



Maternal Mental Health: Reflection on Child Wellbeing

Third QPEM Conference 11-13th of January 2019

Dr. Erin Valentine, Clinical Psychologist

DISCLOSURE

I do not have any relevant financial relationship with commercial interest to disclose.

Learning Objectives

At the end of the presentation, the attendee will be able to:

1

Discuss the spectrum of maternal mental health in relation to child maltreatment.

2

Describe the impact of maternal mental health on child maltreatment.



Introduction: The Prevalence of Mental Health

Mental Health and Its Effects

- **One in four** people in the world will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives.
- **The general prevalence of mental disorders between men and women is similar**, but women/mothers are at an increased likelihood of experiencing certain disorders that can impact the care they provide to their children. (Certainly the mental health of men/fathers is also important to consider when thinking about child wellbeing, but is a topic for another time.)
- The overall **mental health and wellbeing of women/mothers has a significant impact on their pregnancies, children, families, and communities.**
- Research has documented a **relationship between parental mental illness and child abuse and neglect**; with particular concern among children living with a mother with mental illness and within economically disadvantaged families.

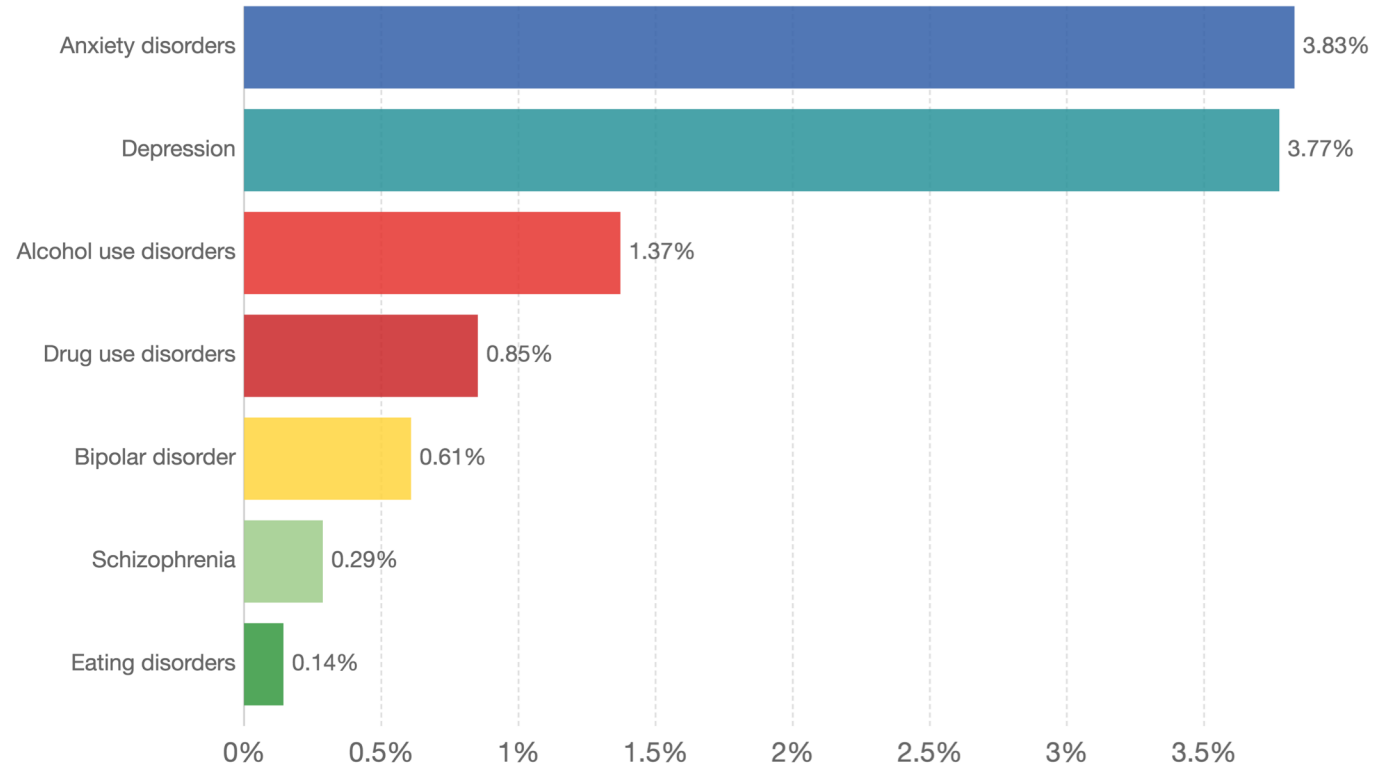
Mental Health and Its Prevalence



Prevalence by mental and substance use disorder, World, 2016



Share of the total population with a given mental health or substance use disorder. Figures attempt to provide a true estimate (going beyond reported diagnosis) of disorder prevalence based on medical, epidemiological data, surveys and meta-regression modelling.



Source: IHME, Global Burden of Disease

CC BY-SA

Women/Mothers and Mental Health



- **Depression, anxiety** and **somatic complaints** predominate in women, affecting approximately 1 in 3 women.
- Unipolar **depression** is twice as common in women compared to men.
