

Delving Into Maternal Mental Health Webinar Series

Military Families and Maternal Mental Health Webinar

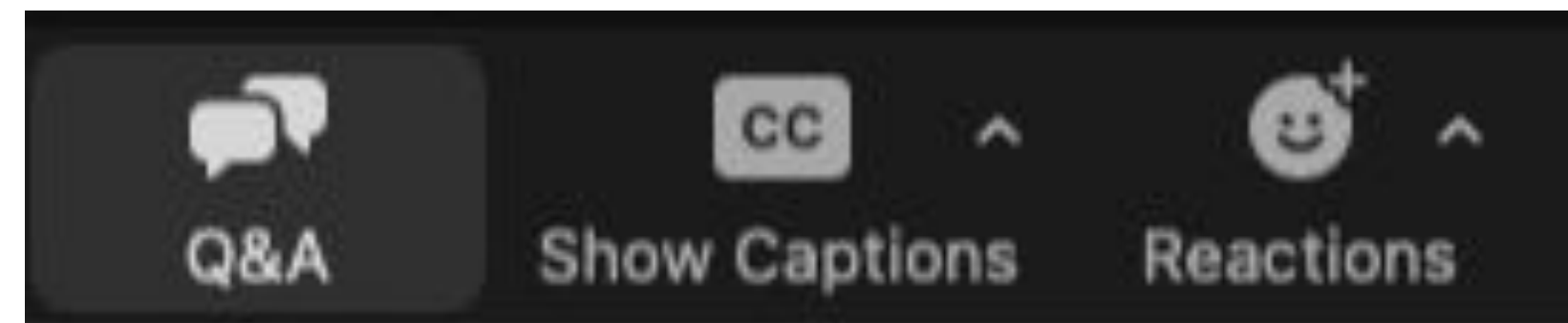




Questions, Captions, & Reactions

At the bottom of your screen use the:

- **Q&A button** - ask a question.
- **Show Captions button** - see live captions.
- **Reactions button** - share an emoji.



Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance (MMHLA)

We are a nonpartisan 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the mental health of mothers and childbearing people in the United States with a focus on policy and health equity.

Learn more at mmhla.org.



Delving Into Maternal Mental Health Webinar Series

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Birth Trauma &
Maternal Mental Health
Webinar and Fact Sheet

Pregnancy, Disability &
Maternal Mental Health
Webinar and Fact Sheet

Pregnancy, Infant Loss &
Maternal Mental Health
Webinar and Fact Sheet

Military Families &
Maternal Mental Health
Webinar and Fact Sheet

What we'll cover...

- ✓ **Overview** of maternal mental health among servicemembers, spouses, and women Veterans.
- ✓ Sharing of **lived experience**.
- ✓ **Projects** aimed at supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our nation's military mothers.



After this webinar, we will email you:

- Brief survey
- Powerpoint presentation
- Webinar recording
- Military, Veteran Women & Maternal Mental Health Fact Sheet

Webinar Self-Care

Some information may be challenging.

Please take breaks as needed.



Our Presenters



Tiara Flynn

Air Force Veteran
Full Spectrum Doula

•••

Phenomenal Mama



Patience Riley NCC, LPC, PMH-C

Air Force Spouse
Therapist and Support
Group Leader

•••

Perinatal Mental
Health Alliance for
People of Color



Gaby Cavins CLEC

Navy Veteran
Executive Director

•••

The Military Birth
Resource Network and
Postpartum Coalition



Jamie Zahlaway Belsito

Founder and Director of
Policy & Partnerships

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Maternal Mental Health
Leadership Alliance



U.S. Naval Academy
1984



White House
1992

Key Facts:
*Maternal
Mental Health*





1 in 5 Mothers Are Impacted by Mental Health Conditions

Maternal mental health (MMH) conditions are the **MOST COMMON**

complications of pregnancy and birth, affecting 800,000 families each year in the United States.^{1,2}



Mental Health Conditions Are the Leading Cause of Maternal Deaths

Suicide and overdose are the **LEADING CAUSE**

of death for women in the first year following pregnancy.³

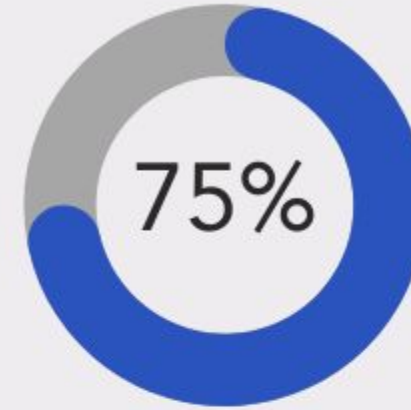


\$14 Billion: The Cost of Untreated MMH Conditions

The cost of not treating MMH conditions is \$32,000 per mother-infant pair, or

\$14 BILLION

each year in the United States.⁵

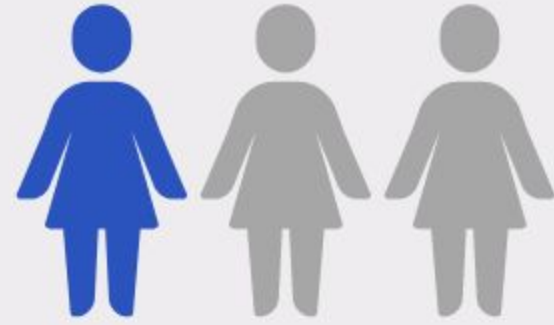


Most Individuals Are Untreated, Increasing Risk of Negative Impacts

75% of individuals impacted by MMH conditions

REMAIN UNTREATED,

increasing the risk of long-term negative impacts on mothers, babies, and families.⁴



