

PERINATAL CONTINUUM OF CARE:

Opportunities to support mental health and wellbeing for parents, caregivers, babies, and families during pregnancy and early parenting.

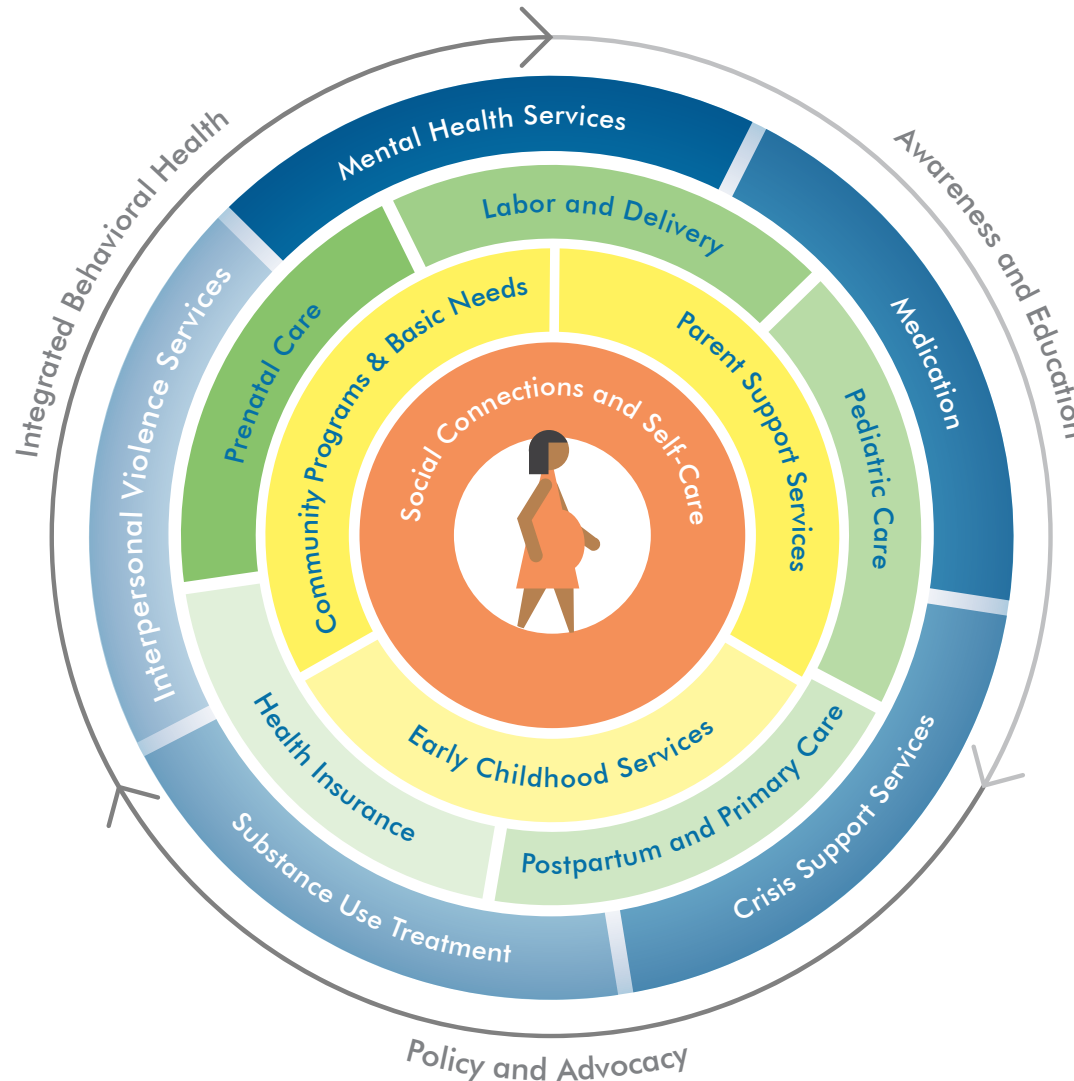
VISION

Our vision is that families in our community are resilient and thriving, with their mental health needs prioritized and met during pregnancy and early parenting. When pregnant parents and families with young children are struggling, we alleviate stress by providing emotional support and connection to additional resources. By committing to support mental health in the perinatal period, we create pathways to family wellbeing.

