



## Postpartum Depression and How It Impacts Families

About 15-20% of mothers, or one in five to seven will experience postpartum depression and anxiety. There are still barriers to women seeking help for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADS). Most recent data indicates that only about 50% of women will seek help.

Reducing stigma and increasing education for families as well as medical professionals can boost the odds that someone will reach out for help. It's very important for medical providers to properly screen for PMADS and encourage care and assist with linkage.

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The Anti-Stigma Coalition hosts a **Facebook Live on Wednesday, April 19 at noon** for a discussion about perinatal issues and how to access resources.

Panelists are LuAnne Brown, R.N., ceo, Buffalo Prenatal Perinatal Network, Alexcia "Lexi" Harrod, vice president/co-founder, Melinated Moms WNY, Julie Rosinski LCSW-R, PMH, co-director, WNY Postpartum Connection, Inc.

The moderator is Matthew Smith, executive director, Preventionfocus, Inc. The event is free and open to the public and viewers will have the opportunity to ask questions during the event.



“Stigma can greatly impact moms who are experiencing PMADS,” said Rosinski. “Moms are often given well-intentioned but incorrect messages by family, friends, and medical professionals that contribute to their hesitation in seeking help. They might have their concerns dismissed as ‘just baby blues,’ that this should be the happiest time of their lives, that maternity leave is like a vacation, that they will feel instantly bonded with their baby, and several other myths that are perpetuated in motherhood and parenthood.”

According to Rosinski, moms might hold a lot of shame if they have negative thoughts or feelings about being a mom or about their baby. In some cases, moms have intrusive thoughts about

harm coming to the baby. They might feel a lot of shame or fear about this and not tell anyone out of fear of hospitalization or CPS involvement.

There are many systemic barriers to seeking care as well. Financial barriers or difficulty in accessing healthcare coverage. Harmful stereotypes based in systemic racism can also impact mothers of color and prevent access to care. These stereotypes can result in medical harm or neglect, and professionals not effectively screening for PMADS. In our region, the lack of culturally diverse models of care and culturally and racially diverse mental health providers can also be a barrier to care.

Rosinski has worked with women who had delayed accessing care, who were trying to muscle through it, or were hoping for the depression/anxiety would lift on its own.

“I have many moms who were also very hesitant to try medication or believed that utilizing therapy or medication meant they were a failure,” she said. “Depression causes them to believe negative thoughts and narratives about themselves. Often with proper screening from their OBGYN, Midwife, or pediatrician, or sometimes with a nudge from a concerned spouse or family member, they come to therapy or start meds. Validation, normalization, and education around what they are experiencing often lifts some of the resistance and shame, making them open to engaging in care.”

Rosinski said that PMADS do not only affect women. One in 10 fathers experience PMADS, as well as non-gestational parents in same-sex relationships, LGBTQIA+ parents, and adoptive parents. Individuals and families need to know that they are not alone, and help is available.

There are numerous programs and agencies ready to assist new families. Compeer offers the Postpartum Mentoring Program in recognition that the postpartum period can be a particularly difficult time.

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“Our postpartum program offers support by matching people who have recently given birth with experienced volunteers who understand postpartum mental health challenges, including but not limited to depression,” said Cheri Alvarez, MS, ceo, Compeer of Greater Buffalo.

According to Alvarez, peer support helps parents navigate the complex emotions and challenges associated with the postpartum period and helps normalize their experiences. Compeer offers a safe and compassionate space for participants to share their experiences, feel validated and less alone during their journey.

**For more information, visit their website [CompeerBuffalo.org](https://www.compeerbuffalo.org) or contact Lisa Johnson, [lisa@compeerbuffalo.org](mailto:lisa@compeerbuffalo.org).**

**Additional resources:**

**WNY Postpartum Connection, Inc.**  
[wnypostpartum.com](https://wnypostpartum.com)

**Buffalo Prenatal/Perinatal Network**  
[bppn.org](https://bppn.org)

**Jericho Road**  
[jrhc.org](https://jrhc.org)

**Postpartum Support International**  
[postpartum.net](https://postpartum.net)

**Postpartum Resource Center of New York**  
[postpartumny.org](https://postpartumny.org)

**For local resources. [211.org](https://211.org)**

We need to talk about postpartum mental health in the context of a community and society issue, not just an individual issue. Untreated postpartum mental health conditions can set into motion a negative domino effect of familial and societal stressors.

Increase in disability, long term mental health conditions, negative impact on infant mental health, child abuse, marital/relational discord, increased physical illness are a few ways untreated perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADS) can cause further problems.