Certain Individuals are at Increased Risk for Experiencing MMH Conditions

High-risk groups include people of color, those impacted by poverty, **MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS THEIR SPOUSES, and WOMEN VETERANS.**^{6,7}



It's Not Just Postpartum Depression: There are a Range of MMH Conditions

MMH conditions can occur during pregnancy and up to one year following pregnancy and include depression, anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar illness, psychosis, and substance use disorders.⁸

Military Families and *Maternal Mental Health*

Facts and Figures

	Service Members <i>Active duty</i>	Spouses <i>Dependents</i>	Veterans <i>Formerly active duty</i>
Total	1.4 million	1 million	16 million
Women	130,000	920,000	2 million
% Women	17%	92%	10%
# giving birth annually	16,000	85,000	10,000



About Military Culture

Understanding the
unique military culture is necessary
to appreciate the impact it may have
on the mental health of military mothers
and women Veterans



Hierarchical and male-dominated culture

Impacts all aspects of life

Service member and family

About Military Culture and Mental Health

Service members are expected to be disciplined in their actions and words, and always to be ***in control of their emotions.***

In the military environment, individuals who are perceived to be ***NOT mentally or physically tough*** may be looked down upon or ostracized.

Experiencing mental health challenges can be seen as a ***sign of weakness*** or ***lack of professionalism,*** which are the antithesis of military culture.

Increased Risk for MMH Conditions

35%

of military mothers
(service members and spouses)
experience MMH conditions

50%

of mothers with deployed spouses
experience postpartum depression





Why?

- Frequent moves and separations
- Distance from family of origin
- Lack of social support
- Disruption to family structure and routines
- Concern about service member in harm's way
- Dual-military relationships

Barriers To Care

- Military culture which emphasizes self-reliance, strength, hierarchy, “service before self”
- Fear that acknowledging mental health conditions are seeking mental health care will negatively impact career or security clearance
- Logistics, such as childcare / transportation
- Availability of specialized mental health care



Increased
Risk
for
Service
Members

History of Deployment

Women service members with a personal history of deployment experience MMH conditions at

2X

the rate of non-deployed women

Sexual Assault

As many as

40%

of women service members
report experiencing sexual assault

Impact on Female Service Members

Not only do they perceive stigma related to ***mental illness***, but also stigma associated with ***gender***.

Showing emotion, being vulnerable, feeling fear, and seeking help are ***associated with femininity*** rather than the masculinity that underlies the military mindset.



Military Mothers Say...

You are told to just 'suck it up' or 'put your big girl panties on' and just deal with it.

Spouses are afraid to 'rock the boat' for their spouse or to get them in trouble.

When I got pregnant, I was told that not only did you let the entire crew down, but as soon as you have your child you have 15 weeks to recover, and you are getting deployed for 6 months. Find someone else to raise your child.

Loneliness
Shame
Helplessness
Inadequacy
Embarrassment

You are not allowed to have **depression**.
You are not allowed to have **anxiety**.
So you **hold it all in** and you can't show that stuff at work.

I was afraid if I took antidepressant medication that I would lose my clearance.

