

**Jonathan** was changing dramatically. In the past, he had been an outgoing and friendly individual, who tried hard at school despite the extreme pressures of a difficult family situation. But over time, he had started to leave schoolwork undone, had become exceedingly irritated and irritable, and had developed very poor personal hygiene habits. He wasn't sleeping and, in fact, seemed to be losing all touch with the reality of his life.

If that weren't enough, Jonathan also seemed to believe that he was a famous martial artist with a flair for developing new fighting styles, not a young person falling further and further from his potential.

The changes in Jonathan occurred quickly – and so did the consequences of those changes. In the last year, Jonathan was expelled from four different schools and learned that he could not progress from 8th Grade into high school without attending summer school.

The complete transformation of Jonathan from an adolescent trying to successfully overcome the obstacles in his life, to a deeply troubled and disconnected youth headed for failure, was radical and swift.

This situation was compounded by the fact that Jonathan, at 14 years old, had moved 13 times in the last two years before becoming homeless for a time, and then moved into a shelter with his mother and two siblings.

Luckily, a perceptive school counselor was concerned about Jonathan's behavior and referred him to an innovative mental health program in Michigan.

The Michigan Prevents Prodromal Progression (M3P) Program provides confidential assessment and early assistance for adolescents and young adults at risk for severe

mental illnesses. It is also part of the Early Detection and Intervention for the Prevention of Psychosis Program (EDIPPP), a national research treatment program funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. M3P – along with five other participating sites – is focusing its research work on early detection and effective intervention to improve the way we approach and deal with severe mental illness.

For the school counselor who referred Jonathan, M3P seemed like the best chance this young man had to reclaim his potential. Following the referral, a M3P clinical coordinator reached out to Jonathan and his mother to engage with the family and start the assessment process.

The M3P assessment process is designed to help determine if the problems that referred adolescents experience are caused by early symptoms of severe mental illness. If a young person is found to be at risk, they are offered services and immediate medical attention.

Jonathan's mother reported that he didn't sleep for days at a time, that she was at the point of giving up on him, and that she did not know how to support him and take care of his two siblings. After the screening, it was clear that Jonathan needed the kind of support and intervention that M3P was designed to provide.

In fact, according to the M3P coordinator, Jonathan was clearly experiencing psychotic symptoms when he came to the program. The M3P team designed a program of psychosocial intervention, supported by the careful use of medications, to stabilize Jonathan.

He became more organized and was able to talk through his concerns about not being able to start high school. He told his clinical coordinator that he would do whatever was necessary to be eligible for high school

admission and that “failure was not an option.” It was early in the intervention program, but Jonathan had already started to regain his sense of self, his determination, and his drive to do well.

The cost of attending summer school was the next challenge for Jonathan and his family to face. Jonathan and his brother were sleeping on the floor because the family couldn’t afford beds and they also lacked money for food. These facts made it hard to justify paying for summer classes.

The M3P team worked with a local Thrift Shop and school district waiver program that identified community resources to provide beds and cover the cost of classes. M3P’s connections in the community also provided bus tokens for Jonathan’s transportation to school. In addition, M3P checked in with Jonathan’s teacher twice a week and assigned an occupational therapy student to help him stay organized, complete his homework, and plan for starting high school.

Today, Jonathan is symptom free. He has new friends, gets along better with his family, is thinking clearly and is ready to start high school. He still participates in regular family problem-solving groups, takes his medications, and attends a homework group with peers. He is once again friendly, sociable, and getting along well with others.

Through the commitment and alliance of M3P, the school, and local community organizations, Jonathan is now reclaiming his potential and is managing to control his mental illness – a chronic disease that steals the lives of far too many of our adolescents and young adults.