

**Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)
National Child and Maternal Health Education Program (NCMHEP)**

**Understanding Perceptions of Postpartum Depression
To Inform Educational Outreach Efforts**

Messages for Focus Group with Fathers

Message #1: Many moms often feel changes in mood after birth.

- Any woman can suffer from mood swings after the birth of a child.
- There is no shame in feeling depressed or anxious after the birth of a child.
- Hormones, genetics, and brain chemistry all play major roles in the onset of these mood swings after the birth of a child.
- Approximately 70% to 80% of all new mothers experience some negative feelings or mood swings after the birth of their child.

Message #2: Postpartum depression is not just “feeling moody” or overwhelmed shortly after birth.

- If these feelings have gone on for a long time and they have interfered with your daily activities, speak with a health care professional.
- It might be hard to recognize depression or anxiety when you are tired, overwhelmed, or adjusting to life with a new baby.
- It is important to talk to your partner, family, friends, or health care provider if you don't feel like yourself.
- Symptoms can start anytime in the first year postpartum.
- Symptoms may include feelings of anger, lack of interest in the baby, loss of interest in things you used to enjoy, being unable to care for your baby or yourself, and thoughts of harming yourself or the baby.
- These symptoms may be signs of postpartum depression.
- A family history of depression or anxiety, family stress, complications in the pregnancy or birth, or a multiple birth can all increase the risk of postpartum depression.

Message #3: Postpartum depression can be treated.

- Getting treatment is important for you and your family.
- With proper care, you can fully recover.
- Without treatment, the depression and all of its symptoms will get worse and may put you and your family in danger.
- Your health care professional may ask you a set of questions to decide on the best treatment for you.
- Some women find a support group helpful in coping with postpartum depression.
- There are many treatment options for postpartum depression. Some women may participate in therapy and some women may require medication.

Key Message #4: A significant other may be the first to notice that a new mom is having difficulty coping.

- You are in a unique position to help your partner.
- It can be difficult to know how to address emotional changes your partner.
- The stigma associated with postpartum depression often prevents women from asking for help.
- Many women and their partners do not know what postpartum depression is or how to recognize its signs.