



For Immediate Release:

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Mothers Urged to “Speak Up When You’re Down” May is Maternal Depression Awareness Month

LOS ANGELES – In recognition of Maternal Depression Awareness Month, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and the LA County Perinatal Mental Health Task Force are celebrating the third annual “*Speak Up When You’re Down*” campaign for women who are suffering from maternal depression. The campaign is designed to encourage women to seek help, to educate others about depression associated with pregnancy and birth, and to reduce stigma associated with maternal depression.

“Having a child should be and is a joyful experience for women and their families. But often women who are pregnant or who have recently given birth are overwhelmed and experience depression,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “In Los Angeles County, one in five mothers rate their mental health as fair or poor during their pregnancy. It is important that we educate women and their families about maternal depression and ways to cope.”

The first Perinatal Depression Awareness Month was declared in 2010 in Los Angeles County by the Board of Supervisors. It coincides with Mother’s Day and is to be recognized every May. Maternal depression encompasses a range of mood disorders that can affect a woman during pregnancy and around the time of birth. Left untreated, maternal depression leads to long-term depression in the mother, a lack of emotional availability for the baby and detrimental outcomes in the development of the fetus, newborn and developing child. The good news is that these conditions are often preventable and highly treatable.

“Perinatal mood and anxiety disorders are more common than one might think. Yet they are highly treatable and prevention efforts can make a positive impact,” said Caron Post, PhD, Executive Director of the Los Angeles County Perinatal Mental Health Task Force. “Through a variety of “*Speak Up When You’re Down*” activities, we hope to let women know that maternal depression is common, treatable and that they are not alone.”

The public is invited participate in *Maternal Depression Awareness Month* by attending events, conducting outreach in their communities, joining the Los Angeles County Perinatal Mental Health Task Force’s social awareness campaign or purchasing Mother’s Day cards. Some of the many events planned for the month include a family festival, educational workshops, and policy summits. Informational posters and brochures are also available at <http://www.maternalmentalhealthla.org/for-providers/resources>.

The Los Angeles County Perinatal Mental Health Task Force’s mission is to remove the barriers to prevention, screening and treatment of prenatal and postpartum depression in Los Angeles County, so that all mothers can have a happy and healthy pregnancy and postpartum period. The Task Force provides training and technical assistance to over 1,000 health care and community-



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based providers throughout Los Angeles County each year, coordinates public awareness events and initiatives, and advocates for laws and policies that encourage universal screening for maternal depression and access to care.

For more information about Maternal Depression Awareness Month, events and materials, please visit: MaternalMentalHealthLA.org.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: @LAPublicHealth.

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