



# Pennsylvania Department of Health



Pennsylvania  
Department of Drug and  
Alcohol Programs



Pennsylvania  
Department of Human Services

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## **Shapiro Administration Leaders Encourage Postpartum Depression Screenings for All Pennsylvania Mothers, Call for Faster Referrals to Mental Health Services**

*Governor Shapiro's budget proposal doubles-down on work to improve health of Pennsylvania mothers and babies.*



**Pittsburgh, PA – Shapiro Administration** officials from the departments of Human Services (DHS), Health (DOH), and Drugs and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) today highlighted Governor Josh Shapiro’s proposal in this year’s budget to implement universal postpartum depression screenings for all Pennsylvania moms.

During a visit to the Allegheny Health Network’s (AHN) Alexis Joy D’Achille Center for Perinatal Mental Health, leaders shared how postpartum depression can occur weeks and months after childbirth, where mothers experience a broad range of symptoms including but not limited to sadness, hopelessness, anxiety, change in appetite, difficulty in sleep, mood swings and thoughts of self-harm that may make it difficult to carry out daily tasks, including caring for themselves and their babies. Postpartum depression

affects one in eight mothers across the country. It not only impacts the well-being of Pennsylvania mothers, but also has profound effects on their families and communities.

“For more than two decades, as a pediatrician, I worked with new mothers and their babies and saw firsthand the impact pregnancy-related depression has on women and their families,” said **Secretary of Health Dr. Debra Bogen**. “Implementing universal postpartum depression screenings and referrals to evidence-based treatment options for all Pennsylvania mothers is a meaningful action we can take to ensure women receive the care they need during a critical time in their lives.”

Many mothers experiencing postpartum depression may not fully recognize the symptoms. Universal screening ensures that all mothers are assessed regardless of background or risk factors and provided information and resources. Early identification of postpartum depression is crucial for timely intervention, and like other health conditions, it can be effectively treated.

That’s why **Governor Josh Shapiro’s [2025-2026 proposed budget](#)** continues to invest \$5 million to improve the health of mothers and babies and directs DOH to work to educate doctors and nurses to timely identify signs of pregnancy-related depression and speed up referrals to mental health professionals.

“More than half of pregnancy-related deaths occur between one week and one year postpartum, and mental health is a leading underlying cause of these tragic, preventable losses,” said **Department of Human Services Special Advisor Sara Goulet**. “Addressing this crisis and helping mothers get the care they need requires a comprehensive approach where mothers are safe and empowered to speak honestly about what they are experiencing so they can be quickly connected to follow-up care. Universal screenings and a direct warm hand-off are important steps to combatting the preventable loss of life experienced by too many women.”

“We are focused on making sure pregnant and mothering individuals not only survive before, during, and after a pregnancy—but thrive,” said **Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs Deputy Secretary Kelly Primus**. “The days, weeks, and months following a birth are a crucial time for mom and baby, and we know that substance use can go hand in hand with postpartum depression. We will continue to work with our agency partners on making sure postpartum supports are there when families need them most.”

Since taking office, **Governor Shapiro** has charged his Administration with finding ways to improve the health of mothers and babies. The Administration has prioritized using data and recommendations from the [Pennsylvania Maternal Mortality Review Committee \(MMRC\)](#), feedback from a statewide survey, and regional listening sessions to develop a multi-agency [Maternal Health Strategic Plan](#).

Additionally, the Shapiro Administration established a Division of Maternal Health Services within DOH to support the administration of the MMRC, regional maternal

health coalitions announced last year, and other efforts to improve the health of mothers and babies.

“Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders impact about one in five birthing women each year, with consequences that extend far beyond the mother’s well-being — children and partners are affected, too. Investing in comprehensive, services is not just a matter of compassion; it’s a critical public health imperative and we applaud the efforts of the Governor’s office and other leaders to help us better care for these patients,” said **AHN Women’s Behavioral Health, Psychiatry and Behavioral Health Institute Medical Director Dr. Ewurama Sackey**. “The need for expanded resources is felt not just here in Pittsburgh, but across the Commonwealth and the entire nation. By providing new mothers with the resources and support they need to thrive, we are saving lives, investing in healthier families, and building stronger communities.”

“Over the years, UPMC has developed a spectrum of maternal health services and a robust integrated care program to meet new moms both where they are and with what they need after giving birth,” said **UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital Chief of Psychiatry and psychiatrist at UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital Dr. Priya Gopalan**. “We thank the Shapiro Administration for providing another important and vital step in identifying and treating postpartum depression for new mothers.”

**Editor’s Note:** Video downloads and photos from the news conference are [available on PAcast](#).

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