

Maternal Mental Health Capture: A Program Evaluation for Standardized Mental Health Screening

Maria Nikolao, RN, BSN, DNP-FNP Student

Abstract

BACKGROUND: Maternal mental health (MMH) problems are a significant concern in the United States (US) and often go undiagnosed, adversely affecting physical health needs as well as infant development and survival (Siu et al., 2016a). Although health care providers are aware of MMH, previous studies have indicated that barriers relate to the lack of provider training in maternal depression care and communication, and a lack of referrals to mental health services or social services (Moore Simas et al., 2019).

LOCAL PROBLEM: The organization wanted to evaluate the current MMH screening process. The target for each clinic is 80% for capturing MMH screening, but the goal was unmet with the recent report of only 66% capture.

PURPOSE: The project was a program evaluation of the MMH screening process for all perinatal patient encounters through the first postpartum visit.

METHODS: The project used the Biopsychosocial Theory of Mental Health and the Logic Model to guide the program evaluation.

INTERVENTION: The project collected and analyzed the organization's baseline information on MMH screenings and staff surveys to determine gaps and barriers in practice.

RESULTS: Staff indicated the barriers are inadequate resources (43%), lack of time (47%), and knowledge of the program guidelines (42%). Completed screenings failed to reach 80% throughout the project.

CONCLUSION: These results can be used for a collaborative approach to improve MMH screening with evidence-based practices. Routine screening and management of MMH during and after pregnancy as a component of comprehensive quality of care will improve mother and baby outcomes, therefore improving overall family health.