

Ellen Story Commission on Postpartum Depression  
Thursday, January 28<sup>th</sup> 2021  
5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

**Commissioners present:** Representative James O’Day (co-chair); Senator Joan Lovely (co-chair); Representative Mindy Domb; Representative Liz Miranda; Representative Kim Ferguson; Representative Carole Fiola; Victoria Mori on behalf of Senator Bruce Tarr; Calee Merenda on behalf of Senator Diana DiZoglio; Senator Anne Gobi; Senator John Keenan; Timoria McQueen Saba; Margaret Hannah; Jessie Colbert; Nneka Hall; Karin Downs; Rebecca Butler; Lauren Almeida; Dr. Karen Crowley; Dr. Lee Cohen; Dr. Monica Le; Dr. Leena Mittal; Peggy Kaufman; Dr. Jayne Singer; Divya Kumar; Elizabeth Murphy; Dr. Tiffany Moore-Simas; Dr. Lisa Scarfo; Gail DeRiggi; Dr. Julie Johnston; Dr. Michael Yogman; Dr. Joshua Sparrow; Margarita O’Neill-Arana; Margot Tracy; Jill Fieleke

**Commissioners absent:** Liz Friedman; Kerry LaBounty

Several members of the public and other state employees were also present

## 1. Welcome and Introduction

Representative James O'Day, Senator Joan Lovely, and Elizabeth Boyes welcomed Commissioners and guests. Commissioners introduced themselves and the organizations they represent on the Commission. The Commission welcomed two new Commissioners:

- Margarita O'Neill-Arana, Department of Mental Health
- Margot Tracy, MassHealth

The Commission approved the minutes from the October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 meeting.

## 2. Announcements

- Annual Awareness Day:
  - The Commission's Annual Awareness Day will be held virtually in May. Several Commissioners have expressed interest in helping plan the event. Members of the public are also welcome to assist with planning the event and can contact Elizabeth Boyes at [Elizabeth.Boyes@mahouse.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.Boyes@mahouse.gov) if they want to get involved.
- MCPAP for Moms Update:
  - Commissioner Leena Mittal provided the Commission with an update on MCPAP for Moms. The covid-19 pandemic has increased the need for mental health referrals and services. MCPAP for Moms has seen an increase in calls, a greater need for complex referrals, and is overall busier as a result of the pandemic. There are geographic challenges with finding mental health services to refer patients to. MCPAP for Moms' substance use disorders (SUD) expansion continues to provide training and education to SUD providers. Last year, MCPAP for Moms and colleagues from PSI presented a proposal to expand MCPAP for Moms in collaboration with PSI. This proposal will be submitted again for funding consideration.
- Newton-Wellesley Hospital PMAD Initiative Presentation by Buffy Sheff Ross, MSW, LICSW, and Michael Jellinek, MD:
  - Newton-Wellesley Hospital (NWH) launched a perinatal mood and anxiety disorder (PMAD) initiative in April 2019. The Maternity Service Counsel under the umbrella of the NWH Collaborate for Healthy Families and Communities began initiative to address PMADs and identify PMADs. Patients are referred to Buffy and she connects them with other providers and resources. Using the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS), patients are screened at 24 weeks prenatally, 6 weeks postpartum, and 6 months postpartum. NWH is the first Mass General Brigham hospital to screen at 6 months. So far, Buffy has received 540 referrals from providers. Buffy works with 20 to 30 patients per week. Referrals have increased every month in 2020 compared to months last year 2019. Patients are not just presenting with depression and anxiety but SUD, domestic violence, homelessness, grief. Patients are experiencing a huge sense

of loss because their family cannot be close or visit often due to the covid-19 pandemic. A challenge the initiative faces is coordinating care for patients who are uninsured or underinsured. The future plans include expanding the initiative to other Mass General Brigham Hospitals and to start QI project with MGH to understand how mothers with PPD navigate care.