SHOW SUPPORT & BE AN ADVOCATE

“Perinatal” refers to the time during pregnancy and early parenting, a critical period for promoting mental health and wellness of families in our community. Any contact during the perinatal period is an opportunity to support mental health and wellbeing. Together, we can:

- ✔ **Commit** to playing a role in supporting perinatal mental health
- ✔ **Create** opportunities to educate families about perinatal mental health
- ✔ **Support** perinatal mental health by giving compassionate care at every interaction
- ✔ **Connect** families to community resources
- ✔ **Fight** to eliminate barriers created by stigma, fear and inequities
- ✔ **Implement** enrollment, engagement, and shared decision making processes that work for all families
- ✔ **Advocate** for policies that lift up women, children and families



coloradomaternalmentalhealth.org/continuumofcare

KEY RESOURCES

All of us play a role in helping families connect with services. For support navigating resources, contact:

- For crisis situations, always start with **Colorado Crisis Services**
Phone: 1-844-493-8255
Text: Text TALK to 38255
coloradocrisiservices.org
- **Postpartum Support International**
Phone: 1-800-944-4773
Text: 503-894-9453
postpartum.net/colorado
- **211 Colorado**
Phone: Dial 211
211colorado.communityos.org
- To learn more:
coloradomaternalmentalhealth.org

CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES

- **Integrated Behavioral Health** is the systematic coordination of physical and behavioral healthcare. Integrating mental health, substance use, and primary care services produces the best outcomes and proves to be the most effective approach to health care across the lifespan.
- **Awareness and Education** can be employed across all elements of the continuum of care to reduce stigma and increase families' ability to recognize, prevent, and address perinatal mental health concerns.
- **Policy and Advocacy** can support and bolster all elements of the continuum of care.

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Social Connections & Informal Community Supports

Taking care of a new baby can come with many challenges. When parents develop and utilize their social connections, they are better equipped to take care of their baby. Preparing parents to think about friends, neighbors and family members who they can turn to when they need help is a great place to start. Encouraging and supporting parents to eat well, exercise, engage in activities they enjoy, and ask for help when needed promotes a healthy mind and healthy body. Social connection opportunities exist through faith-based organizations, social media networks, meet-up groups, community classes and gatherings, and many other places where people come together in our community.

Community Programs & Basic Needs

Many families are eligible for community and basic needs supports including [WIC](#), [SNAP](#), and [Colorado Works \(TANF\)](#). [211 Colorado](#) connects families to social and community resources suited to their needs. Our community-based services improve the quality of life for new families by increasing access to basic resources and cultural and recreational activities, such as museums, libraries, parks and recreation centers. Some community-based programs provide support for specific populations, such as parents who identify as [LGBTQ](#), [refugees](#), or [families of color](#). Community programs have an opportunity to raise awareness about mental health concerns, provide education, and connect families to additional resources.

Parent Support Services

The transition to parenting a new baby can be stressful, and most parents benefit from support. Parent support may come from home visitation programs such as [Nurse Family Partnership](#) and [Parents As Teachers](#), parenting groups such as [MotherWise](#), or through [foster care and adoption support services](#). Parents can also get support through online platforms such as [Bright by Text](#) and informally from family, friends, and neighbors. Services that provide parent support help to prevent mental health concerns and are well-positioned to provide education and connection to additional resources as needed.

Early Childhood Services

Most families utilize some form of child care within their child's first year. Local [Early Childhood Councils](#) support parents and child care providers in finding and creating high-quality child care options. Many early care and education programs, such as [Head Start/Early Head Start](#) offer family support and education opportunities in addition to child care. When parents or providers have concerns about developmental delays, [Early Intervention](#) provides developmental supports for children ages 0-3. [SafeCare Colorado](#) is a support program for parents and caregivers with children ages five and under who need extra support to keep their families safe and healthy. Early childhood providers have the opportunity to educate families, recognize concerns, and refer to other services when concerns arise.

