

Florida's 8th Annual Perinatal Mental Health Conference: Collaborating to Address the Maternal Mental Health Crisis Conference

Executive Summary

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The [Florida Maternal Mental Health Collaborative](#), is a coalition of stakeholders across Florida committed to providing every woman and her family in the state with the essential assistance and care for their mental health and overall wellness. In a true statewide effort, we involve leaders from human services organizations in our steering committee, as well as numerous professionals, advocates, and families via our surveys/research, workgroups, and general membership. Each year, we organize a vibrant, data-focused perinatal mental health conference with significant clinical value.

This year's conference, hosted in Tallahassee, FL, brought together more than 130 professionals featured over 20 presentations from statewide, national, and international experts and leaders in their field. The variety offered really spoke to the theme of: Collaborating to Address the Maternal Mental Health Crisis. The CDC and NIH have acknowledged that perinatal mental health conditions are a significant illness during pregnancy and postpartum, yet most professionals interfacing with this population only receive one lecture on the topics. This, coupled with past policies and the recent pandemic, has resulted in increased health disparities, challenges in receiving appropriate care, and heightened isolation as significant risk factors for perinatal mental illnesses. Our conference aimed to raise awareness, promote collaboration, and facilitate networking among providers and stakeholders statewide, pushing us to work towards our shared vision. Attendees were informed of the latest research, innovations in clinical care, and policy-making that can impact how we treat perinatal mental health conditions.

The conference focused on the following areas:

- Policy-making and change
- Health equity and disparities
- Substance abuse
- Loss, Grief, & Resilience
- Postpartum depression (PPD) in women of color
- Paternal mental health
- Research and Community Participation
- Innovations in clinical care

The three-day event initiated with a 4-hour Pre-conference workshop facilitated by this year's **Excellence in Perinatal Mental Health Award Recipient, Midwife Jennie Joseph, LM, CPM**, and the brilliant **Briana Boynton** who is a Practicing Doula. They employed a combination of lecture, PowerPoint, and discussion/breakout groups to educate and inspire attendees to imagine/create a network of Perinatal Safe spots that can establish Florida as a Perinatal Safe Zone. The pre-conference equipped participants with awareness of the four tenets of The JJ Way® system and how this method can impact interdisciplinary collaborations on a local, state, and regional level to create perinatal safety. Attendees were also able to describe the effect of racial disparities in perinatal outcomes on all members of society, including themselves as providers and community stakeholders, and discuss current approaches to eliminating them. The workshop was more than just an edifying session; it was a thought experiment that connected people across discipline and perspective to truly consider how we can network and innovate collaboratively to make Florida a Perinatal Safe Zone. It was the perfect way to ground our conference experience which was packed with illuminating sessions and discussions that gave attendees a fresh outlook on the perinatal care system.

Our keynote speaker, **Bob T. Ammerman, PhD**, initiated the event by delivering a high-level presentation on prioritizing maternal mental healthcare within pediatric primary care settings. He opened the way for an assortment of presentation sessions that participants were able to glean from. Mr. **Omari Maynard** Artist and co-founder of the A.R.I.A.H. Foundation, concluded the first day with his keynote address, titled "Father's Supporting Father's Through Their Maternal Health Journey," which harmoniously weaved together the power of art in grieving, personal experiences, advocacy efforts, and more. The presentation was insightful, stirring, and heartfelt, reminding us all why the work we do is critical, and why we must continue to improve it. The Resiliency Panel, comprised of individuals who have lived experienced with Perinatal Mental Health imbalance, featured **Mama Yata (Trishay Burton)** alongside, **Jaquetta Johnson Esq.**, hosted by **Ms. Nicole Everett**. The panel shared their personal stories, exhibiting incredible courage and resilience. Attendees were deeply moved by the intensity of the experiences shared and the inspiring strength of the mothers who spoke. Our conference-built awareness fostered collaboration and networking among providers, patients, and patrons across the state, and challenged us to grow, collectively aiming towards achieving our vision.

Feedback from attendees revealed that they would like more content to address obstetric violence and or birth trauma, infertility, the use of MAT for opioids, IPT, cultural differences in PMD, fatherhood involvement/dad-centric models, Co-occurring mental health and SUD, mindfulness, high risk pregnancies and breastfeeding, adolescent perinatal mental health, LGBTQ population, parent engagement and leadership, and in general more training and workshops.

Get connected and collaborate with us by joining our year-round workgroups. For more information on the FLMMHC, go to

www.FLMomsmatter.org