- Worldwide about **10% of pregnant women** and **13% of women who have just given birth** experience a mental disorder, primarily **depression** and **anxiety**. In developing countries these statistics are higher: 15.6% during pregnancy and upwards of 20% after child birth.

WHO, 2018

Women/Mothers and Mental Health

Maternal Mental Health includes more than depression and anxiety, other common conditions include:

- **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**
- **Somatization**
- **Bipolar Disorder**
- **Borderline and other Personality Disorders**
- **Psychosis**, which is rare, but a major concern when present

Stress, being **overwhelmed**, **under resourced**, and **loneliness** are ‘subclinical’ conditions that affect many mothers and affect their mental health.

Virtually all women can develop mental health disorders during their child bearing year, but **poverty**, **migration**, **extreme stress**, **exposure to violence** (domestic, sexual and gender-based), **emergency and conflict situations**, **natural disasters**, and **low social support** generally increase risks for specific disorders.



Maternal Mental Health and Child Maltreatment: A Recent Cohort Study

Maternal Mental Health and Its Relation to Child Maltreatment



International Journal of
*Environmental Research
and Public Health*



Article

Maternal Mental Health Disorders and Reports to Child Protective Services: A Birth Cohort Study

Ivy Hammond ¹, Andrea Lane Eastman ¹, John M. Leventhal ² and Emily Putnam-Hornstein ^{1,3,4}

¹ Children's Data Network, Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089, USA; ihammond@usc.edu (I.H.); andrea.eastman@usc.edu (A.L.E.)

² School of Medicine, Yale University, New Haven, CT 06510, USA; john.leventhal@yale.edu

³ California Child Welfare Indicators Project, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720, USA

⁴ Correspondence: eputnam@usc.edu; Tel: +1-917-282-7861

Received: 6 September 2017; Accepted: 14 October 2017; Published: 30 October 2017

