One Internship at a Time

**A Conversation with DENISE HANSEN**

BY HANNAH SHOAF

D uring my internship at Wasatch Mental Health, I worked with adoles-
cents and young adults with psychoso-
sis as a member of the prevention and recovery 
early psychosis (PREP) team. Although the 
internship was challenging, it was an honor to 
gain experience and to do the best I could to help these young people and their 
families that are struggling in our community. 
At first, it was difficult for me to see how per-
vasive schizophrenia is, and I struggled to 
find hope for my clients who suffered from it. 
However, as I got to know them and became 
more educated about the illness and its man-
gagement, I found that with specialized sup-
port comes hope for their futures. I saw this 
firsthand through the successes of two 
of our clients. One had suffered their first 
schizophrenic episode and had ended up homeless. After being stabilized on medication, and with 
ongoing participation in therapy, this client 
earned a bachelor’s degree and then went on 
to earn a master’s degree online. They 
recently secured a great full-time job and are 
very happily working and looking forward to 
a brighter future and stable life with the hope 
of living independently. Another client was 
diagnosed with schizophrenia at 17 and by 18 was 
completely nonfunctional. After working 
with the PREP team, they received their GED, started college, moved out of their parents’ 
house, and now live independently.

From the example of these two clients, I 
learned that there is always hope. Even with 
severe challenges, we are resilient, we can 
find a place, we have a voice, and we can 
reach our goals. These young people still 
struggle with anxiety, delusional thinking, 
and other symptoms, but they recognize their 
ilness and its warning signs. They see their 
progress and are committed to continuing to 
follow their recovery plans.

It was a privilege to work with this vulner-
able population of young adults and youth 
with psychosis. It increased my understand-
ing about mental illness and its effects. One 
of the most valuable things I gained from this 
experience has been increased love and com-
passion for God’s children. The connections I 
made with my clients are not only beneficial to 
them but also enriched me personally. I learned 
that everyone just wants to be heard and seen, 
and I can do that. I can hear and see others, no 
matter what their experience is or how different 
it is from mine. There is power in hearing some-
one’s experience and validating their story.

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