

Massachusetts Special Legislative Commission on Postpartum Depression (PPD)
Wednesday, April 9, 2014, 5:30-7:30 PM
House Members' Lounge, State House, Boston

Minutes

Commissioners present: Representative Ellen Story (Chair); Khadeejah Ahmed (on behalf of Rep. James O'Day); Kristin Alexander; Dr. Lee Cohen; Karen Crowley; Gail DeRiggi (on behalf of Commissioner Thomas Weber); Liz Friedman; Mary Elizabeth Gamache; Dr. Gordon Harper; Peggy Kaufman; Kerry LaBounty; Dr. Claire Levesque; Sen. Joan Lovely; Dr. Tiffany Moore Simas; Rep. Denise Provost; Eileen Terlaga; Lisa Waxman; Dr. Michael Yogman.

Commissioners absent: Sen. Thomas McGee (Chair); Karin Downs; Rep. Kimberly Ferguson; Sen. Jennifer Flanagan; Elizabeth Fluet; Dr. Janice Goodman; Dr. Julie Johnston; Dr. Monica Le; Sen. Richard Moore; Rep. James O'Day; Sen. Richard Ross; Rep. Tom Sannicandro; Dr. Alison Schonwald; Nancy Schwartz; Dr. Jayne Singer; Dr. Joshua Sparrow; Commissioner Thomas Weber.

Subcommittee members present: Beth Buxton; Dr. Claudia Gold; Margaret Hannah.

Special guests present: Kathleen Biebel, Program Director, MCPAP for Moms; Dr. Nancy Byatt, UMass Boston/UMass Medical Center; Dorothy Cam, Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center; Sarah Heaton, Lynn Community Health Center; Divya Kumar, Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center; Leanne McDermott, Lynn Community Health Center; Jennifer Moffitt, Family Health Center of Worcester; Jennifer Nunnemacher, Family Health Center of Worcester; Marcy Ravech, Director, Mass. Child Psychiatry Access Project (MCPAP); Dr. John Straus, Mass. Behavioral Health Partnership; Rossana Valencia, Project Manager, MassHealth.

Other staff members present: Jessie Colbert, PPD Commission Director and aide to Rep. Story; Amanda Jusino, aide to Rep. Story.

Members of the public and other state employees were also present.

1. Welcome; approval of minutes

Rep. Story welcomed Commission members and guests. All of those in attendance introduced themselves. The Commission approved the minutes from the January 15, 2014 meeting.

2. Panel presentation on PPD Community Health Center Pilot Program

Rep. Story introduced staff members from three Community Health Centers participating in the PPD pilot program funded in this year's state budget, who discussed their work and answered questions from Commissioners and other attendees.

The presentation started with Jennifer Moffitt (Certified Nurse Midwife and the Perinatal Services Manager) and Jennifer Nunnemacher (RN) from Family Health Center of Worcester. They described how, with the new pilot funding, they have been able to implement PPD screening at regular intervals (6 weeks, 2 months, and one year), and set up training and supervision of staff on PPD. They are working on creating a resource and referral list, and on using electronic health records to prompt and record screenings at every well-child visit.

The Commission then heard from Postpartum Doula Divya Kumar and Community Health Worker Dorothy Cam from the Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center, both hired with pilot funding. They have been screening all moms with babies under 6 months, and then developing relationships with moms and offering help with breastfeeding, PPD, and other issues. They talked about how doctors are very grateful for their help and often pull them into patients' appointments when necessary.

Finally, there was a presentation from Psychologist Sarah Heaton and OB/GYN Nurse Manager Leanne McDermott from Lynn Community Health Center. They have used some of the pilot funding for PPD training for case managers, so even if the funding doesn't continue next year those staff members will have expanded knowledge and skills. The health center has been able to offer patients home visits by both Community Health Workers and the psychologist, and will be adding screening in primary care soon, hoping to expand it health center-wide.

Holyoke Health Center, the fourth grant recipient, was not able to send a staff person, so Jessie Colbert offered a brief update on their work. Although they have had a slow start because their Community Health Worker has been on medical leave, they have begun doing the PHQ9 screen at well-child visits up to one year, and doing "warm hand-offs" to their co-located behavioral health services when necessary. They serve a very high percentage of low-income, teen, and Hispanic moms. They made a decision not to indicate screening results on moms' charts for legal reasons.

The panelists then answered questions and heard suggestions from the group. Among other comments, Dr. Claudia Gold discussed how we can encourage better mental health of moms and babies by working with the dyad. Dr. Michael Yogman encouraged the health centers to expand home visiting and work with moms prenatally. Several panelists responded regarding challenges with the latter – they're not sure if this funding will continue (don't want to offer help to pregnant moms if they can't follow up next fiscal year), and in some cases mothers do not receive prenatal care at babies' health centers.

Dr. Lee Cohen sought the panelists' thoughts on how their programs could be scaled up. They agreed that beginning prenatally is key, and that an ideal program would combine aspects of all health centers' programs.

3. Reports and discussion of other initiatives

MCPAP for Moms: Dr. John Straus re-introduced attendees to the program, and he and other MCPAP for Moms leaders shared what they are doing to prepare for the July 1 launch. Dr. Nancy Byatt talked about how MCPAP for Moms will build the capacity of front-line providers to address PPD through a toolkit, training, and a screening protocol. Liz Friedman discussed her work on coalition-building, and Margaret Hannah updated the group on the resource and referral system.

There were a number of questions about the project. Lisa Waxman asked about mothers who aren't connected with a medical provider, and Dr. Cohen asked a similar question about what moms can find online. Dr. Straus responded that they will have resources for moms on their website, but will try to engage moms who find them online with help through their doctors. Commissioners and others talked about how community members and medical professionals need to work together to address PPD. Dr. Yogman and Peggy Kaufman talked about the importance of engaging the business community as well.

Medicaid screening coverage: Rossana Valencia offered an update on the Medicaid PPD working group's progress. She said they support screening both prenatally and postpartum, and are now working on a policy memo that will go to the executive team for approval.

DPH regulations: Beth Buxton reported that the screening data collection regulations will be presented to the Public Health Council soon, and then presented at a public hearing. [Note: The public hearing will be held on Tuesday, July 8 at 3 PM at 250 Washington Street. More info. will follow.]

Anti-stigma media opportunities: Dr. Claire Levesque reported that, at her encouragement, the Commission will be submitting an application to the Emerging Leaders Program at UMass Boston, for a team of leaders to develop a PR campaign on our issue. She also reported that, unfortunately, PPD was not selected to be the topic of the fall Mass. ACOG conference. [Note: PPD and MCPAP for Moms were subsequently successful in securing a presentation spot at the conference.]

Other reports and announcements: Amanda Jusino provided an update on the “anti-shackling bill,” disallowing shackling of state inmates while they are in labor. Similar versions of the bill passed in both branches, but only the House bill mandates PPD screening. [Update: the bill passed; screening was not included, but it did call for regular access to a mental health clinician for women with PPD.]

Sarah Beaulieu introduced the Commission to her new initiative, [The Enliven Project](#), which draws needed attention to how sexual trauma can lead to birth trauma, and how both can contribute to perinatal mental health issues. She has worked primarily through social media, and hopes Commission members and others can get involved in “bringing sexual violence out of the closet.”

Jamie Belsito updated the Commission on the work of the North Shore PPD Task Force. Liz Friedman said the *New York Times* will have a story soon about PPD, and reminded the group that Commission friend Deb Wachenheim had advocated for better media coverage on PPD after she lost her sister last spring.

4. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.