Maternal Mental Health in the Military

Lived Experience and Support



Tiara Flynn

Air Force Veteran,
Full-Spectrum Doula,
Individual with Lived
Experience



Patience Riley
NCC, LPC, PMH-C

Air Force Spouse,
Therapist, Individual
with Lived Experience

Tiara Flynn

Air Force Veteran

Small Business Owner

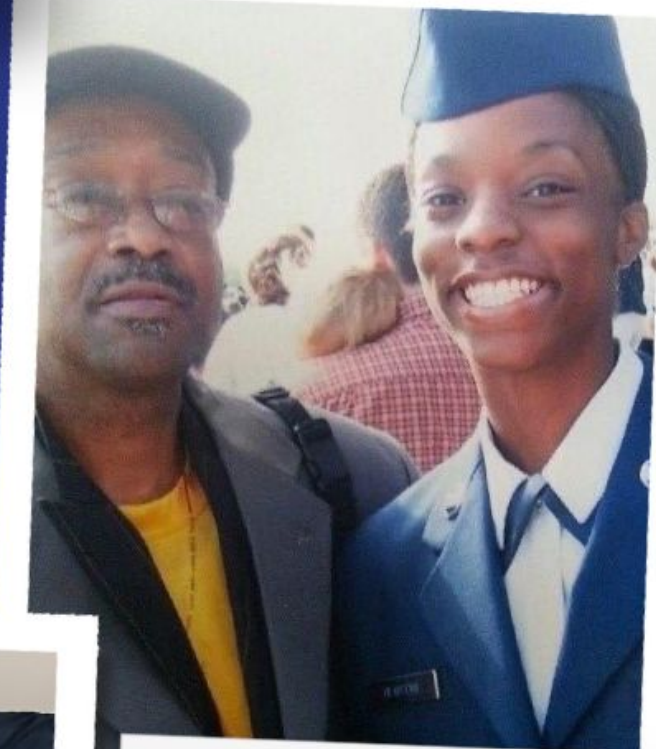
Full Spectrum Doula

Speaker

Advocate

Mom of 2

About Tiara... 



Patience Riley

NCC, LPC, PMH-C

Air Force Spouse, Mom of 2

Working with Military Families:

- Key themes supporting military families: Relationship issues, times of separation, lack of support
- Postpartum Support International & Perinatal Mental Health Alliance for People of Color



My Story

Perinatal Mental Health Complications

- PCS
- COVID-19 pandemic
- Unexpected deployment
- Lack of immediate support



Policy Strategies to *Support Military Mothers*



Gaby Cavins

CLEC

Navy Veteran, Military
Birth Resource Network
& Postpartum Coalition



Jamie Zahlaway

Belsito

Founder, Director of
Policy & Partnerships,
Maternal Mental Health
Leadership Alliance

Gaby Cavins

Navy Veteran

Mom of 3

CLEC

Executive Director,
Military Birth Resource
Network and
Postpartum Coalition



Doula Pilot Project

- **5-year pilot project** launched in 2022 to provide doula and lactation support for TRICARE beneficiaries, including active duty servicemembers and their spouses.
- **Opens overseas in 2025.**
- Purpose: **study the impact of doula and lactation services** on cost, quality of care, and maternal and fetal outcomes for the TRICARE population.
- Pilot project is not available to individuals birthing at military treatment facilities (MTFs). As a result, **active duty service members are not able to benefit from this project.**
- **Doulas/Lactation professionals must meet certain requirements to become TRICARE certified based on their region.**

Tricare Childbirth and Breastfeeding Demo

- **Covered Services:**
 - Labor Doulas
 - IBCLCs
 - Certified Lactation Counselors (CLCs)
- **Doula support:**
 - Up to 6 visits before/after birth and labor support
- **Lactation support:**
 - 6 visits (now covers breastfeeding class)



Issues and Updates

- **MBRNPC survey:**
 - Access to providers in the area/birth location
 - Reimbursement rate/timeframe
 - Billing inconsistencies
 - Lack of training on the part of the staff
- **National Defense Authorization Act 2024**

Jamie Zahlaway Belsito

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance (MMHLA), Founder and Director of Policy & Partnerships

Mom of 2

Former Commissioner to the Postpartum Commission of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Former Member of the House of Representatives, Commonwealth of Massachusetts





Military Maternal Mental Health Pilot Project

- **5-year pilot project** administered through the Department Of Defense to prevent perinatal mental health conditions.
- **Integrate evidence-based perinatal mental health prevention programs** within existing maternal or pediatric care or programming.
 - EX: Primary care, obstetric care, pediatric care, or family or parenting programs.
- **Implement pilot program at 2 Military Treatment Facilities (MTF's)** with established maternal health programs or Women's Clinics.

Military Maternal Mental Health Pilot Project

- **Increase awareness of and encourage participation in care or programming** for pregnant and postpartum service members and beneficiaries;
- **Establish an advisory committee to identify evidence-based perinatal prevention programs;**
- **Increase participation amongst a diverse group of pregnant and postpartum service members and beneficiaries:**
 - Outreach to eligible pregnant and postpartum servicemembers and beneficiaries about the pilot program participation.
 - Reduce stigma amongst servicemembers and beneficiaries about perinatal mental health conditions.

Prevention Program Pilot Project



Centering
Pregnancy®

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MOTHERS
& BABIES

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PREPP
PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR
EFFECTIVE POSTPARTUM PARENTING

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ROSES

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Resources



Resources

- [Postpartum Support International: Military Moms support group](#)
- [Military Birth Resource Network and Postpartum Coalition](#)
- [Blue Star Families](#)
- [TRICARE Childbirth and Breastfeeding Demonstration](#)
- [Military Birth Talk Podcast](#)
- [Military OneSource New MilParent Program](#)
- [National Advocates for Pregnant Women](#)
- [Pregnancy Justice](#)

REMINDER

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we will email...

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Quick Poll



Thank you! *Stay in Touch!*



mmhla.org

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mbrnpc.org

 [Military Birth Resource Network and Postpartum Coalition](https://www.linkedin.com/company/military-birth-resource-network-and-postpartum-coalition)

 [@militarybirth](https://twitter.com/militarybirth)

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