### 3. Goal Setting

- Last year, we tried to pass *An Act relative to the well-being of new mothers and infants*. The bill was stuck in committee and we will be refilling it again this legislative session. Susan Feingold, Psy.D, PMH-C, helped pass similar legislation in Illinois and will present on her experiences and offer advice to Massachusetts.
  - Presentation from Susan Feingold, Psy.D, PMH-C:
    - Postpartum psychosis is rare, with 1 to 2 per thousand mothers experiencing postpartum psychosis. Of the mothers who experience postpartum psychosis each year, 4% to 5% will commit suicide and 1% to 4% will commit infanticide. Postpartum psychosis is the most severe form of maternal mental illness and it is also temporary. The law seeks to prevent lifetime prison sentences by directing mothers to mental health services instead. The law does not increase incidences of infanticide as seen in 28 other countries that already have similar laws. In Illinois, the law was passed with the continued support of advocates regularly reaching out to legislators, educating legislators, and discussing the bill in the news.
- Commissioner Nneka Hall's presentation on Postpartum Care Centers:
  - Commissioner Nneka Hall is looking to reinvent postpartum care in Massachusetts and, eventually, the rest of the nation through postpartum care centers. The mission of Commissioner Hall's postpartum care center, Mother Is Supreme, is to support birthing parents and teach them how to care for themselves and their infants. Postpartum care centers are available in other countries with the goal of supporting birthing parents and their infants. A postpartum care center provides emotional and practical support to relieve the mental and physical load of the birthing person. The staff at a postpartum care center includes postpartum care specialists, LPNs, OBs, CNAs, LCSWs, mental health counselors, infant development specialists, IBCLCs, massage therapists, pelvic floor specialists, yoga instructors, cooks, security, and more. Birthing parents can stay at postpartum care centers for 3 to 21 days or drop-in as needed.
  - What Commissioner Hall needs from the Commission:
    - Legislation surrounding insurance coverage for extensive postpartum care, legislation on FMLA and financial support for postpartum leave, funding to secure a space for a postpartum care center, funding for training postpartum care specialists, initiating a pilot program for a

postpartum care center, and connecting with others who could support this initiative.

- **Implicit Bias Training for Health Care Providers:**
  - Implicit bias training for health care providers was previously mentioned but never discussed. In 2019, California passed legislation requiring perinatal care providers to undergo implicit bias training. In 2020, the Governor of Michigan signed an executive directive requiring all health care providers to take implicit bias training courses. Illinois has tried to pass similar legislation twice, but it has been stuck in committees.
  - Is potential legislation requiring implicit bias training for health care providers something that the Commission would be interested in seeing filed? Open it up for discussion.
  - General consensus that implicit bias training does not address systemic racism in the health care system and it is systemic racism that we should focus on to create the biggest impact.

#### **4. Clarification on Commission's Purpose**

- a. Chapter 313 of the Acts of 2010, Section A, states the Commission's purpose:

“There shall be a special commission on postpartum depression to provide guidance and advice to the governor, the general court and the secretary of health and human services on current research on postpartum depression, including, but not limited to, best and promising practices in the prevention, detection and treatment of postpartum depression and to recommend policies, including legislation, to promote greater public awareness, screening and treatment of postpartum depression. The special commission may conduct public hearings, forums or meetings to gather information and to raise awareness of postpartum depression, including the sponsorship of or participation in statewide or regional conferences.”

#### **5. FY 22 Budget**

- The Commission will look to continue funding the Postpartum Depression Pilot Program and MCPAP for Moms for fiscal year 2022.

#### **6. Monica Le, MD, MPH Farewell**

- a. Monica has represented MassHealth on the PPD Commission since 2011. She was instrumental in securing MassHealth reimbursement for PPD screenings and provided the Commission with regular updates on MassHealth's activities related to PPD. Monica will be missed and we wish her all the best in her next journey.
- b. The Commission welcome Margot Tracy, who will be filling Monica's seat as a representative for MassHealth.

#### **7. Adjournment**