

A Community Collaboration Toolkit for Pennsylvania Providers

Screening

Implementation Algorithm

Source: Maternity Care Coalition, www.momobile.org

Reference for Guide to Maternal Depression Screening and Referral Care Path

1. Routine medical care visit:

a. OB/GYN

Most women receive prenatal care throughout the course of their pregnancy and are seen postpartum, normally six weeks after giving birth, by their obstetrician/gynecologist. This regulated care system gives health practitioners the unique opportunity to recognize possible risks and symptoms of perinatal depression, and connect women with appropriate services. Early detection of prenatal depression is especially important, as it is known that about 50% of all pregnant women struggling with depression also develop postpartum depression.

b. Pediatrician

Most mothers are likely to bring their babies to the pediatrician for the child's well-baby visits. As a consequence, the pediatrician is the health care provider who has the most contact with both, mother and child, during the childhood years. Parental depression screening helps pediatricians to identify mothers and fathers with depressive symptoms and allows health care providers to address mental health needs in families as a child-focused intervention with the goal to improve child developmental outcomes.

2. Depression screening

a. Depression screening for OB/GYN office:

During the course of the three trimesters of pregnancy it is recommended to screen for prenatal depression at least twice, preferably once during the first prenatal visit and the second time in the last trimester of pregnancy. After giving birth, the woman is again seen by her obstetrician/gynecologist for her 4-6 week postpartum follow up visit, where a first postpartum screening is recommended. Other screening opportunities may be indicated during additional health or family planning care visits.

b. Depression screening for Pediatrician office:

Since depressive symptoms can surface at any time, and the severity may change, depression screening should happen on a regular and ongoing basis. Considering the time-frame when baby blues may occur, the first postpartum depression screening is recommended when the baby is 4-6 weeks old. The second screening is suggested when the baby is 3 months old, and thereafter at 6 months of age.

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