



# **Improving Awareness of and Support for Birthing People and Mothers Experiencing Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders**

## **Maternity Action Plan Work Session: Maternal Mental Health**

June 6<sup>th</sup> 2024

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# What is Maternal Mental Health?

- PP Depression: 38% Black BP report postpartum depression compared to 13-19% overall
- Postpartum Anxiety 17.1%
- Postpartum PTSD 9% full criteria, 18% symptomatic
- Postpartum Psychosis: .5%

<https://www.workingmother.com/black-moms-postpartum-mental-health-crisis>

- Maternal SUD Estimates (adult):  
8.7% adult alcohol use  
5.9% Illicit Drugs

Prince MK, Daley SF, Ayers D. 2023.



# What is Maternal Mental Health?

## The leading cause of maternal mortality

Overdose

Suicide

Other substance use-related death



Over 80% of pregnancy-related deaths are preventable



# What is Maternal Mental Health?

**Fundamental for infant and child  
mental health**

**The foundation for our wellbeing as a  
society**



# SUD, Trauma, and Mental Health

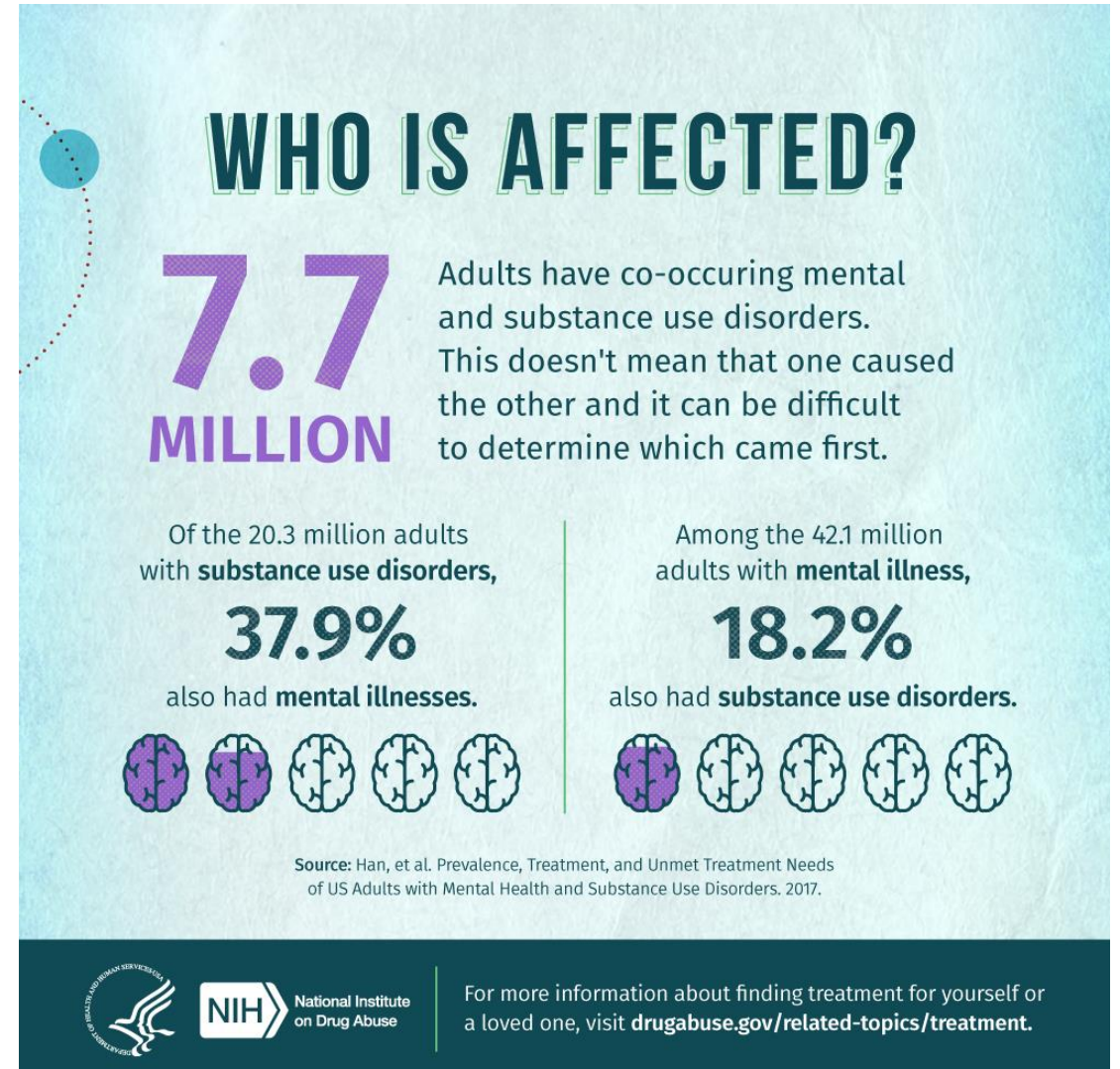
The higher the ACE score, the higher the chances of addiction to alcohol and other drugs in adulthood

4 or more ACEs = 500% increase in risk for adult alcohol use disorder

Men with 6 or more ACE's = 4600% increase in risk for IV drug use

78% of IV drug use in women can be attributed to adverse childhood experiences

(Van der Kolk, B. A. (2015).



For more information about finding treatment for yourself or a loved one, visit [drugabuse.gov/related-topics/treatment](https://drugabuse.gov/related-topics/treatment).



