

Mental health and behavioral issues affect millions of Americans every year— only 30 to 50 percent of women with mental illness during pregnancy and postpartum are diagnosed in a clinical setting¹, and 1 in 5 children and adolescents have a diagnosable mental health disorder that requires intervention or monitoring and interferes with daily functioning.² **In recognition of Maternal Mental Health Month, Mental Health Awareness Month, and Children's Mental Health Awareness Week, NICHQ highlights opportunities for improvement.**

Raise Awareness & Celebrate Strength

Improving mental health outcomes can support better health and well-being for children and families across the country. NICHQ highlights Maternal Mental Health Awareness Month to reduce stigma, share information, and advocate for better systems to provide mental health care for all. Join NICHQ in sharing resources that outline the significant role mental health plays in overall health and wellness, as well as strategies for promoting better mental health for mothers and birthing people, fathers, caregivers, children, and families. These resources will help you get started.

For Pediatricians: Clinical Mental Health Resources

Primary care clinicians are increasingly identifying children with emotional and behavioral disorders and serve as an important first resource for parents and caregivers. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) offers a suite of [Primary Care Tools](#) that outlines strategies to enhance pediatric mental health at both individual pediatric practices and the community level, as well as a video series, [Implementing Mental Health Priorities in Practice](#).

[Infographic: Supporting Father's Mental Health](#)

From cognitive and social-emotional development to education and employment, children with involved fathers achieve better outcomes on nearly every measure of child well-being. Father involvement is also linked with improved mental health and well-being for mothers and pregnant people, yet 1 in 10 fathers experience Paternal Postpartum Depression.³ We can do more to [make fathers visible in maternal and child health](#). Share [this infographic](#), illustrating the importance of dads' mental health.

[Perinatal Depression Brochures](#)

Use the Healthy Start perinatal depression brochures to reach mothers and birthing people in their communities. Also available in [Spanish](#)!

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Support Caregivers Experiencing Depression

In recognition of [National Women's Health Week](#) (May 12-18) and [Maternal Mental Health Month](#), we're sharing resources to create dialogue around maternal depression. Despite the

prevalence of maternal depression, [too many mothers and birthing people don't get the help they need to heal](#). And when mothers' health suffers, their children's health often suffers, too.

- Black mothers are at a higher risk of experiencing postpartum depression and less likely to receive the care they need. [This issue brief](#) shares tips for helping Black mothers and families understand the signs of maternal depression.
- Physicians, public health providers, policymakers, families, and community advocates can take action and drive change to improve mother's mental health. [This webinar](#) discusses strategies for improving access to maternal depression screenings and interventions.



Building Strength & Resiliency in Children

Mental health in childhood involves reaching developmental and emotional milestones, learning healthy social skills, and understanding how to cope when there are problems.

- Stressful events during childhood can have a negative impact across the lifespan. Promoting protective buffers is a vital way for public health professionals, health care providers, families, and policymakers to help more children have a healthy future. [Learn more.](#)

- Strong early social and emotional development gives children the building blocks for lifelong mental health. Pediatric care professionals can help children build this foundation by fostering social and emotional development. [Learn more.](#)



Mental Health & Sickle Cell Disease

To acknowledge the impact of sickle cell disease (SCD) on patients' mental health and to increase awareness of this rare and painful disease, the [Sickle Cell Disease Coalition \(SCDC\)](#) has created [reading lists](#) of recommended literature on SCD in an array of genres for children, young adults, and adults.

NICHQ is partnering with patient advocates and experts in sickle cell disease care to support increased appointment attendance and to learn more about the [impact of COVID-19](#) for people living with SCD.

- [Learn more about the initiative](#), Disseminating Results: Missed Sickle Cell Disease Clinic Appointments and the Health Belief Model
- Read [What's Next for Sickle Cell Disease Improvement? Three Areas That Still Need Our Attention](#)



Let's Do More for Fathers

One in 10 fathers experience Paternal Postpartum Depression (PPPD)³ and up to 16 percent of fathers suffer from an anxiety disorder during the perinatal period.⁴ These two articles outline opportunities to better support fathers.

- [Making Fathers Visible in Maternal and Child Health](#): This article discusses how children with involved fathers achieve better outcomes on nearly every measure of child well-being and mothers experience improved mental health and well-being.
- [Promoting Fathers' Mental Health During Children's Early Childhood](#). This article outlines four strategies health care providers and public health professionals can use to address dads' mental health.

¹[Cox EQ, Sowa NA, Meltzer-Brody SE, Gaynes BN. The Perinatal Depression Treatment Cascade: Baby Steps Toward Improving Outcomes. J Clin Psychiatry. 2016 Sep;77\(9\):1189-1200. doi: 10.4088/JCP.15r10174. PMID: 27780317.](#)

² US Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS). Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office; 2000. Available online at

<http://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/ps/retrieve/ResourceMetadata/NNBBHS>.

³ [Paulson JF, Bazemore SD. Prenatal and Postpartum Depression in Fathers and Its Association With Maternal Depression: A Meta-analysis. *JAMA*. 2010;303\(19\):1961–1969. doi:10.1001/jama.2010.605](#)

⁴ [Leach LS, Poyser C, Cooklin AR, Giallo R. Prevalence and course of anxiety disorders \(and symptom levels\) in men across the perinatal period: A systematic review. *J Affect Disord*. 2016 Jan 15;190:675-686. doi: 10.1016/j.jad.2015.09.063. Epub 2015 Oct 24. PMID: 26590515.](#)