

## Maternal Depression Work Group, Update March 2015

In December 2013, the Vermont Department of Health, Division of Maternal and Child Health (MCH) convened a statewide maternal depression work group (identified as a priority area in the [2014-2015 MCH Strategic Plan](#)). After a series of brainstorming sessions, a needs assessment survey and review of other state strategies, the work group arrived at the following recommendations:

- Increase capacity of Vermont's health care providers to educate, screen, diagnose, and treat perinatal mood and anxiety disorders
- Increase capacity of Vermont's mental health to diagnose, and treat perinatal mood and anxiety disorders
- Identify and support innovative financing options to support the screening, diagnosis, and treatment of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders
- Vermonters have access to comprehensive perinatal mood and anxiety disorders educational information and support and treatment options

Since the meetings in 2013 and early 2014, MCH has been working collaboratively with key players across Vermont's systems to implement strategies that meet the recommendations outlined above. To date, MCH is currently implementing the following activities.

### I. Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders Consultative Service

The Health Department seeks to increase knowledge and capacity of health care and mental health providers to screen, diagnose, treat, and refer women at risk for and experiencing perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. Towards meeting this objective, the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Division has granted funds to UVM Medical Center (Sandy Wood, CNM) to manage a PMAD Consultative Service for health and mental health providers across Vermont.

- UVM Medical Center will maintain a "warm-line" to provide consultation to health care and mental health providers working with and/or treating women at risk for and experiencing Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders (PMAD).
- UVMMC will conduct an assessment of community resources and current strategies in place across Vermont to support and treat women (and their support systems) at risk for or experiencing PMAD.
- UVMMC will provide ongoing technical assistance and training to health care and mental health provider.

### II. Family Medicine Screening Quality Improvement Project

The Health Department is collaborating with the Vermont Child Health Improvement Program (VCHIP) to address the role of Family Medicine providers statewide to screen and treat parental depression in families in the context of well-child visits. Through a comprehensive quality improvement project, practices will be supported to implement screening methods using validated tools and provided with training on how to refer or provide appropriate resources for positive screens.

- A statewide learning session will be conducted for Family Medicine providers to include background on parental depression and the implications to child health and development, use of screening tools, resources for treatment and referral of depressed parents, and activities to launch the QI project.
- Collaborative conference calls will be helped to provide education and support to practices, as well as ongoing feedback and quality improvement coaching on changes that practices are making to implement parental depression screening, treatment and referral.
- Participating practices will be eligible to receive Maintenance of Certification (MOC) and Performance Improvement Continuing Medical Education (PI CME).
- Practices will be assisted in identifying local resources and referrals for parents screening positive for depression, as well as supplied with patient education/support materials.

### **III. Public Messaging**

To meet the objective of increasing awareness of the issue of maternal depression among pregnant/parenting women and their support systems (partners, grandparents, etc.), the Health Department will be contracting with a local marketing firm in the first phase of a comprehensive maternal depression communications and marketing strategy. In phase one, the marketing firm will conduct a literature review to shed light on public health and health communication research pertinent to the maternal depression campaign goals, as well as craft messages and creative concepts to reach the intended audiences. This project will begin in the spring of 2015.

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For more information on these strategies or related maternal depression content, please contact Ilisa Stalberg, MCH Deputy Director, at [ilisa.stalberg@state.vt.us](mailto:ilisa.stalberg@state.vt.us) or 802-951-4026.