

Family Support NEWS BRIEF

A publication of

 CENTER FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES



Mommies and Mental Health: A Closer Look

Research shows that one in five mothers experience anxiety, depression and substance use disorder during pregnancy, and after pregnancy. Now more than ever, there is a significant reduction in the number of perinatal mothers and new mothers seeking mental health services. Suicide is one of the leading causes of death among pregnant and post-partum women. Seventy-five percent of mothers who screen positive for depression do not access treatment. Why? What are some of the most common reasons for these crises?

Economic factors, stigma, health disparities, and the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic are some of the reasons why pregnant mothers and new mothers do not seek mental health services. According to research, many mothers feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities and do not have anyone to support them with accessing

mental health services.¹ Mothers recognize the ongoing stigma associated with mental health care and do not want mental health assistance. Mothers living in poverty and with low incomes often cannot afford mental health services or have few opportunities to high quality services. Historically, African-American mothers experience many health disparities, discrimination and inequities regarding maternal mental health services and may decline the services. A study revealed that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 29 percent of women experienced moderate to high anxiety and 15 percent experienced depression. At the onset of the pandemic and during the pandemic, the numbers increased from 29 percent to 72 percent for anxiety and from 15 percent to 41 percent for depression.² Professionals take these factors into consideration as they help mothers overcome the challenges.

Family support professionals help mothers improve their mental health and well-being in a variety of methods. Use warmlines and a strength-based approach to establish a trustworthy relationship with expecting and new mothers. Have confidential conversations and create a safe space for mothers who are experiencing maternal depression, anxiety, or other mental health concerns; be a listening ear. Emphasize the importance of practicing self-care and the benefits of self-care. Conduct screenings to help mothers identify maternal mental health symptoms and conditions and help break the silence of the stigma associated with mental health. Support pregnant and post-partum mothers as they navigate through the mental health care system and find affordable resources.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services offer various resources and funding to support maternal health. Family support professionals are encouraged to do a warm transfer with the mother and the mental health professional once resources are identified. Collaborate with mothers to identify and utilize tools and strategies to address racism and inequities in maternal mental health care. Be sure to follow up with the mother and confirm the mother is satisfied in using the recommended resources and mental health services.

Family members and partners are instrumental in helping prenatal and postpartum mothers overcome mental health challenges. Partners may meet with the mother's mental health professional to better understand the mother's mental health condition and learn ways to better support the mother. Family members and

partners may have to go the extra mile to help the mother. For example, the partner may take the night shift and take care of the baby while the mother gets sleep. Partners can drive and accompany the mother to doctor appointments. Family members may pick up groceries, take over meals and come over during the day, so the mother can take a nap, and simply be there for the mother to have an adult conversation.³

May is Mental Health Awareness Month and an excellent time to increase awareness of maternal mental health and services. As more mothers access information, care, and support they need for mental health illnesses, the more likely they will have positive outcomes for themselves, the baby, and the entire family.

Resources

[Pennsylvania Perinatal Quality Collaborative](#)

[Pennsylvania Department of Human Services](#)

[Nine Things Moms Can Do to Support Their Mental Health](#)

References

1. Shriver, K. (2022, June 2). Moms and Mental Health Depression and Anxiety around Pregnancy. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. <https://www.nichd.nih.gov/ncmhcp/initiatives/moms-mental-health-matters/moms>
2. Carelon Behavioral Health. Access Mental Health for Mothers. <https://www.accessmhct.com/moms>
3. Pine Rest Staff. Supporting Women During Pregnancy and Postpartum. Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services.

2023 Pennsylvania Strengthening Families Conference

The 2023 Pennsylvania Strengthening Families Conference, "Thriving Together, Growing Stronger" was held May 2 – 4, 2023, at the Sheraton Harrisburg Hershey Hotel. Over 200 attendees from across Pennsylvania (and afar) gathered for learning and connection opportunities. The opening night reception was well-attended along with 18 workshops throughout the conference. Be sure to check out next month's News Brief for a more in-depth discussion of the conference.



Upcoming Family Support Webinars

Spreading HOPE: An Introduction to Positive Childhood Experiences

Wednesday, June 7, 2023, from 10:00 AM to 11:15 AM

We can build HOPE when we implement a strengths-based approach that identifies, celebrates, and promotes access to key Positive Childhood Experiences critical to the health and thriving of all children and families. We will review the research behind Positive Childhood Experiences, how that research led to the development of the HOPE (Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences) Framework, and what individuals can do to create environments that prioritize equitable access to the Four Building Blocks of HOPE.

Presenter

Rijelle Kraft, Family Support Managing Coordinator, Center for Schools and Communities

[Register for Spreading HOPE webinar](#)



Family Support April Webinar Recap

The April Family Support webinar, “Mothers and Babies: Bridging the Mental Health Gap”, was held on April 20, 2023. The webinar featured a discussion on the Mothers and Babies curriculum and mental health, particularly in communities with limited access to services and intervention.

[Watch recording of Mothers and Babies webinar](#)

Parents as Teachers Online Courses

Foundational and Model Implementation

For new parent educators and new supervisors of affiliate programs.

Tuesday, June 20 – Friday, June 30, 2023

[FMI registration link for June session](#)

[FND registration for June session](#)

Register for other courses offered by National Parents as Teachers at their [website](#).

Questions regarding registration for PAT trainings? Contact [Jennifer Esposito](#).



Family Support Team

Family Support at Center for Schools and Communities provides training and technical assistance to Parents as Teachers providers, Children's Trust Fund grantees, and the Strengthening Families Leadership Team.

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[Pennsylvania Parents as Teachers](#) at Center for Schools and Communities

[Pennsylvania Children's Trust Fund](#)

[Pennsylvania Strengthening Families](#)

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Safe Kids Corner



All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs)

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children under 16—who are too young to have a driver's license—should not be allowed to operate or ride off-road vehicles. There were 37,925 emergency department visits among children ages 0-19 due to ATV injuries in 2020.

Top Tips for ATV Safety

1. Always wear your gear including a DOT-compliant helmet, goggles, long sleeves, long pants, over-the ankle boots, and gloves.
2. ATVs are designed to be operated off-highway and should not be operated on public or paved roads.
3. Never carry a passenger on a single-rider ATV.
4. Ride an ATV that's right for your age.
5. Supervise riders younger than 16.
6. Ride only on designated trails and at safe speeds.
7. ATV riders should take a hands-on safety training course.
8. Do not operate ATVs while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
9. Read and follow the operator's manual and warning labels.

Source: https://www.safekids.org/safetytips/field_risks/atvs

Locate the services you need and deserve, including health services, with the Finding Your Way in PA app.

Finding Your Way in PA
Resources for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

findingyourwayinpa.com

The advertisement features a purple background with a white heart containing a pulse line. A person is shown holding a smartphone, with a QR code and the text 'Finding Your Way in PA' above them. A location pin icon is also present.