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Prenatal Care

In Colorado, more than 90% of women receive some level of prenatal care. Visit schedules are frequent, and can be an opportune time for mental health screening and referral. In Metro-Denver, many prenatal care practices include integrated behavioral health specialists who offer mental health services within the context of a prenatal care visit, providing support for stress, sadness, worries and concerns, [perinatal loss](#), and other mental health concerns. Encouraging parents to return for their postpartum visit and supporting their transition to primary care after delivery are also key to supporting perinatal mental health.

Labor and Delivery

Hospitals, birth centers, home delivery providers, childbirth educators, doulas, and lactation consultants have the opportunity to educate expectant and new parents about mental health, provide guidance about self-care, and connect families with resources. For babies admitted to the NICU, the need for emotional support to families continues. Labor and Delivery and NICU providers must also be prepared to address [perinatal loss](#).

Pediatric Care

Infants have the opportunity for well-child visits with pediatric providers at least six times in their first year of life, and families often prioritize these visits. Pediatric providers can educate, screen, and connect families to services. In Metro-Denver, many pediatric and family medicine practices include integrated behavioral health specialists who can provide mental health support within the context of a pediatric visit.

Postpartum and Primary Care

The postpartum period begins after delivery and ends when the mother's body has nearly returned to its pre-pregnant state. During this time, the mother experiences many changes, both emotionally and physically, all while adapting to life with a new baby or adjusting to a perinatal loss. The 6-week postpartum check is an important time to address physical and mental health concerns. The postpartum visit is typically the last visit with an obstetric provider for that pregnancy. For this reason, the postpartum visit should support a smooth transition to a primary care provider to address health needs after discharge from obstetric care.

Health Insurance

Families with health insurance are much more likely to access health services, which are essential in the perinatal period. [Connect for Health Colorado](#) is Colorado's official health insurance marketplace and a resource for families who may need financial help to reduce health insurance costs. For children, young adults, and pregnant people eligible for Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid Program) or Colorado Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+) [Healthy Communities](#) provides Family Health Coordinators to help families complete program applications, navigate care, understand coverage and benefits, and access other community resources.

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Mental Health Services

For families experiencing perinatal mental health concerns, a range of trauma-informed outpatient, intensive and inpatient mental health services are needed. [Community Mental Health Centers](#) and [private providers](#) offer outpatient care, and many also offer intensive outpatient and/or case management services. Several area hospitals offer inpatient services. [Postpartum Support International](#) offers regional coordinators and an [online provider directory](#) to connect parents with mental health services that match their family's needs. Mental health services may be integrated into health care settings and even some [WIC](#) centers.

Medication

There are mental health medication options that are [safe and effective during pregnancy and lactation](#). Primary and prenatal care providers can prescribe medication. When needed, psychiatric services are available through [Community Mental Health Centers](#) and private practitioners. [Postpartum Support International](#) offers a [Perinatal Psychiatric Consult Line](#), providing consultation to health providers within one business day.

Crisis Support Services

[Colorado Crisis Services](#) offer immediate crisis intervention by telephone or text, 24/7. Crisis support includes information, referral and connections to other resources. Colorado Crisis providers are encouraged to complete training to support women and families during pregnancy and postpartum. Other important crisis resources include the [National Suicide Hotline](#) and the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#).

Substance Use Treatment

For families experiencing alcohol or drug use problems, a range of community-based, outpatient, intensive and residential services are needed, including specialized [substance use disorder treatment \(SUD\)](#). Gender-responsive and trauma-informed SUD treatment services, including medication-assisted treatment, such as [Mothers Connection](#) and [Special Connections](#) help people have healthier pregnancies and healthier babies by providing case management, individual and group counseling, and health education during pregnancy and postpartum. Specialized perinatal tobacco cessation services are available through the [Colorado QuitLine](#) and [Baby & Me Tobacco Free](#), and resources on preventing secondhand smoke exposure can be found at [I Am A Smoke-Free Zone](#).

Interpersonal Violence Services

Family wellbeing is dependent on safe, healthy relationships among family members. Parents who feel threatened physically or emotionally within their relationships are likely to experience emotional stress and mental health concerns. It is important for health and service providers to recognize and acknowledge symptoms of unhealthy relationships, help them know they are not alone or at fault, and refer to support services. [Violence Free Colorado](#) has created a county-based resource directory to help connect people to local domestic violence programs.