

Advancing Maternal Mental Health in Georgia

POSTPARTUM SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL - GEORGIA CHAPTER



Postpartum Support International
Georgia Chapter

2022 Georgia Maternal Mental Health Legislative & Policy Agenda

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Extend Medicaid eligibility in the postpartum period up to one year after delivery.

During the 2020 legislative session, the Georgia General Assembly extended the coverage of pregnancy Medicaid from 60 days to six months postpartum. While this is a great step in improving maternal health, women are at risk for pregnancy-related mortality and morbidity throughout the first year after delivery and Georgia ranks among the worst states in the nation for maternal mortality. In order to maintain Medicaid coverage, women must re-apply and qualify under much stricter income guidelines because they are no longer pregnant. This six months of eligibility constrains women's ability to get critical healthcare, including mental healthcare, in the postpartum period. When new mothers lose this needed medical coverage after six months, they are no longer able to receive care for conditions that may have arisen during their pregnancy, leaving them at risk for mortality or morbidity in the postpartum period. In fact, 67% of Georgia's pregnancy-related deaths that occur between 6 months and one year postpartum were determined to be preventable. By extending eligibility up to one year after delivery, women will have greater access to mental health services and treatment for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs).

Expand Certified Peer Specialist credential to include Perinatal Mental Health.

Peer support is a cornerstone of treating mental health complications, including PMADs. The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) provides a foundation for those with lived experiences to pursue Certified Peer Specialist credentialing to provide this form of social support. In conjunction with our support of perinatal provider workforce development measures, we seek the inclusion of perinatal mental health (PMH) into DBHDD's Certified Peer Specialist - Mental Health (CPS-MH) credential.

Enshrine World Maternal Mental Health Day in Georgia Code.

The first Wednesday in May is World Maternal Mental Health Day across the globe. On this day, advocates bring awareness to the fact that women of every culture, age, income level and race can develop perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. Importantly, we share that there are effective and well-researched treatment options available to help women recover. We support formally enshrining Maternal Mental Health Day into Georgia code and a yearly Proclamation at the State and local government levels that highlights this day. This year, World Maternal Mental Health Day falls on May 4th, 2022.

Create a comprehensive statewide universal screening system for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs).

It is vital that providers offer universal maternal mental health screenings of all pregnant and postpartum women. The universal screening system would look for the presence of prenatal or postpartum mood disorders, using evidence-based tools such as the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Screen or Patient Health Questionnaire. Both are validated for use in the perinatal population and they are free instruments. The timing for screening should include all the following:

- First prenatal visit
- At least once in second trimester
- At least once in the third trimester
- Screening at facility where the woman gives birth (between labor and discharge)
- Four to six weeks postpartum at an obstetrical visit
- Repeated screenings at 6 and 12 months in the postpartum period in the obstetric and/or primary care setting (also includes care received in midwifery and Federally Qualified Health Center settings)
- 1-, 2-, 4-, and 6-month pediatric visits

Perinatal mental health screening at periodic intervals is recommended by the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG), American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Medical Association.

Support mental health workforce development and reimbursement parity.

Georgia is ranked 48th among all states in access to mental health care, driven by the inadequate availability of mental health workforce. Except for the Atlanta Metropolitan area, the entire state of Georgia is classified as a Mental Health Providers Shortage Area. In combination with other health care access barriers, an insufficient pool of mental healthcare providers delays and even prevents treatment of PMADs. We support adopting measures that are demonstrated to develop the healthcare workforce in regions and populations lacking adequate services and providers, including maternity care and perinatal providers. Such incentivization measures include: Providing loan forgiveness for healthcare and mental health students who work in areas impacted by workforce shortages; increasing the Medicaid reimbursement rate for mental health services; and funding a tax credit for mental health providers willing to serve as preceptors (mentor to medical students), particularly in underserved/low health access areas of Georgia.





Need Help? Call or Text our HelpLine.

Call 1-800-944-4773 (4PPD)

English & Spanish

Text in English: 800-944-4773

Text en Español: 971-203-7773



OUR PROGRAMS

All of our programs are FREE for families!

PROVIDER TRAINING

Our organization has trained over 500 providers in Georgia to identify, treat and refer families for maternal mental health conditions and concerns. In partnership with the Department of Public Health (DPH), we provide scholarships to providers in underserved areas of Georgia, those who accept Medicaid, sliding scale and/or ProBono clients, and those who speak a language other than English.

BLACK MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT

In 2021, we hosted Georgia's first ever Virtual Black Maternal Mental Health Summit! The event had over 370 attendees, primarily Black women from Georgia, and received an overwhelmingly positive response. We will host this free event once again on February 26, 2022.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Our support groups went live online during the pandemic. In partnership with PSI and Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Georgia, we offer them for moms, fathers, veterans, LGBTQ+ families, and other communities by language and demographic.

PEER SUPPORT & HELPLINE

PSI operates a nationwide helpline (see above). This toll-free telephone number allows anyone to get basic information, resources and connected with their State Coordinator. Calls are returned within 24 hours. PSI-GA State Coordinators have served hundreds of families to get the care and support they needed, including referrals to maternal mental health providers and systems of care.

CLIMB OUT OF THE DARKNESS

Every year, PSI hosts Climb events all over the world where families and communities gather to bring awareness to perinatal mood and anxiety disorders and their impact. Georgia has led the world both in fundraising and in the number of climbs. The 2022 Climb will take place in June.

ACCESS THESE PROGRAMS AT WWW.PSIGA.ORG