

Principle/Introduction

The Perinatal Social Worker must be aware of the complex bio-psychosocial and policy issues inherent in the process of post partum depression. Every hospital and obstetric setting shall have a Perinatal Social Worker as an integral member of the health care delivery system. The Perinatal Social Worker shall understand that post partum depression is a serious illness with prevalence estimates of 10-30% and higher in some populations. Perinatal Social Workers should recognize that post partum depression is one disorder in a spectrum of post partum mood disorders that include the transitory post partum blues through the severe post partum psychosis. Post partum depression symptoms typically manifest within 6 weeks post delivery, however may manifest up to 12 months, including classic symptoms of depression in addition to concerns about the infant and the capabilities of the mother. Symptoms of post partum depression generally continue past the 2 week time period for post partum blues and may increase in severity, impacting mother-infant interaction and stressing the family system. Perinatal Social Workers not having contact with women past the two week time period should ensure that families are informed about post partum depression and are provided with information on how to access services after the transfer of care.

Approved by the Board of Directors, National Association of Perinatal Social Workers, May, 2009.

Prepared by the Standards Committee of the National Association of Perinatal Social Workers.

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The National Association of
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Standards for Perinatal Social Workers Working with Patients Experiencing Post Partum Depression

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Standards for Perinatal Social Workers Working with Patients Experiencing Post Partum Depression

Standard 1

In hospital and obstetric settings, evidence-based counseling and support services shall be provided to women through the ante partum and post partum periods by Master's Level Social Workers.

Standard 2

The Master's Social Worker shall conduct a full psychosocial assessment with all first-time mothers that includes education about the causes of post partum depression, the range of symptoms of post partum depression, and the ways to decrease the symptoms of post partum depression.

Standard 3

Any woman with a previous history of post partum depression, other mood or anxiety disorder, or demonstrating known risk factors shall receive services from a Master's Social Worker during the ante-partum and post partum periods including a full psychosocial assessment, education and support.

Standard 4

The Perinatal Social Worker will provide all ante-partum and post partum women with resources and referrals for continued culturally and linguistically appropriate evidence-based counseling services and treatment for post partum depression. These services may include assessment by a licensed physician for medication to manage the symptoms of post partum depression.

Standard 5

The Perinatal Social Worker will provide all ante-partum and post partum women with resources and referrals for support groups that address issues related to post partum depression and are culturally and linguistically appropriate.

Standard 6

The Perinatal Social Worker shall provide the partner/spouse and family members of any ante-partum or post partum woman, who is experiencing symptoms of post partum depression, information about the signs and symptoms of post partum depression and assist the woman to access appropriate resources.

Standard 7

Perinatal Social Workers in settings where women are seen past two weeks postpartum will screen all women utilizing a standardized instrument or screening scale designed to detect symptoms of depression that may otherwise be undiagnosed or undetected through a psychosocial assessment.

Standard 8

Hospitals shall maintain a written plan for the provision of specialized social work services pertaining to post partum depression. This plan shall be developed by a Master's Social Worker and shall clearly define the social worker's role, responsibilities and functions. The social worker shall have the opportunity to participate in training related to the signs and symptoms of post partum depression and mood disorders during the ante-partum and post partum periods, as well as evidence-based treatment methodologies.

Standard 9

The Perinatal Social Worker, functioning as an integral part of the health care delivery team, shall be included in every aspect of hospital policy formulation and decision-making related to the issue of assessment and treatment of post partum depression.

Standard 10

The Perinatal Social Worker will provide support and education to medical and support staff regarding psychosocial aspects of post partum depression.