

## **Optimizing Maternal Mental Healthcare: Educating Healthcare Professionals and Enhancing Utilization of the Healthy Beginnings Program for Pregnant and Postpartum Women**

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**Background:** Postpartum depression (PPD) is a significant maternal health concern affecting the well-being of mothers and their families. Although guidelines exist for screening and management, gaps in care leave many women with PPD under-recognized and under-treated. **PICO:** Among healthcare professionals who provide care for pregnant and postpartum patients at a small Midwest women's clinic, how does the implementation of a postpartum depression education session impact the knowledge and practices of the healthcare staff on the topic of maternal mental healthcare compared to current practice? **Project Interventions:** The project created an educational initiative and care pathway to ensure all mothers and healthcare professionals are well-informed about PPD and receive consistent, thorough, and timely care. Educational sessions were conducted at the clinic and the delivering hospital. The sessions educated on current ACOG screening guidelines, Cheryl Beck's Theory on PPD, the Healthy Beginnings program, and a care pathway to better integrate these evidence-based strategies. **Outcomes:** Surveys distributed throughout the educational initiatives assessed changes in healthcare professional knowledge, attitudes, and intended practice changes. The survey results showed increased awareness of PPD screening guidelines (92%), increased commitment to the Healthy Beginnings Program (100%), and increased confidence in identifying and managing PPD. Postpartum follow-up rates were also tracked, revealing a 13% increase in follow-up within three weeks post-initiative. **Conclusion:** This project was successful as it improved healthcare professional knowledge and commitment to postpartum care. The focus should remain on continuing education and improving patient education to better support mothers in this vulnerable time.