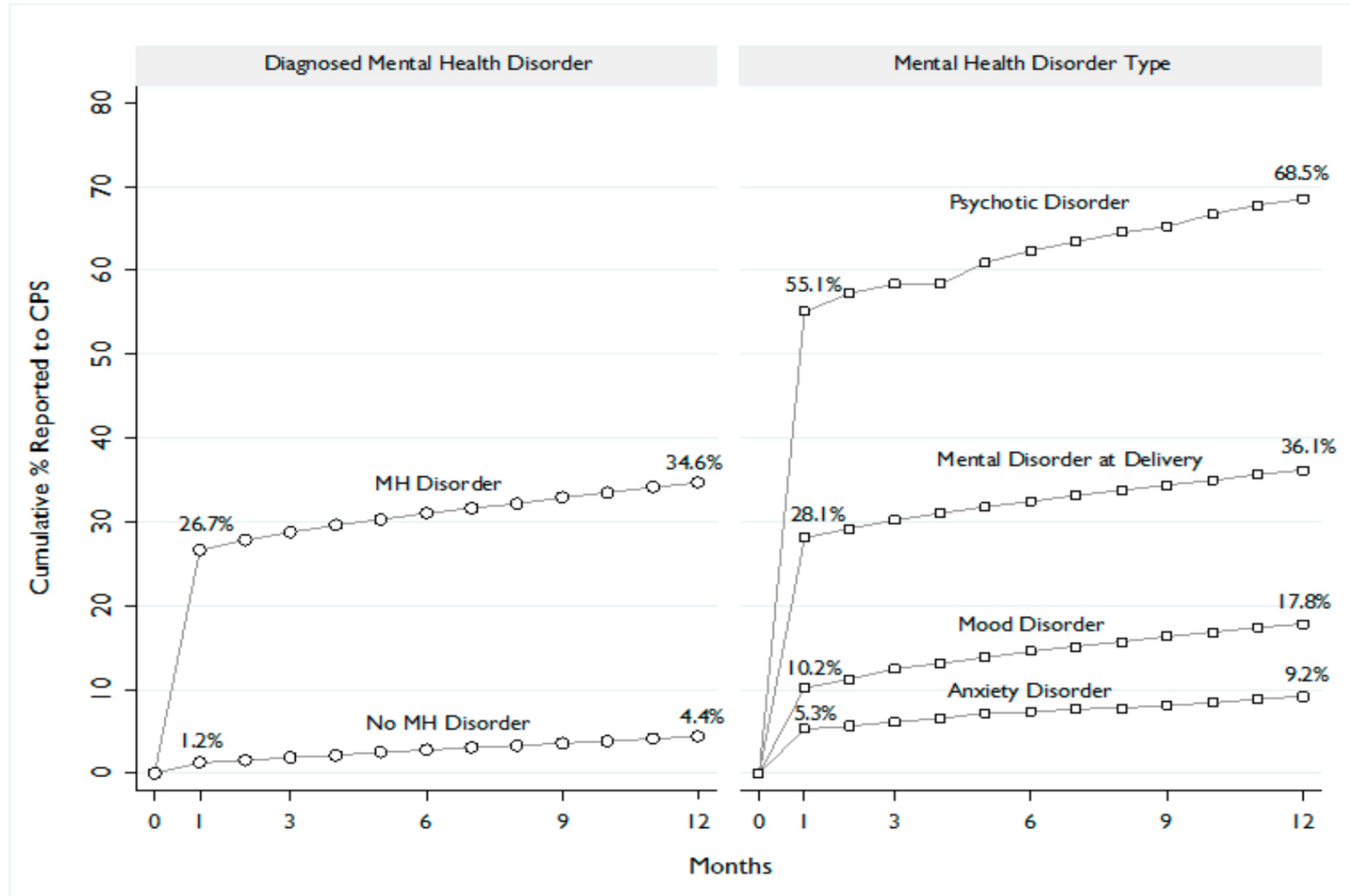
Abstract: *Background:* Existing literature has documented a strong relationship between parental mental illness and child maltreatment, but little is known about the prevalence of mental illness among childbearing women. In the present study, linked administrative records were used to identify the prevalence of maternal mental health (MH) disorders documented at birth and

Maternal Mental Health and Its Relation to Child Maltreatment

- The cohort is 551,232 children born in the United States.
- Data taken from linked administrative records to identify the prevalence of maternal mental health disorders documented at birth and the associated likelihood of maltreatment reports.
- In this study 2.8% of children were born to a mother with a documented mental health disorder.
- 34.6% of infants born to mothers with a mental health disorder were reported to child protective services within 1 year vs. 4.4% of children born to mothers without.

Hammond et al, 2017

Maternal Mental Health and Its Relation to Child Maltreatment



Maternal Mental Health and Its Relation to Child Maltreatment

- Births with a maternal mental health condition were associated with **younger maternal age at first birth**, more coverage by **public health insurance**, higher rates of **missing paternity** on the birth certificate, 41.3% of infants with mothers who had a mental health disorder had documented maternal **substance abuse** (versus less than 0.5% without).
- **Among children born to mothers with a documented psychotic disorder, 68.5% were reported to to child protection services during infancy.** The cumulative percentage reported to child protective services was much lower among mother-child dyads in which anxiety or mood disorders were diagnosed (17.8% and 9.2%, respectively), yet these values were still twice as high as the percentage of those without any documented mental health disorder (4.4%).

