

26 November 2021



After meetings with Minister of Health Hon Andrew Little, Associate Minister of Health Dr Ayesha Verrall and the Ministry of Health, PADA is thankful to Minister Verrall who is listening to the needs of families across Aotearoa, to have increased funding for support for maternal mental health.

PADA Tangata Whenua co-chair Huia Hanlen says "We welcome the news that there will be additional support for whānau experiencing perinatal mental distress. At PADA we hear from community support groups that the demand for their services is increasing as whānau grapple with the challenges of being new parents in a pandemic."

PADA Tangata Tiriti co-chair Leigh Bredenkamp comments "It is heartening to see Minister Verrall champion perinatal mental health and adopt the recommendation of the PMMRC to create a national pathway for accessing maternal mental health services. We look forward to working collaboratively with the Ministry to provide the best possible education and support to care providers so that whānau can have timely access the services they require in their communities."

Investment to support maternal mental health

Associate Minister of Health Dr Ayesha Verrall has announced an investment to help expand maternal mental health services in five District Health Boards.

"Supporting parent's mental wellbeing during their child's first 1000 days, from conception to two years of age, is critical to the long-term emotional, mental and physical wellbeing of their tamariki," Ayesha Verrall said.

"Pregnancy and early parenting is a time of enormous change and often big challenges for parents and whānau - and maternal mental health is a foundation of strong families and communities."

The Ministry of Health estimates around 12 to 18 percent of New Zealand mothers will develop depression, anxiety or other mental health issues during the perinatal period. These figures are higher in some population groups, including Māori and Pacific peoples.

"I asked the Ministry of Health to carry out a stocktake of maternal mental health services provided by district health boards. A key finding in their report, which is being released today, was that we need to do more to improve equity and ensure cultural models of care are available," Ayesha Verrall said.

"This funding of \$500,000 per year under the Maternity Action Plan, will be used to enhance early intervention initiatives for women with mild-to-moderate maternal mental health needs, and their whānau. Māori and Pacific women in rural and isolated areas will be prioritised.

“This year, we’re investing across Lakes, Northland, Waitemata, Counties Manukau and Hawkes Bay DHBs.

“From July 2022, Northland and Lakes DHBs will receive an additional \$500,000 per year for service expansion. They were chosen as they provide maternal mental health services with support from local community providers, and this funding will allow them to immediately extend their services to help more mothers and whānau in these priority communities.

“It is important people have access to consistent and appropriate support, when and where they need it. The findings of the Maternal Mental Health Stocktake will be used as we reform the health system,” Ayesha Verrall said.

The stocktake also found a need to provide an environment that better supports whānau who experience the loss of a child. Work is already progressing on a bereavement pathway to support people through this tragic time.

And the Ministry of Health is also working with the Health Reform Transition Unit on developing a national pathway for accessing maternal mental health services.

“This was a recommendation from the Perinatal Maternal Mortality Review Committee. The national pathway will ensure our future health system supports services which better meet the Crown’s Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations. And it will provide more equitable health outcomes for whānau Māori, Pacific peoples and other populations that are disadvantaged.

“Mental health and child wellbeing are key priorities for this Government, and I am committed to ensuring women receive the support they need during pregnancy, birth and in the post-natal period,” Ayesha Verrall said.

For further comment, please contact Treena Cooper – 04 4616318



Treena Cooper
General Manager
Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Aotearoa
www.pada.nz

*E tūtaki ana ngā kapua o te rangi, kei runga, kei runga te Mangoroa e kōpae pū ana.
The clouds in the sky close over, but above them spreads the milky way.*