Barriers to Behavioral Health Service Use Among Medicaid-Eligible Racial and Ethnic Minority Women with Pre-Existing Psychiatric Disorders in Philadelphia County

Community Behavioral Health

The Challenge
CBH claims data revealed an unmet need for behavioral health services among African-American perinatal women with pre-existing psychiatric disorders and child protective services involvement—lowest rate of use and intensity of use during pregnancy and the postpartum period.

Our Approach
Created a Sense of Urgency - Discussions with CBH Executive Staff & City of Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Maternal, Child & Family Health
Conducted Focus Groups & Telephone Interviews with Racial and Ethnic Minority Perinatal Women

Barriers Identified
Cultural - "Don't talk about it," Tough it out"
Lack of support - family or partner
Lack of transportation
Being a high risk pregnancy
Lack of knowledge about available resources
Lack of child care
Fear of "saying the wrong thing during the visit"
Competing demands - "just preparing to give birth"

Findings
High Risk Women - Severe Psychiatric Disorders
High Risk Pregnancy
LBW among offspring
Willing to take medication during pregnancy and the postpartum period
Individual therapy helpful, not group therapy

Policy & Treatment Implications
Home-based behavioral health services
Integration of behavioral health services into pediatric and obstetrics clinics
Integration of peer support services
Foster resilience among mothers and their offsprings - CPP & PCIT across CBH network
Adopt a public health approach