# Trauma Creates Vulnerability to Addiction

Decreased capacity for self-regulation

Compromised ability to form healthy attachments

(Dr. Debra Ruisard, Complex Trauma Training Consortium)



# How Does Maternal Mental Health Impact the Parent-Child Dyad?

Changes brain development during gestation

Alters parent-child interactions resulting in diminished regulation capacity for child



# Maternal Mental Health: Impact on Prenate

- The mother is the child's environment
- Chronic Stress in pregnancy related to pregnancy and delivery complications, preterm birth and low birth weight
- DV during pregnancy related to higher level of emotional difficulties, aggressive behavior, violent crimes, and suicide in children

(Sancho-Rossignol et. al, 2018)





# Effect of Mother's Emotions During Pregnancy

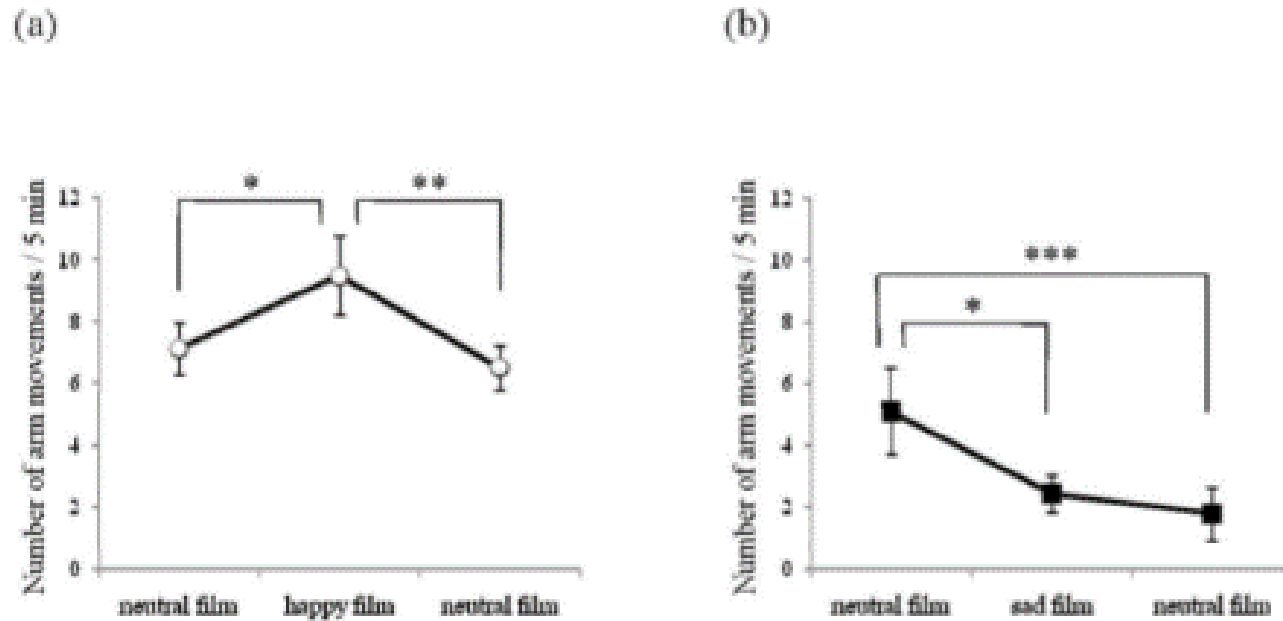


Fig. 1 The number of fetal arm movements for (a) the happiness group (open circles;  $n = 8$ ) and (b) the sadness group (filled squares;  $n = 9$ ). Asterisks indicate a significant difference from baseline (\*:  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*:  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*:  $p < 0.005$ ).



# Maternal Mental Health and Infant Mental Health

- PMADs adversely affect parental cognitions and beliefs, attunement, responsiveness and therefore attachment

(Hoffman, C., Dunn, D., & Njoroge, W. 2017)

- Child's brain develops capacity for regulation within regulated interactions with caregiver
- Access to social determinants of health > parental stress
- Emotional regulation deficits lead to behavioral difficulties

(Cotraccia, 1015 Johnson et al. 2002 in Finn et al, 2018)



# Ability to Regulate is Formed in Relationships

- Infant's emotional regulation capacity created within the context of regulated, responsive caregiver.
- Affect regulation is housed in the prefrontal cortex and interactions with regulated caregivers.
- Emotional regulation deficits lead to behavioral difficulties.
- Absence of co-regulation: misunderstandings of internal states of self and others leading to difficulties forming and sustaining relationships (Cotraccia, 1015 Johnson et al. 2002 in Finn et al, 2018).



The mother's face is the child's  
first mirror.

-Donald Winnicott

Self  
Other  
World



# Maternal Mental Health: CGE's Response

- Continuum of Care
- Mommy and Me residential programs
- Community Based Home Visitation with SDOH focus
- Early Relational Health
- Doulas as Early Relational Health Providers
- Community-based peer providers
- Permanent Supportive Housing
- Relational Recovery Model



# Reducing Stigma Related to Maternal Mental Health

- Recognize what we bring to interaction  
(Brazelton Touchpoints)
- Recognize and address social determinants of health
- Screen for PMADS through first year
- Expand the doula and peer role
- Consider the parent-child system in intervention
- Shift from ‘What is wrong with you?’ to ‘What happened to you?’
- Reframe addictive behaviors as adaptations  
(Dr. Debra Ruisard, Complex Trauma Training Consortium)
- Remove barriers to breast/chest feeding  
(Tucker & O'Malley, 2022)





# Key Takeaways

- Maternal Mental Health is the leading cause of maternal mortality.
- Maternal wellbeing is the foundation for infant mental health and wellbeing across the lifetime
- Regulation is a key component of mental health and is formed within caregiving relationships
- Communities and individuals can create powerful change by shifting perspectives on maternal mental health.



The Parent-Child Relationship is  
the most powerful mental health  
intervention known to mankind.

-Bessel van der Kolk



# Questions and Conversation

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