



World Maternal
Mental Health Day
#maternalMHmatters



Perinatal Mental
Health Alliance
of Newfoundland & Labrador

For Immediate Release:

**Perinatal Mental Health Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador
Celebrates World Maternal Mental Health Day
Wednesday, May 1st 2024**

St. John's, Newfoundland, April 22th, 2024: The [Perinatal Mental Health Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador](#) is celebrating World Maternal Mental Health Day on May 1st. The Alliance is taking an opportunity to pause and give thought to the support provided to families undertaking the perinatal journey including fertility, pregnancy, loss, delivery and the time up to a child's early years; with events taking place from **April 28-May 5th 2024**

RAISING AWARENESS

Flora's Walk is a fundraising initiative by the Canadian Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative (CPMHC), to raise awareness and monetary funds for organizations, families, and initiatives across Canada. This year, 75% of the fundraised costs will stay in Province to support perinatal mental health, with the remaining 25% going towards national advocacy efforts.

Three locations across the province to join: **St. John's, Carbonear, and Corner Brook!**

1. **St. John's: Saturday, May 4th at 2:00pm, at Quidi Vidi Lake (Meet at Boathouse)**
Hosted by: *The Canadian Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative (CPMHC) NL Chapter*
2. **Carbonear: Saturday, May 4th, at 2:00pm at the Carbonear Boardwalk.**
Hosted by the *Carbonear General Hospital- Rural Eastern Zone Team*
3. **Corner Brook: Sunday, April 28th at 2:00pm, at Margaret Bowater Park (Entrance behind the Richard Squires Building)**
Hosted by: *The Western NL Team*

Local Municipal Support

The [City of St. John's City Hall](#) will be looking blue & bright as of **April 29th**, when it will be lit up in teal to recognize World Maternal Mental Health Week. The lights will remain teal through May 5, 2024 in support of World Maternal Mental Health Week.

Individual Level Engagement

This year, the Perinatal Mental Health Alliance in collaboration with the Government Task Force for Perinatal Mental Health are launching a Survey to gain insight into the struggles faced by birthing parents and their supports in the perinatal period. The survey will go live on May 1st, 2024 on www.pmhanl.com.

PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH IN NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

Dr. Archana Vidyasankar, Chair of the Alliance, reminds us that: "While this is a happy journey for most, there are many who face stress, illness and complications that can result in serious mental illness. These issues can include serious depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and psychosis. What's even more shocking is that suicide is a leading cause of perinatal death in Canada."



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It is estimated that, in Newfoundland and Labrador, 28% of new parents will experience a perinatal mood and anxiety disorder (compared with the national average of 23%). This means that approximately 1000 births per year in this province may result in mental illnesses, which could benefit from support and treatment.

Left untreated, perinatal mental illnesses can lead to premature labour, admission to the neonatal intensive care unit, increased risks of obstetrical complications, lower breastfeeding rates, and poor fetal and infant outcomes (potential cognitive, emotional and behavioral impairments). The cost of remediating these problems over the long term is estimated at about \$150,000 for each mother-child pair.

PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH IN CANADA AND AROUND THE WORLD

Yet there are jurisdictions around the world that have addressed this issue and as a result have dramatically reduced the cost of delivering mental health care and needed support.

By providing targeted assistance, the cost of treating a mother-child pair has been estimated to decrease by as much as 95%, to \$5,000.

PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH ALLIANCE OF NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

The key is universal screening and coordinated support and treatment. This is the mission that has been adopted by the Perinatal Mental Health Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Alliance is composed of mental health counselors, nurses, physicians, social workers, early childhood specialists, policy advisors, as well as persons with lived experience who openly share their journey to improve care in the province.

The Alliance has several province-wide objectives, include the following:

- to advocate for improved, coordinated, province-wide perinatal mental health programs, supports and services;
- to recommend community and research-informed strategies to address barriers to support and treatment;
- to raise public and professional awareness of perinatal mental health issues in the province; and
- to inform and educate the public and professionals about perinatal mental health issues.

The Perinatal Mental Health Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador is poised to make significant changes! Anyone interested in joining the Alliance is invited to visit <https://www.pmhanl.com>. The Alliance encourages the community to get involved in these upcoming initiatives to promote, celebrate, and advocate for #maternalmentalhealth.

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On behalf of the Perinatal Mental Health Alliance



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PMHANL Backgrounder

The Perinatal Mental Health Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador (PMHANL) is a group of volunteers representing: persons with lived experience; professionals in clinical practice; volunteers and professionals in not-for-profit organizations dealing with mental health, public health, early childhood education and other areas of intervention; advocates for mothers, infants and families; policy advisors; and other persons interested in healthy families.

The professions represented within the Alliance include: pediatricians, gynecologists/obstetricians, family physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, obstetrical/public health nurses, doulas/midwives, social workers, early childhood educators, crisis counsellors and policy advisors. Their professional expertise is complemented by the lived experience of non-professionals who courageously and selflessly share their experiences to enhance the care provided to persons in the full spectrum of fertility, from pregnancy to the infant's first year, and including their families.

The Alliance is sensitive to the needs of all types of families, from the traditional two-parent family to single parents, same-sex parents and non-traditional/non-binary parents.

As is often the case with action-oriented alliances, action precedes structure. Since its early start in 2018, the PMHANL has undertaken research projects, advocated to government for service and support improvements, raised public awareness and provided professional development to the people in the field.

Over the past year, PMHANL has been working to solidify its governance structures. With support from the Daymark Foundation, the Alliance has been able to engage CreAction Consulting to support the finalization of the process, ensuring the development of a strong strategic plan. This past year, the Alliance has developed two working subcommittees, the Communications Committee and the Education Committee. These groups are made up of both PMHANL Board Members and Community Members to support the advocacy, educational, and awareness efforts of the Alliance in NL.

More information about the Alliance can be found on its website www.pmhanl.com or by contacting Rozane El Masri at pmhanlcoordinator@gmail.com.