



## **95% of Health Care Practitioners Believe Perinatal Mental Health Services Are “Insufficient” in Canada**

May 2021 –Survey findings from the Canadian Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative (CPMHC) show a vital need for a national perinatal mental health strategy to address gaps in screening and treatment, particularly now that rates of postpartum depression have doubled in the context of the pandemic.

The full survey results will be revealed during a **live online press conference on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 11 am ET featuring the CPMHC along with Alberta MP Heather McPherson, Ontario MPP Bhutla Karpoche, and mom, Candice Thomas who will share her experience of giving birth during a pandemic.**

The CPMHC report, *Time For Action*, containing recommendations for government on how to improve perinatal mental health care in Canada will be also be released on May 5<sup>th</sup>, World Maternal Mental Health Day, during the morning session (10:30 am – Noon) of a joint Ludmer Center/CPMHC virtual online symposium. **A review of perinatal mental health best practices from Dr. Alain Grégoire, Dr. Simone Vigod, and others will follow in the afternoon (12:30 pm – 2 pm).**

**Register to attend here:** <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/improving-perinatal-mental-health-care-in-canada-tickets-147986448451>

### **Critical survey findings include:**

- **95.8% of health care practitioners believe that perinatal mental health services are insufficient in Canada;**
- **87% of health care practitioners in Canada do not have mandated screening for perinatal mental illness at their workplace;**
- When people are screened and have symptoms indicative of needing intervention, 27% of health care practitioners indicated that patients were able to access their referral within a month, 31% waited between 1-2 months, while **42% had to wait for >2 months for access;**
- Perinatal mental health services differ across health regions. More than half of health care practitioners surveyed (57.3%) reported that they have not received specialized training in Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders or were unsure if they received specialized training.



- **87% of practitioners believe people from diverse backgrounds encounter barriers to accessing perinatal services.** These include language, cultural, and cost barriers.
- **69% of practitioners reported that COVID-19 has complicated access to care, including reduced in-person visits and overall services.**

**Mothers speak out:**

“The way we address perinatal health focuses so thoroughly on the baby that the mother gets lost in the shuffle. We need to do better.” (Morag Wehrle, North Vancouver, BC)

“Too many moms are suffering with some even losing their lives over this. We are all in this together.” (Nicole Devlin, Calgary, AB)

“The doctor placed me on a four month wait list to see a general psychiatrist. I was crushed.” (Sarah Cunningham, Bowmanville, ON)

“I needed medical help and ended up going to the emergency room a total of three times to try and find it. I felt like I had to justify why I was feeling the way that I was.” (Carleigh Weldon, Windsor, ON)

“I am speaking out now for all the moms who don’t know that it is not their fault. They’re being told every day that they are failing when in reality, the system is failing us.” (Heather Marcoux, Red Deer, AB)

“My story is not unique. Many Indigenous women suffer from postpartum mood and anxiety disorders. But in our communities, there is a greater stigma towards mental illness.” (Stephanie George, Jarvis, ON)

“I know particularly as a Black teenage mother, I was uncomfortable calling the police or emergency services to help me through the negative thoughts.” (Anita Ewan, Toronto, ON)

**Contact:**

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