

At age 23, following a series of unexpected stresses in his life, our son experienced a psychotic episode that landed him in Spring Harbor Hospital for two weeks. It was there, at the recommendation of his attending psychiatrist and the family navigator, that we were connected to the PIER program at Maine Medical Center. This was the beginning of his eventual return to a healthy and purposeful life. We can't imagine his recovery without the incredible support, dedication, and care of the professionals at PIER.

He was interviewed and assessed by PIER's intake specialist while still at Spring Harbor and placed on the list for the next available spot. He came home to live with us after his discharge (he'd been living independently prior to the onset of his psychosis) but wasn't able to join PIER until a spot opened up; this delay lasted about two months. During this time, one of the social workers at PIER maintained good contact with us and even offered to meet regularly with our son for coffee and conversation. She was a vital link to PIER's resources during an extremely difficult period and helped sustain the momentum from his inpatient and partial hospitalization experiences. She also understood his initial reluctance to engage with PIER's wraparound treatment and made it clear that the decision to enter the program was entirely his; her respect and empathy made ALL the difference in getting him to agree to try it.

Once we started PIER, several aspects of the program immediately became essential. First, PIER's psychiatrist interviewed our entire family together, resulting in what at that time was the most complete overview of our son's condition yet compiled. Second, our son's psychiatrist and therapist met every week and shared information, ensuring that everyone who was working with him was on the same page. Third, all of our son's sessions established practical and constructive goals without duplicating services. And fourth, he benefitted from meeting with PIER's employment specialist, helping him to envision a future in which he could once again be productive in a work setting.

As a family, we experienced our own challenges during our son's journey. We had a lot to learn about how to best support him while enduring the peaks and valleys of his recovery. The staff at PIER answered every question we asked. We met regularly with his psychiatrist and his therapist. We attended the Multi Family Group, where we found a community of other parents who were going through the same kinds of things we were. We watched our son meet other young people whose struggles often mirrored his own. And the facilitators were in constant contact with his providers, meaning that everyone had a fully rounded understanding of who he was and how he was progressing in a variety of settings.

It would be impossible to overstate the importance of PIER in all our lives; the amount of growth and healing in our son and in ourselves has been incalculable. The team of professionals at PIER understood what a terrifying time this was and provided our son with the tools he needed to rebuild his life. He graduated from the PIER program after one year. His team at PIER helped him transition to a new therapist and psychiatrist. He is no longer symptomatic. He has a job he enjoys and is living independently with friends. None of this would have been possible without PIER. We are grateful beyond measure to this wonderful program and to the people who were so vital to our son's recovery. Thank you.

Lincoln Peirce  
Jessica Gandolf