



orygen



SUPPORTING YOUNG PARENTS

ADDRESSING PERINATAL AND YOUTH MENTAL NEEDS

Parenthood can be both a rewarding and challenging experience for new and expecting parents. We know that during this time of transition, experiences of mental ill-health are common.

The term 'perinatal' refers to the period from the conception of a child through to the period after birth. Perinatal depression and anxiety impacts one in five mothers and one in ten fathers or non-birth parents. Although many young parents are well-equipped and supported in parenthood and pregnancy, this group is disproportionately impacted by mental ill-health and exposed to mental health risk factors.

Recognising this, Orygen and PANDA – Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia, have partnered to identify opportunities to better support young parents across Australia during the perinatal period.

This involved consultations with young parents and perinatal mental health organisations, which revealed a preference for accessing support through the perinatal mental health sector. Other opportunities to expand the appropriate service options available for young parents included greater collaborative care, referral pathways and initiatives between perinatal and youth mental health organisations.

Key policy opportunities that were identified, and which are expanded on below, include:

- establish a perinatal mental health strategy;
- ensure guidelines, services and resources meet the needs of young parents; and
- increase vocational supports.

ESTABLISH A PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

Perinatal mental health service offerings vary significantly across the country. Additionally, consulted perinatal mental health services described a lack of coordination between other perinatal services and the broader health and social service systems.

A perinatal mental health strategy that maps current services, identifies gaps, and expands current best-practice initiatives would benefit all new and expecting parents, including young parents. Dedicated consultations with young parents in the design and development of the strategy would ensure it meets their needs.

ENSURE GUIDELINES, SERVICES AND RESOURCES MEET THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PARENTS

Despite an increased national focus on perinatal mental health in the past two decades, with the creation of initiatives, clinical guidelines and helplines, the unique needs of young parents have been largely unexplored. While many young parents do not require youth-specific supports, support for issues pertinent to young parents may not currently be available in all-age services.

A number of opportunities exist to increase youth-friendly resources and service options. A dedicated focus on young parents in future perinatal mental health guidelines would provide unique considerations for the needs of young parents. Existing perinatal mental health websites could be augmented with youth-specific content to support young parents with relevant information when they need it. Adding webchat support to existing helpline services would provide support aligned to the preferences of young people.



INCREASE VOCATIONAL SUPPORTS

Becoming a young parent can disrupt education and employment goals during a pivotal time for vocational development. Consulted young parents and perinatal mental health organisations reported that assisting young parents with vocational goals would be beneficial, but that this support is not widely offered by services.

A range of opportunities has been identified to support the vocational needs of both adolescent and young adult parents. National best-practice guidelines are needed to support young parents in secondary education. Trialling pathways between perinatal and youth mental health services would increase vocational support options for young parents.



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THE FULL PAPER, VISIT
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KEY POLICY SOLUTIONS

ESTABLISH A PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

Develop a national perinatal mental health strategy, which includes a dedicated focus on young parents.

Establish a joint agency taskforce to implement the national perinatal strategy.

ENSURE GUIDELINES, SERVICES AND RESOURCES MEET THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PARENTS

Include a focus on young parents in the national perinatal mental health clinical practice guidelines.

Assess the youth-friendliness of mother-baby units.

Augment PANDA's perinatal mental health helpline with webchat support.

Augment existing perinatal mental health websites with youth-specific content.

INCREASE VOCATIONAL SUPPORTS

Develop nationally-consistent, best-practice guidance for young parents in education.

Expand Additional Child Care Subsidy eligibility to include young people engaged in education.

Develop, trial and evaluate pathways between perinatal mental health services and youth mental health individual placement and support (IPS) services.

GET IN TOUCH

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