

PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Personal Stories From Training Participants

DEANNA'S STORY



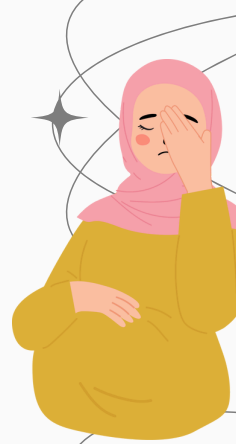
Deanna Montenegro,
Birth and Postpartum Doula & Newborn Care Specialist

Why did you take Mental Health First Aid?

"There is a mental health crisis in this country and in New Jersey. I see a lot of depression, sometimes it's baby blues, sometimes not. I thought it would be a great tool to have and something I could use every day."

How has Mental Health First Aid helped you support birthing people?

"I found the role-playing scenarios and information provided very relatable to my work and what I was seeing. I see a lot of mental health symptoms, moms and parents adjusting to their new lives. I've been able to put what I learned into play. I had a client who was showing signs of postpartum depression. Because of this training, I was able to assess my client and listen nonjudgmentally. Listening was key. I was able to hear her story and things that were affecting her. And then I was able to consider my plan and provide resources and information. I was also able to apply what I learned with my own family."



This work was generously supported by the [Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey](#).

To learn more about our Perinatal Mental Health First Aid initiative, please contact Armonie Pierre-Jacques at apierrejacques@njhcqi.org.

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KESMEEL'S STORY

Kesmeel Davis, Postpartum Doula

Why did you take Mental Health First Aid?

"A lot of parents are not aware of how pregnancy can affect, or heighten existing, mental health changes in the postpartum period. There is a need for education for them, and for me.

As a doula, you receive education on anxiety and mood disorders. But you are not trained in how to approach it, how to talk to parents, or the resources. Mental Health First Aid allowed me to learn and identify mental health challenges in a nonjudgmental way."

How has Mental Health First Aid helped you support birthing people?

"The training helped me realize a different approach, a better, more empathetic one, to help someone with mental health challenges. I had a client with a history of mental health challenges and was in therapy. She was having trouble breastfeeding. Before the training, I would have encouraged her to keep breastfeeding and gave advice. After the training, I knew my role was not to diagnose but to listen first. Listening nonjudgmentally is so critical. She didn't need professional resources. She needed someone to listen to. She decided to end breastfeeding. It was impacting her mental health and I understood how it was affecting her because I listened. I assessed how I could support her in that choice and offered reassurance and information. To have learned how to help someone feel safe enough to share that and know how to support them, that was powerful. I appreciated I could hold that space with her."



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JACKIE'S STORY



Jackie Martinez,
Registered Nurse

Why did you take Mental Health First Aid?

"This training is needed because I work with a lot of patients that have mental health challenges. Many experience challenges with housing, financial hardship,

substance use, fetal demise, and more. This training helped me feel more prepared to help patients and provided me with the best course of action to approach patients."

How has Mental Health First Aid helped you support birthing people?

"This training helped me feel more connected to my patients and helped me learn how to approach them. I had a patient who experienced a fetal demise. You have to be able to listen nonjudgmentally, assess the situation, and respect their wishes. I have lost a baby myself and understand that any loss can be devastating. In my approach, I gave her some time to spend with the baby and reminded her that I am here to emotionally support her. I also referred her to the social worker for professional help. People need to know how to manage and respond to their patients. This training is relevant to my profession and very helpful for nurses and doctors. I'm really happy I took the course."



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