

New case management program for post-traumatic stress disorder resulting from stays in the neonatal intensive care unit

Summary of update: On January 1, 2019, we're launching a new case management (CM) program in Washington for screening of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in parents of infants hospitalized in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). This CM program will support mothers and families at risk for PTSD due to the stressful experience of having a baby in the NICU.

What is the purpose of this program?

The NICU PTSD program seeks to improve outcomes for families of babies who are in the NICU by screening and facilitating referrals to treatment for PTSD in parents.

How will it work?

Case managers will reach out by phone to parents of babies who have been in the NICU for 30 days or more. They will screen and facilitate referrals to treatment for PTSD.

What is PTSD?

Post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, is an anxiety disorder that may develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal. Additionally, people who have seen another person experience a life-threatening event can also suffer from PTSD. Other facts about PTSD:

- PTSD is diagnosed when the stress symptoms persist for more than a month.
- Symptoms of PTSD include intrusive memories (i.e., flashbacks and upsetting dreams), attempts to avoid thinking or talking about the event and hyperarousal (e.g., irritability or anger).
- Onset of PTSD symptoms may be delayed for as much as a year after the initiating event.

Why screen for PTSD in parents of long-term NICU patients?

- One in 10 infants in the United States is admitted to a NICU.
- Incidence of parental NICU-related PTSD varies from 20-41 percent.
- PTSD is treatable if identified.
- Lack of treatment can affect the health of the parent and the child.
- Children cared for by mothers with PTSD are at significantly higher risk for psychological aggression, child abuse and neglect.
- PTSD in parents can have long-term, adverse impacts on children such as lower cognitive performance and conduct disorders.

What if I need assistance?

If you have questions about the new CM program for PTSD in the NICU or need assistance with any other item, contact your local Provider Relations representative or call Provider Services at 1-800-454-3730.