



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Department of Human Services Partners with Hospitals to Enhance Maternal Health Services

York, PA – The Department of Human Services (DHS) continues their focus on improving maternal health by today joining WellSpan Health and Representative Carol Hill-Evans to highlight the Wolf Administration’s leadership in developing best practices to support the health system’s work to improve screenings, follow-up, and use of treatment for perinatal depression. WellSpan York is one of 16 hospitals participating in the enhanced screening process using the framework established by Pennsylvania’s Perinatal Quality Collaborative (PQC), a partnership led by DHS and the Jewish Healthcare Foundation, focused on improving identification and care for patients experiencing perinatal depression during or after pregnancy.

“Pregnancy and the postpartum period are times of great joy and great change. With this change can come stress, fear, and anxiety that can fuel feelings of depression and isolation and invasive thoughts. Alarming, nearly 60 percent of pregnancy-associated deaths happen between 42 days and one year after giving birth. Pennsylvania mothers deserve more which is why DHS is taking a close look at maternal health practices,” said Acting Secretary Snead. “Our health care system and providers must be partners and advocates in mothers’ health and wellbeing. The department is proud to be working closing with hospitals to develop and embed better perinatal depression screening, follow-up, and treatment practices are an important step to make this a foundational part of prenatal and postpartum care, and I am very grateful to WellSpan Health for their partnership and leadership in this space. Moms, babies, and their entire families deserve more, and this is our opportunity to do better.”

“When one of our patients at WellSpan Health screens positive for this depression, we immediately engage the resources of our WellSpan Philhaven mental health experts to get them what they need to address these symptoms,” explained Megan Lecas. “We owe it to these moms and moms-to-be to keep them a healthy step ahead. We thank Acting Secretary Snead for continuing this critical dialogue with our community.”

Since taking office, Governor Wolf has prioritized expanding access to health care and supportive services that helps parents be supported through pregnancy and the postpartum period and gives children a strong, healthy start that can lead to continued health, well-being, and positive outcomes throughout their lives.

The Wolf Administration also [recently announced](#) that Pennsylvania will opt-in to extended postpartum coverage for birthing parents covered through Medicaid due to their pregnancy. Under the American Rescue Plan Act, states are able to extend the Medicaid postpartum coverage period from just 60 days to one year after giving birth. Data on maternal mortality rates in the United States in 2018 and 2019 show a growing trend that is particularly concentrated among Black women as compared to Latinx and White women.

Expanding postpartum coverage for mothers covered through Medicaid will provide continuity and access to health care through a critical period in the mother’s life and a

foundational time for the health and well-being of their children. The postpartum expansion will be available to states to take effect in April 2022. Currently, individuals are not being disenrolled from Medicaid due to the federal public health emergency declaration. A formal declaration of intent to expand the postpartum coverage period will be submitted to the federal government once guidance is issued to states from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

To learn more DHS' programs and apply for Medical Assistance and other assistance programs in Pennsylvania, visit www.dhs.pa.gov.

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