

State Medicaid Policy for Reimbursement of Maternal Depression Screening

Type of Innovation: State Medicaid Reimbursement and Billing Policy for Maternal Depression Screening

Organization: Task Force comprised of the Illinois Departments of Public Aid which is the single state agency for Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program, Human Services, Public Health, Children and Family Services, and Corrections, and Conference of Women Legislators in coordination with the University of Illinois at Chicago and in partnership with the Illinois Chapters of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Academy of Family Physicians, and American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the Ounce of Prevention Fund and other key state organizations.

Date of Implementation: December 1, 2004

Target Population: Pregnant women enrolled in the Illinois Medicaid program

The issue: Approximately 1 in 10 new mothers suffer from maternal depression in the first year after giving birth. In addition to being debilitating and harmful to women who experience the illness, maternal depression also can compromise their ability to nurture their children. Studies have found that children of depressed women exhibit more problem behavior and have more difficulty achieving age appropriate developmental and cognitive milestones. Certain factors, including low-socioeconomic status, and exposure to stress place pregnant and post partum women at greater risk for maternal depression.

In spite of its significant impact on the health and well-being of women and children, maternal depression remains under-recognized and under-treated. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists calls it "the most under-recognized, under-diagnosed, and under-treated obstetrical complication in America." Fortunately, simple and validated screening tools that can identify women who may be experiencing depression are available. Moreover, prescription medications and psychosocial interventions can effectively treat depression during pregnancy and the post partum period.

Providers, policymakers, and program administrators can implement policies and programs to identify women who may be at-risk for, or who are experiencing, maternal depression and provide referrals for appropriate treatment and follow-up. "If you want to improve health care overall, one of the best places to start is with the nation's largest health insurer, namely Medicaid. Here in Illinois, we are committed to improving the health and well-being of our 2 million beneficiaries, including over 1.1 million children. We recognize that a key component to overall health is mental health and therefore, we have developed a wide range of new initiatives to address mental health and in particular perinatal depression so that every child may have a healthy start in life," said Dr. Anne Marie Murphy, the Illinois Medicaid Director. The Medicaid

program is a critical funding source that states can use to support screening of pregnant enrollees for maternal depression.

The intervention: Illinois health care and human services agencies in partnership with state provider organizations and children's advocacy groups are working together to address maternal depression with the ultimate goal of improving maternal and child health outcomes through screening, early identification, referral and treatment. Illinois has a longstanding history of promoting the importance of young children's healthy development. Illinois Department of Public Aid's (IDPA) Task Force on Perinatal Care focused on improving birth outcomes; a Governor's Task Force on Maternal Depression and a grant from the Michael Reese Health Trust to participate in The Commonwealth Fund's Assuring Better Child Health and Development (ABCD II) initiative, administered by the National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP), served as the catalysts for development and implementation of this policy. Illinois is one of five states selected to participate in the ABCD II collaborative to ensure that social emotional screening is a component of well child visits under Medicaid's Early and Periodic Screening Diagnostic and Treatment services component; young children at risk of developmental or behavioral delay are identified in primary pediatric settings and appropriately referred to specialists or other community resources, such as early intervention; parents at risk of depression are referred to mental health professionals; billing and reimbursement policies facilitate use of these services; and new care models are tested in primary pediatric practice.

The Illinois Medicaid program covers approximately forty percent of the state's births each year and a disproportionate number of high-risk births. To promote depression screening of pregnant women enrolled in Medicaid, the IDPA implemented an initiative that enables providers to receive Medicaid reimbursement for maternal depression screening effective December 1, 2004. Under existing Medicaid policy that allows providers to conduct risk assessments of children and pregnant women, providers who use a pre-approved standardized depression screening tool can receive Medicaid reimbursement at a rate of \$14.60 per screening. The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale, the Beck Depression Inventory, and the Primary Care Evaluation of Mental Disorders Patient Health Questionnaire are approved by the IDPA for use with pregnant women enrolled in Medicaid. Providers interested in using another screening tool must receive prior written approval from IDPA.

Illinois Medicaid billing procedures require that providers use the infant's Recipient Identification Number (RIN) when a maternal depression screening occurs during a well-child visit or episodic visit for the infant and the mother's RIN if the woman is pregnant or during her postpartum period, up to a year after birth, and is covered by Medicaid. The IDPA worked with state provider organizations representing pediatricians, obstetricians and gynecologists, and family physicians to promote the new policy among the state's providers. One outcome of this partnership is that the Illinois Academy of Pediatrics provides information about this new policy and suggestions for record keeping on its web site. Both the Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (ICAAP) and the Illinois Academy of Family Physicians are participating in the Illinois ABCD II project (*Healthy Beginnings*) by training providers on maternal depression screening and social/emotional screening of children under age three. "Addressing the issue of maternal depression and its impact on the healthy development of young children is a

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critical need; not only is it a women's health issue but a pediatric issue as well," said Dr. Stephen Saunders, President, ICAAP.

Should a screening indicate that a pregnant or postpartum woman is suffering from depression providers can access a statewide Perinatal Mental Health Consultation Service. Through a project supported by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration, providers can receive free consultation by a team of experts in perinatal depression and information about referral sources by calling a statewide toll-free hotline. Additionally, web materials have been developed for providers and patients. The information includes a client brochure and referral resources.

This new Medicaid policy is one component of a broader statewide initiative to improve maternal and child health outcomes. In addition to this policy, Illinois is pilot-testing training of pediatricians and family physicians on the mental health of children and families, including screening children for social/emotional delays and mothers for maternal depression. Moreover, children who are identified with or at-risk of social and emotional delays can receive services through the state's Early Intervention program (Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

For more information about the Illinois Medicaid policy for maternal depression screening reimbursement, please contact: the Illinois Department of Public Aid, Bureau of Maternal and Child Health Promotion. Staff can be reached at (217) 524-7478. The e-mail address is: aid2434@idpa.state.il.us