

MEMO



DEC 06 2010

Senate of Pennsylvania
December 3, 2010

TO: ALL SENATORS

FROM: Stewart J. Greenleaf *Stewart*

SUBJECT: Cosponsorship -- Prenatal and postpartum counseling information and screening

I am reintroducing **Senate Bill 151**, requiring information relating to parenting and prenatal depression, postpartum depression, postpartum psychosis and other emotional trauma counseling to be provided to pregnant women. In addition, new mothers must be screened for postpartum depression symptoms prior to discharge and at postnatal check-up visits.

Under my legislation, the Prenatal and Postpartum Counseling and Screening Act, a hospital, birthing center, physician, nurse-midwife or midwife who provides prenatal care to a pregnant woman during gestation or at delivery of an infant shall provide the woman with a fact sheet that includes common symptoms of the medical conditions of prenatal depression, postpartum depression, postpartum psychosis and other emotional trauma related to pregnancy and parenting. The fact sheet must include the following statement: "Prenatal depression, postpartum depression and postpartum psychosis are serious medical conditions that require a physician's evaluation and recommendations for treatment. If you are suffering from any of the signs and symptoms of these conditions, you should immediately inform your treating physician or psychiatric physician." In addition, health professionals providing postnatal care must screen new mothers for postpartum depression symptoms prior to discharge and at the first few postnatal check-up visits.

The above mentioned health care facilities and health care professionals are required to provide the woman with a resource list of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of professional organizations that provide prenatal counseling, postpartum counseling and assistance to parents. They must also document in the patient's record that the patient received the information and retain such documentation for at least three years. The Department of Health shall adopt, promulgate and enforce any rules and regulations to carry out the intent of this act and make available on its website a printable fact sheet and listing of professional groups that provide pregnancy counseling and assistance to parents.

Following the delivery of a baby many new mothers experience some level of postpartum depression. It is estimated that up to 80% of new mothers experience a mild, short-term form of postpartum depression referred to as the "baby blues." Symptoms include feelings of sadness, anxiety and insomnia. About 10 to 20% of new mothers go through severe postpartum depression where the symptoms last longer (up to one year) and are more intense. Finally, in rare cases (about 1 or 2 out of 1,000 women) postpartum psychosis may occur, with symptoms like hallucinations, delusions and suicidal or homicidal thoughts. Postpartum depression may be treated with counseling and/or medication depending upon the nature and severity of the postpartum depression.

Several states (Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Texas and Virginia) have enacted similar laws which require the distribution of information (and screening in the case of New Jersey) to pregnant women and new mothers about postpartum depression.

If you would like to cosponsor this legislation, please contact Pat Snively of my office by e-mailing her at psnively@pasen.gov.