**Julie Rosinski LCSW-R, PMH**  
Co-director, WNY Postpartum Connection



**WHAT DO YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT?**

Is there a topic that you'd like us to cover in an upcoming newsletter or Facebook Live? Let us know! Email [info@letstalkstigma.org](mailto:info@letstalkstigma.org) to start the conversation.

Buffalo•Toronto  
Public Media



## We recently spoke with Beth D. Fronckowiak, Director of Learning & Engagement for Buffalo/Toronto Public Media about educating the community about mental health.

### Why did your organization become a member of The Anti-Stigma Coalition?

Our organization joined The Anti-Stigma Coalition because we strongly believed in its goal of not only decreasing the stigma associated with mental wellness, but also providing platforms for people to talk about it with one another.

### How are people with mental health challenges impacted by stigma?

People with mental health challenges are impacted by stigma in many ways. The feeling of shame and embarrassment can lead to individuals not receiving the proper medical treatment or therapy support that may be much needed. Hopefully, the more stigma is talked about, the easier it will become for those who need support to seek it.

### What is your organization doing to address stigma and enhance mental wellness for employees, viewers, and volunteers? Can you share some of the special events you have hosted which address mental health?

Some of the things that Buffalo Toronto Public Media does to address the stigma around mental health is by offering stories and events related to mental wellness through multiple platforms. We air radio news stories consistently on WBFO, we offer interactive events on social media platforms, and we engage our community through screening and panel discussion events.

One event that we are very proud of was focused on Native American young people. Native Americans see the highest rate of suicide compared to any other racial or ethnic group in the U.S., and ages 15-24 have the highest rate within the community. In partnership with Seneca Native Connections, Native American Community Services, and the Suicide Prevention Coalition, we focused on young people in Native American communities in Western New York who may be struggling with their mental health. We held in-depth listening sessions in Salamanca and Irving prior to holding a large-scale engagement event that included mindful discussions, interactive breakout sessions, and informative activities.

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**Beth D. Fronckowiak**

Director of Learning & Engagement  
Buffalo/Toronto Public Media

*Please consider becoming a member of our Coalition at [letstalkstigma.org/membership](http://letstalkstigma.org/membership).*



## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



**WE ARE HOPE** is a collaboration to address the mental health needs of our community in response to the multiple traumatic events experienced this past year.

On March 29, a Community Trauma Panel Discussion was held at Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of Western to talk about moving forward. It was hosted by Karl Shallowhorn of Mental Health Advocates of Western New York

Other partners included The Buffalo Urban League, Hope Rises, and Anti-Stigma Coalition members BestSelf Behavioral Health, Horizon Health Services, Spectrum Health & Human Services

ERIE COUNTY  
**ANTI-STIGMA**  
COALITION

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **LGBTQ+ Dementia Community Forum**

**Saturday, April 15 | 2 PM – 3:30 PM**

**Lock City Books, 8 Market St, Lockport, NY 14094**

Register at (800) 272-3900. No individual or family should navigate the challenges of Alzheimer's disease alone. This forum is an opportunity to bring together community members affected by the disease and dedicated staff and volunteers to talk about resources, programs and services to support families in their communities. This event is free - all are welcome. Light refreshments will be served.

### **Mental Health First Aid offered by WNY Life Coaching**

**June 1, 9 AM – 3:30 PM**

Class Format Options: VIRTUAL. First Aiders will complete 2-hour, self-paced online pre-work, and then participate in a live 6.5 hr Instructor-led virtual training.

### **Climb Out of the Darkness Walk for Postpartum Mental Health**

**Sunday June 25, 10 AM | Como Lake Park, Lancaster, NY**

Climb Out of the Darkness for perinatal mental health awareness presented by WNY Postpartum Connection, Inc. Raising awareness for the mental health of new families.

### **NAMI Programs**

**Various Dates Through April.**

Visit [namibuffalony.org/programs/calendar](http://namibuffalony.org/programs/calendar).

### **Endeavor Health Services - Clubhouse**

**Various Dates Through April. Visit [ehsny.org](http://ehsny.org).**

Visit [letstalkstigma.org/events](http://letstalkstigma.org/events) for more.

### **ERIE COUNTY ANTI-STIGMA COALITION FOUNDING MEMBERS**

BryLin Behavioral Health System • Children's Mental Health Coalition of Western New York, Inc.  
Community Partners of Western New York • Compeer • Crisis Services of Erie County  
Erie County Department of Mental Health • Erie County Office for People with Disabilities  
Fellows Action Network • Fuerst Consulting Corporation • Jewish Family Service of Buffalo & Erie County  
The Mental Health Advocates of WNY • Millennium Collaborative Care • Patrick P. Lee Foundation  
Preventionfocus, Inc. • Telesco Creative Group • The Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation