

Maternal Mental Health Strategy: Building Capacity in Saskatchewan

The *MotherFirst Working Group* was created following a Regina conference “Unmasking Postpartum Depression” in the fall of 2009. The goal was to address the issue of inconsistent identification and treatment of women with maternal mental health problems in our province. The group brings together interdisciplinary stakeholders, including major professional health associations, community organizations, First Nation groups, and women with lived experience. The group is geographically, culturally, and professionally representative.

The Ministry of Health has endorsed the following MotherFirst recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION #1: EDUCATION

Increase awareness of the frequency, impact, and treatment of maternal mental health problems, and promote positive mental health through ongoing access to evidence-based materials.

Materials were sent out to all careproviders who are known to be involved in pre and postnatal care. They are available through the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute preventioninstitute.sk.ca or skmaternalmentalhealth.ca

RECOMMENDATION #2: SCREENING

Universal screening for depression and anxiety using the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) in pregnant and postpartum women.

We believe that emotional and mental wellbeing is as important as physical health in the childbearing family. The EPDS will be used consistently at regular intervals during routine health care visits during pregnancy and postpartum. Positive mental health will be promoted with all women. A score of 12 or will be used for a referral to a health professional, while those who score 10 or 11 will have the opportunity for follow-up. Screening will occur at the first or second prenatal visit and again at 28-34 weeks gestation and at 2-3 weeks and 2 and 4 months postpartum. Partners of women who score positive for depression (≥ 12) will also be offered depression screening.

RECOMMENDATION #3: TREATMENT

Prioritize maternal mental health within Mental Health Services, improve accessibility, and increase treatment options.

Timely treatment is essential to restore the well-being of mothers suffering from mental health problems and to minimize the adverse effects they can have on their infants and families. Each region will develop a flow chart to show access to care if a woman is depressed.

RECOMMENDATION #4: SUSTAINABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Implement the MotherFirst policy recommendations and ensure maternal mental health remains a priority within Saskatchewan.

Groups will be developed at the provincial and regional levels and will include multiple stakeholders, including First Nations.

For more information about the ***MotherFirst: Maternal Mental Health Strategy***, please contact Angela Bowen, College of Nursing, University of Saskatchewan at angela.bowen@usask.ca or visit www.skmaternalmentalhealth.ca. Copies of the report or resources can be found at www.preventioninstitute.sk.ca. For more info on the Smiling Mask, contact Elita Paterson, info@thesmilingmask.com