005). Failure and Delay in Initial Treatment Contact After First Onset of Mental Disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 62 (6), pp. 603-613.
2. Drake, R., et al. (2000). Causes and Consequences of Duration of Untreated Psychosis in Schizophrenia. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 177, pp. 511-515.
3. Downey, L., et al. (2012). Undiagnosed Mental Illness in the Emergency Department. *The Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 43 (5), pp. 876-882.
4. (2013). Recovery After an Initial Schizophrenia Episode (Raise): A Research Project of the NIMH. *National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health*. Retrieved October 4, 2013 from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/schizophrenia/raise/index.shtml>.
5. (2013). Outcomes & Accomplishments. *Henderson Behavioral Health*. Retrieved October 15, 2013 from <http://www.hendersonbehavioralhealth.org/outcome.html>.