Maternal Mental Health and Its Relation to Child Maltreatment

- **Infants born to mothers with a diagnosed mental health disorder at the time of birth have a heightened likelihood of experiencing early child protective service involvement**, particularly in infants born to mothers with psychotic disorders or with a comorbid substance use disorder.
- **Child protective service reports are most likely to occur during the child's first month of life, making this a critical window for intervention.**
- **Early identification** of infants born to mothers with mental health disorders and co-occurring substance abuse should be viewed as **an opportunity to provide parents with integrated support services early to prevent the occurrence of child maltreatment.**

Screening for Maternal Mental Health in Qatar



PHCC, Hamad-WWRC, & Sidra Medicine:

Postnatal screening with **Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale**

The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS)

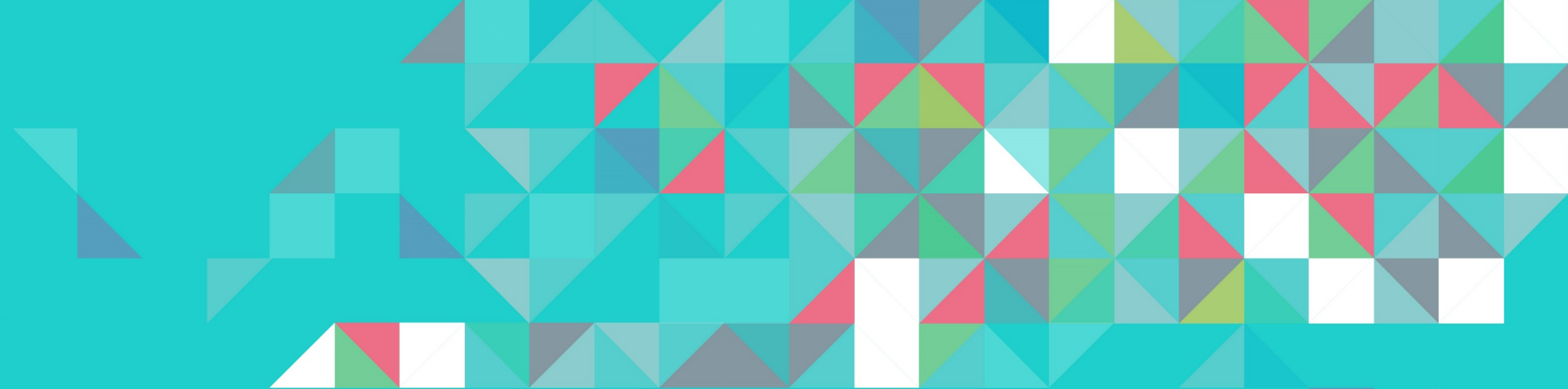
A 10-item questionnaire that helps to identify women who have postpartum depression.

- I have been so unhappy I have had difficulty sleeping.
Yes, most of the time. Yes, some of the time. Not very often. No, not at all.

Perinatal Anxiety Screening Scale (PASS)

A 31-item questionnaire that helps to identify different types of anxiety common in perinatal women.

- A sense of dread something bad is going to happen.
Not at all. Sometimes. Often. Almost Always.



How Mental Health Conditions Can Affect Child Wellbeing

The Impact of Mental Health Conditions on Child Wellbeing

- **Untreated maternal mental health leads to greater referral to child protection service for maltreatment.**
- Children of parents with **depression or schizophrenia** are **2 times more likely to experience abuse** than children of parents without mental illness; **children of parents with antisocial behavior** are **6 times** more likely to experience abuse.
- Parents with **undifferentiated mental illness** are **2 times more likely** to abuse and neglect their children.

