

Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Announces Expansion of Resources for Healthcare Providers Supporting Pregnant and Postpartum Individuals with Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Needs

Hartford, CT – The Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) today announced the launch of ACCESS Mental Health for Moms, a perinatal consultation and education program for healthcare providers developed in collaboration with Beacon Health Options and Yale School of Medicine.

The ACCESS Mental Health for Moms program is designed to improve access to treatment for pregnant and postpartum individuals with mental health and/or substance use recovery needs. Every front-line healthcare provider treating pregnant and postpartum individuals up to one-year post-delivery presenting with mental health and/or substance use concerns, regardless of insurance, will have real-time access to telephonic psychiatric consultation and resource and referral support for their patients. In addition, its launch will begin to address the disproportionality of maternal deaths by race as this has been a major focus of legislative councils, stakeholders, and the work of the Maternal Mortality Review Committee.

As many as 1 in 5 new mothers experience some type of perinatal mood and anxiety disorder (PMADs). “Birthing persons of every culture, age, income level and race can develop perinatal mental health disorders and may become symptomatic any time during pregnancy and in the 12 months after childbirth,” said DMHAS Commissioner Nancy Navarretta. “They can also struggle with substance use during this critical period and, unfortunately, these illnesses often go unnoticed. One of our goals is to improve the quality of care for those experiencing all types of PMADs, and reduce the stigma of maternal mental illness and substance use through well-researched treatment options.”

“Mental health and substance use disorders during the perinatal period are major public health issues. Unfortunately, the resources to support front-line obstetric and primary care providers to manage these issues have been limited and/or underutilized in Connecticut. Having a free and immediate resource to help all providers caring for pregnant and postpartum patients identify and address mental health or substance use concerns is vital in improving the care of this unique and vulnerable population,” stated Dr. Ariadna Forray, ACCESS Mental Health for Moms Hub Team Medical Director, Yale School of Medicine. The Hub Team will have access to a robust continuum of DMHAS-funded services for pregnant and parenting individuals with substance use disorders in addition to perinatal mental health practitioners statewide.

“Building on the success of Beacon’s Massachusetts Child Psychiatry Access Program (MCPAP) for Moms active since 2014, we are pleased to be partnering with DMHAS to launch ACCESS Mental Health for Moms. As in Massachusetts, the Connecticut program expands front-line providers’ access to

psychiatric consultation to meet the behavioral health needs of perinatal women. We're excited to promote maternal and child health by identifying and managing patients' mental health and substance use concerns through consultation, care coordination, and other resources," said Andrea Goetz, Executive Director, Child & Family Division, Beacon Health Options.

Key components of the ACCESS Mental Health for Moms program include:

- Free, real-time perinatal psychiatric consultation and case-based education to obstetric, pediatric and adult primary care, and psychiatric providers;
- Resource and referral support to community-based mental health and substance use services; and
- Training and toolkits for providers and their staff on evidence-based guidelines for mental health and substance use screening and treatment.

ACCESS Mental Health for Moms is free to providers and their patients regardless of insurance status. Medical providers who are in need of immediate perinatal psychiatric consultation can access the perinatal psychiatry team at Yale by calling 1-833-978-MOMS (6667), Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

For more information about the program, including how to enroll, visit www.accessmhct.com/moms.

To learn more about services available through DMHAS's network of providers, please visit <http://portal.ct.gov/WomensServices>.