

# Assembly Bill 159 (Pedro Nava)

## Healthy Mothers Act of 2009

### Reason AB 159 is Necessary

Perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMAD) occur during both pregnancy and the postpartum period and many women are not adequately informed about, screened for, or treated for PMAD. The stigma associated with PMAD also prevents many at-risk women from accepting the needs for services and treatment for their disorder.

### Existing Law

**California Health and Safety Code Section 123550** expresses Legislative findings that postpartum care is an “essential service necessary to ensure maternal and infant health” and that this service (among others) is “not currently distributed so as to meet the minimum maternal and infant health needs of many Californians.”

### This Bill

AB 159 (Nava):

- Allows the State Department of Public Health to establish a PMAD Task Force to develop a best practices model for public awareness and a standard of care that may be used by physicians, medical centers, hospitals, and other medical organizations.
  
- Specifies that the PMAD Task Force will consist of a survivor of PMAD and a representative of the:
  - CA Medical Association
  - American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology
  - CA Psychiatric Association
  - Postpartum Support International
  - CA Hospital Association
  - CA Nurses Association
  - CA Assoc. for Nurse Practitioners
  - CA Nurse Midwives Association
  - State Public Affairs Committee of the Junior Leagues of California
  - A Licensed Professional Counselor

- Stipulates that the PMAD Task Force shall provide awareness, assistance and information regarding the availability of services and treatment for PMAD to pregnant women, new mothers and their families.
  
- Establishes a recommended standard of care, which is currently absent, for pregnant women, new mothers, and the families of these women.
  
- Will be supported using non public sources including voluntary contributions to the California Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders Awareness Fund.

### Facts

- According to the **Department of Psychiatry at the University of Michigan Medical School**, almost one woman in four will experience depression at some point in her life, most commonly during the childbearing years.
  
- A 2003 article entitled “Depressive Symptoms Among Pregnant Women Screened in Obstetric Settings” in the **Journal of Women’s Health** indicates that at least one in eight women suffer from PMAD.
  - 80% percent of these women go undiagnosed and untreated.

## Facts (continued)

- A mother affected by PMAD may experience symptoms that include, but are not limited to:
  - depressed mood,
  - inability to find pleasure in activities that are usually engaging,
  - sleep disturbances,
  - diminished concentration,
  - appetite and weight loss,
  - anxiety and panic attacks,
  - feelings of guilt and worthlessness,
  - suicidal thoughts
  - and fears of harming her baby.
- One out of every 1,000 new mothers can experience postpartum psychosis.
- A new mother with postpartum psychosis may begin with symptoms including:
  - manic states,
  - hyperactivity,
  - an inability to sleep, and avoidance of the baby.
- The disorder can lead to additional symptoms for the new mother that include:
  - delusions,
  - hallucinations,
  - incoherence
  - and thoughts of harming her baby or herself.

## Comments

- A 2003 London study entitled "**The Impact of Maternal Depression on Familial Relationships<sup>1</sup>**," concluded that children of depressed women show deficits in social, psychological, and cognitive domains and are at increased risk for depression themselves and other psychiatric illness such as conduct

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<sup>1</sup> Burke, L., The Maudsley Hospital, "The Impact of Maternal Depression on Familial Relationships," Denmark Hill, London, UK, 2003.

disorder [and are] at an increased risk for child abuse.

- In 2005, celebrity Brooke Shields authored "**Down Came the Rain: My Journey Through Postpartum Depression**," detailing her struggle after the birth of her child and eventual recovery in an attempt bringing the prevalence of her disease to the public through mainstream media.
- Kristina Fuelling, a Placer County mother, was sentenced to over six years in custody after suffering postpartum depression that developed into psychosis resulting in her drowning her infant in the bathroom sink of the family home on Jan. 20, 2008. Her mental state was verified by two court doctors.

## Support

Junior League of California (sponsor)  
Junior League of Los Angeles, Inc.  
California Communities United Institute

## Opposition

## Votes

## For More Information

Caroline Vance (805) 564-1649  
Caroline.Vance@asm.ca.gov