

2019 Maternal Mental Health Innovation Awards Application Innovation in Policy and Advocacy

Submitted by Heather Dopp in behalf of Postpartum Support International - Utah

Program Objectives and Overview of Innovation

PMAD Care for mothers throughout rural Utah using Telehealth services and a PMAD Resource Application for smartphones:

PSI-Utah organized a group of PMAD survivor mothers from around the state in conjunction with healthcare and mental health providers to testify to the Social Services Appropriations Committee on the mounting need for greater access to maternal mental healthcare across our state. Our testimonies conveyed the alarming gaps in mental care for mothers both during pregnancy and throughout the postpartum period. We highlighted the statistic that suicide is the leading cause of death among postpartum women in Utah and emphasized that while we are the highest state in the Union for births per capita, little has been done within our state to support mothers struggling with mental health issues. We discussed a new Telehealth program that PSI-Utah, the Utah Department of Health, and University of Utah Healthcare have implemented in 2018 to better serve mothers across rural Utah who do not otherwise have access to PMAD-trained professionals in their community. This system allows a mother in crisis to connect with a mental health professional via phone or internet to discuss symptoms, explore diagnoses and continue treatment and medication management without the mother having to make a multiple-hours long drive to see someone trained in maternal mental health care. The Appropriations Committee granted PSI-Utah and the Health Department \$220,000 each year for the next two years to continue building and expanding our Telehealth program. The funding will also go toward a smartphone application sponsored by PSI-Utah and the Department of Health that lists all resources available to mothers across the state. These resources include community specific programs and support groups, resources provided by the state, and a directory of providers who have been trained in PMAD care. With the help of the grant money we anticipate that the app will be available to Utah mothers later this year. We were also successful in our request that Governor Gary Herbert declare the month of February 2019 as Maternal Mental Health Awareness Month in the state of Utah.

Our Telehealth program began last year with funding coming from PSI-Utah and University of Utah Healthcare. The funding we received from the 2019 Utah legislative session will help us maintain current operation and increase our accessibility across the state for the next few years, however we do anticipate the need for more funding when our grant money is depleted. Our maternal mental health resources smart phone application will be released later this year and has largely been developed by the Utah Department of Health pro bono, with PSI-Utah providing most of the resource and professional directory information. Once the app is released we anticipate maintenance costs to be pro bono or minimal.

I am not certain of how many mothers have received treatment through our Telehealth program at this juncture, though I do know that at least one story about a mother who used our Telehealth PMAD services was shared during the Appropriations Committee. I am able to request that information from University of Utah Healthcare if necessary.

Implementation of a Telehealth service for mothers facing perinatal and postpartum anxiety and mood disorders would be largely possible across the United States, especially when partnering with a local healthcare corporation as we have with University of Utah Healthcare. Telehealth services are an innovation across the healthcare field, particularly in states like Utah where we have many rural communities without immediate access to specialized care. Using the same

secure Telehealth system already in place, other states could easily offer PMAD Telehealth services to mothers in rural communities nationwide.

App development for state-specific perinatal and postpartum resources would also be possible. PMAD support organizations typically have a resource list of free support groups and services as well as a directory of PMAD trained professionals across the state. This information could easily be placed in an application with the help of an app developer along with any other specialized application functions such as the ability to call Postpartum Support International warm-line or National Suicide Prevention Hotline.

Thank you for your consideration of PSI-Utah's innovative approaches to Maternal Mental Healthcare in Policy and Advocacy.

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