



AB 577 Medi-Cal Maternal Mental Health

SUMMARY

Maternal mental health is of increasing concern because of the high prevalence of depression and anxiety during the perinatal period and the resulting long-term implications of delayed, inconsistent, or absent treatment. Extending Medi-Cal benefits for pregnant women will ensure that they receive important pregnancy-related and post-partum health care, including mental health care.

BACKGROUND

Maternal mental health conditions influence the well-being of mothers, children, families, and communities. Low-income women and women of racial/ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected by maternal mental health disorders, as they face unique barriers to diagnosis and treatment. While many of these women may already be enrolled in Medi-Cal, others, who do not meet Medi-Cal's income eligibility, are not. Fortunately, Medi-Cal raises the income eligibility for women who are pregnant so they may receive important pregnancy-related and post-partum health care, including mental health care.

Pregnant women whose income is above this threshold may still qualify (up to 322% FPL) for assistance through the Medi-Cal Access Program (MCAP). While MCAP is a comprehensive coverage, it does require a small fee (1.5% of annual family income) to participate. These programs enable more low-income women who may not otherwise qualify for Medi-Cal, to receive medically necessary treatment to ensure the health of their pregnancy and baby.

These benefits however, end after 60 days from the birth of their child. Unless the new mom enrolls in a Covered California program, which requires her to pay a premium, any treatment she would be receiving would no longer be covered. She would either need to obtain commercial insurance or explore community resources that offer appropriate mental health services. This disruption in coverage could break the continuity of care and potentially halt treatment altogether. This is unhealthy for the mother and the baby.

THIS BILL

This bill would amend Section 14005.18 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to Medi-Cal, by extending Medi-Cal postpartum care from 60 days to one year for women diagnosed with a maternal mental health disorder, ensuring no gap in coverage and maintaining continuity of care.

SUPPORT

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (Sponsor)
March of Dimes (co-sponsor)
American Academy of Pediatrics
California Health+ Advocates
California Psychiatric Association
California School Employees Association
Disability Rights of California
Maternal Mental Health Now
Nurse-Family Partnership

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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