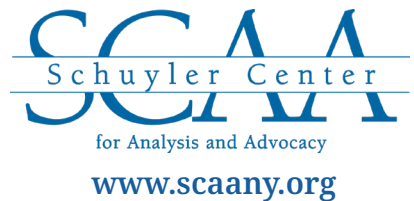


The Moving on Maternal Depression (MOMD) Project in New York: An Opportunity to Improve Policies and Programs that Support Maternal Mental Health



Background

Maternal depression takes a toll on the well-being of moms and their families. As many as 1 in 9 women experience some form of depression within 12 months after giving birth. Additionally, the rate of pregnant women diagnosed with depression at delivery increased by seven times between 2000 to 2015.¹ Perinatal depression encompasses major and minor depressive episodes that occur either during pregnancy or within the first 12 months following delivery, and can affect more than 180,000 new mothers (11.5%) annually in the United States.² Untreated maternal mental health disorders endanger young children's cognitive, physical, socio-emotional and behavioral development, as well as their course of learning and mental health.³ Negative impacts on young children of untreated or prolonged maternal mental disorders include higher rates of behavioral problems, concurrent mental illnesses, difficulty coping with stress, academic performance issues, and difficulty forming healthy relationships.⁴ The likelihood of poor outcomes increases for children of parents facing severe or chronic mental disorders. Negative outcomes may be exacerbated by other risk factors such as poverty, family violence, discrimination, substance abuse, and physical health problems. For instance, maternal mental disorders can hinder a mother's ability to climb out of poverty while reducing her ability to help her child grow and develop.⁵



While New York has long recognized maternal mental health as an important component of women's health, developing comprehensive policies across multiple agencies and sectors requires continuous effort.

The Moving on Maternal Depression (MOMD) Project

In 2018, New York was invited to join a national learning collaborative: Moving on Maternal Depression (MOMD), convened by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). This project advances structural changes to health systems to prioritize policies proven to strengthen maternal mental health, particularly interventions that prevent, and if that is not possible, detect and treat, maternal mental health disorders. By improving maternal mental health, the project also aims to improve and strengthen early childhood development and family economic security. The New York State Office of Mental Health is leading the project, with the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy serving as project coordinator, and CLASP providing technical assistance.

MOMD is structured around a maternal depression toolkit developed by CLASP. The toolkit is based on CLASP's brief, *Seizing New Policy Opportunities to Help Low-Income Mothers with Depression; Current Landscape, Innovations, and Next Steps*, and informed by CLASP's work with numerous states to identify, reduce, and treat maternal depression. It helps stakeholders engage in discussions, develop a common understanding of barriers and opportunities, and advance strategies to prevent, identify, and treat maternal depression.

For the purpose of this project, maternal mental disorders are understood as a wide range of emotional and psychological reactions a woman may experience during pregnancy or within 12 months of delivery. Maternal mental disorders include maternal depression as well as perinatal mood and anxiety disorders.

The MOMD project presents an exciting opportunity to create effective policy and practice to improve maternal mental health in New York. The MOMD project draws upon the experience and expertise of a broad range of stakeholders including women who have experienced maternal mental health issues, experts from government, health providers, and maternal and child advocates.

Project Goals

New York's goal for the MOMD project is to improve the health and well-being of mothers and children by strengthening state and local policies that identify, screen, prevent, refer, and treat maternal depression and other maternal mental disorders. To reach this goal, the project is focused on four goals:

- ▶ Integrate key metrics for implementing continuous improvement activities on maternal depression across State agencies and through health care providers and community-based organizations.
- ▶ Use innovative mechanisms to meaningfully engage in policy-making processes by collaborating with women who have experienced maternal depression, with an emphasis on the inclusion of communities that have been historically marginalized.
- ▶ Share and align information on maternal depression and other maternal mental disorders across State agencies and with partnerships at the community level that are working in the areas of maternal and child health, early childhood development, and family economic security with an emphasis on strategic alliances to advance health equity.
- ▶ Better understand the capacity of each region in the state for screening and treating women with maternal depression and other maternal mental disorders, and develop a plan that focuses on workforce capacity for screening and treatment options. The plan will address the needs of geographic areas and populations that have been historically underserved.

Project Outcomes and Next Steps

Stakeholders will develop recommendations by spring of 2020 to: 1) improve data to better understand the scope and breadth of the problem; 2) tackle barriers to screening and treatment through workforce policies; 3) strengthen communication and partnership among existing programs within and outside of State government; and 4) address racial equity and cultural competence to better meet the needs of families. The recommendations will become building blocks for policies that leverage and coordinate existing activity around maternal mental health and mortality.

MOMD—An Exciting Opportunity for New York Families

The MOMD project reflects New York's commitment to developing data-driven, evidence-based policies to prevent maternal mental disorders whenever possible, and to prevent, identify, and treat maternal mental disorder throughout the state and across all of New York's diverse communities. The project – with its diverse group of passionate and engaged stakeholders – presents a real opportunity to improve the mental health of expecting and new mothers to better enable New York mothers, babies and families to thrive.

Endnotes

¹ Depression During and After Pregnancy | Features | CDC. (2018, May 14). Retrieved September, 2019, from <https://www.cdc.gov/features/maternal-depression/index.html>

² Gaynes, B.N., Gavin, N., Meltzer-Brody, S., Lohr, K.N., Swinson, T., Gartehner, G., & Miller, W.C. (2005). Perinatal depression: Prevalence, screening accuracy, and screening outcomes: Summary. In AHRQ evidence report summaries. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (US).

³ CLASP (2016) *Seizing New Policy Opportunities to Help Low Income Mothers with Depression*, Schmit, Walter.

⁴ National Research Council and institute of medicine (2009) *Depression in Parents, Parenting and Children: Opportunities to Improve Identification, Treatment and Prevention*. Committee on Depression, Parenting Practices and Healthy Development of Children Board on Children, Youth and Families. Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academic Press

⁵ Child Psychiatry Human Development (2012) *Early School Outcomes for Children of Postpartum Depressed Mothers: Comparison with a Community Sample*. Kersten-Alvarez, Hosman, Riksen-Walraven, vanDoesum et al. 201-218