



The **National Coalition for Maternal Mental Health (NCMMH)** was formed in 2014, bringing together the country's leading voices addressing **maternal mental health disorders** – also referred to as perinatal mood and anxiety disorders, like **postpartum depression** – to create and implement uniform awareness campaigns, engage thought leaders and drive national advocacy.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, **postpartum depression is the most common, yet most under-diagnosed, obstetrical complication in the country.** Research suggests up to 20% of the approximately 4 million U.S. women who give birth each year will be affected by a maternal mental health disorder, including depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety and psychosis, which occur during pregnancy and up to one year postpartum and research suggests that **only 15% of the 800,000 women who are suffering will get the help they need.** Untreated depression can have negative and lasting impact on the developing infant and other children as well as family stability and is estimated to **cost the U.S. almost 9 billion dollars annually,** given the estimate published by Wilder Research.

Maternal suicide is significantly elevated among depressed perinatal women and those suffering from postpartum psychosis a rare but very serious disorder. Maternal suicides account for up to 20% of all postpartum deaths, making it **one of the leading causes of maternal mortality in the perinatal period.**

On Jan. 26, 2016, the **United States Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF)**, which sets forth guidelines around preventive and diagnostic screening, announced its recommendation that pregnant and postpartum women should be routinely screened for depression. However the challenges in actually moving from a policy statement to action remain deep as referral pathways often don't exist and OBGYN and pediatrician capacity and comfort in treating are strained.

In May 2016, NCMMH held an Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill in support of the ***Bringing Postpartum Depression Out of the Shadows Act. House of Representatives Bill #HR3235***, introduced by Congresswoman **Katherine Clark (D-MA)**, and the companion **Senate Bill #S2311**, introduced by Senator **Dean Heller (R-NV)**, called for an amendment to the Public Health Service Act to authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to make grants to states for screening and treatment for maternal depression. This bill was included in the 21st Century Cures Act that was signed into law in December 2016, signaling a national need for education, screening and treatment programs around Maternal Mental Health.

More work is needed to increase referral pathways and treatment resources in all communities around the U.S.

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