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# Governor Cuomo Launches New Multi-Agency Effort to Combat Maternal Depression

HEALTH

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## Comprehensive Actions Ensure Women Receive Proper Access to Care and Treatment

## Builds Upon Additional Measures to Expedite Referrals and Treatment

## Part of Governor Cuomo's 2018 Women's Agenda

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today launched a new multi-agency effort to combat maternal depression. At Governor Cuomo's direction, the Department of Financial Services will require all New York commercial health insurance policies to cover maternal depression screenings, including screening for the mother under the child's policy. The Department of Health and Office of Mental Health will launch a strategic awareness campaign to provide critical information about symptoms and treatment options for maternal depression. Finally, the Office of Mental Health will open the first State-operated intensive outpatient clinic focused on maternal depression. These comprehensive actions will ensure that women in New York can access crucial screenings and treatment to combat maternal depression. This policy is part of the Governor's 2018 Women's Agenda.

"Every woman deserves access to high quality health care, and through our efforts, we're taking action to provide this necessary, skillful and compassionate care to all New Yorkers," **Governor Cuomo said.** "This administration will continue to break down barriers to health care access and provide this critical support to new and expecting parents, creating a stronger, healthier Empire State for all."

Research shows that skillful, prompt and compassionate care can make a critical difference for women with maternal depression, which affects as many as one in seven mothers nationally. Screening increases detection, diagnosis and intervention for maternal depression, which is highly treatable if identified early. However, not all insurance plans cover screenings—and many women lack access to information about available services. Additionally, stigma is a barrier between families and the mental health services they may need. This comprehensive, multi-agency action ensures that women will receive proper access to care and treatment.

Under [new regulations](#) by the Department of Financial Services, all health insurance policies issued in New York will be required to include coverage for maternal depression screenings by both adult and pediatric primary care providers, as well as speedy referrals to treatment specialists. Insurance policies that cover the child but not the mother must provide coverage for maternal depression screening, as a critically important preventative care intervention for the health of the child. This announcement builds upon additional measures to expedite referrals and treatment, including expansion of Project TEACH to connect primary care providers with mental health specialists, enhanced screening and referrals at WIC clinics and increased access to telepsychiatry for those in rural communities. The proposed regulation will take effect 60 days after publication in the State Register.

The Department of Health and the Office of Mental Health are launching a strategic awareness campaign to provide critical information about symptoms and treatment options, and to more broadly remove the stigma associated with maternal depression. As part of the campaign, Commissioners of the Office of Mental Health and Department of Health this week will issue a joint letter to health care providers reminding them of the seriousness of the issue as well as encouraging expansion of treatment options. The NYS Department of Health and community partners will be launching key social media applications that reach new parents and educate them on the symptoms as well as providing key information to resources in their communities on how to get help.

At the Governor's direction to advance cutting-edge specialty programs to treat maternal depression, OMH will be launching the first State-operated intensive outpatient service by the end of the month. Several more programs will launch this summer.

Collectively, these efforts will strengthen the capacity of providers to address the mental health concerns of their pregnant and postpartum patients, so that women at risk or already suffering from maternal depression will have better health and access to care.

"As a mother, I know how important it is to focus on the well-being of a woman throughout pregnancy and after a child is born," **said Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul.** "I am so proud that New York has taken unprecedented action to improve women's lives, and focus on maternal

health. Ensuring that women have access to the resources they need to combat maternal depression will lead to better outcomes and healthier families across New York State."

**Melissa DeRosa, Secretary to the Governor and Chair of the New York State Council on Women and Girls, said,** "Governor Cuomo fights to ensure quality health care for all and has taken bold action throughout his administration to increase access to vital health care services for women at every phase of their lives, from childhood through pregnancy and motherhood. These comprehensive actions will help increase quality of care for maternal depression services and provide women with the compassionate support they need, helping to make New York a safer, healthier state for all."

**Department of Financial Services Superintendent Maria T. Vullo, said,** "DFS is committed to supporting comprehensive preventive care services and a critical component of such comprehensive preventive care services is maternal depression screening and prompt referrals for treatment. Under this regulation, New York mothers struggling with maternal depression will be provided necessary insurance coverage, through both parent and pediatric providers, so that they can receive prompt screening and obtain appropriate treatment."

**Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker, said,** "Maternal depression is a serious issue facing many women in New York State and across the country. These new initiatives will make a difference in reducing the stigma associated with mental health conditions and with asking for help. Under Governor Cuomo's leadership, we will continue to work tirelessly to help mothers and their families move forward and flourish."

**OMH Commissioner Dr. Ann Sullivan said,** "Maternal depression can be successfully treated, but the sooner it is diagnosed the better for both the mother and child. The directives initiated by Governor Cuomo will help increase screening options and provide better outcomes for new mothers with maternal depression."

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**Governor Andrew M. Cuomo**

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