Walsh, MacMillian, & Jamieson, 2002

Brown et al, 1998

The Impact of Maternal Mental Health Conditions on Child Wellbeing

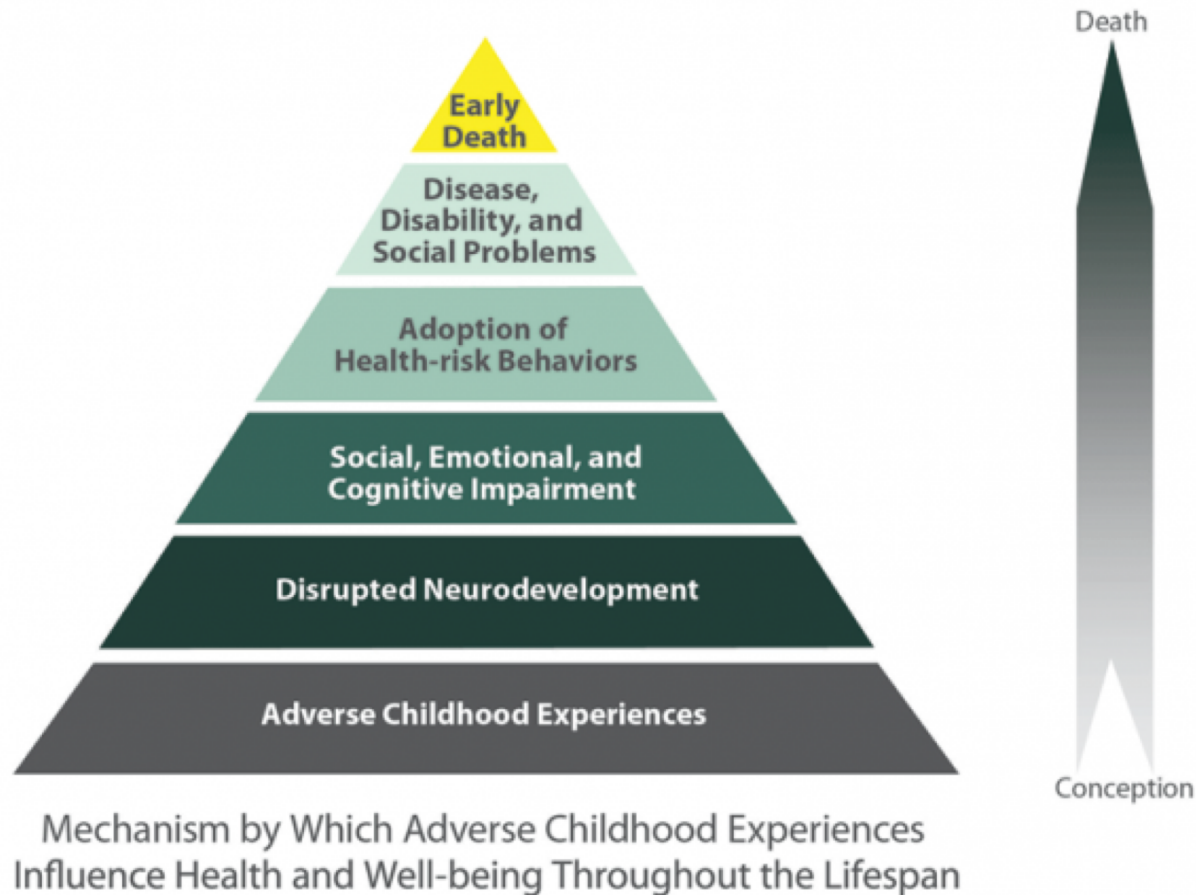
Abuse

&

Neglect

- Lower quality parenting (Simon et al, 1993)
- Less responsive and emotionally involved parents with their children (Goodman & Brumley, 1990)
- Less sensitive parents to their children's needs (Newman et al, 2007)
- Less warmth, more criticism, and higher levels of control (Moore, Whaley, & Sigman, 2004)
- Disengagement (Woodruff-Borden et al, 2002)

The Impact of Maternal Mental Health on ACEs



All ACEs:

Abuse

Emotional abuse
Physical abuse
Sexual abuse

Household Challenges

Mother treated violently
Household substance abuse
Mental illness in household
Parental separation or divorce
Criminal household member

Neglect

Emotional neglect
Physical neglect

Protective Interventions for Children and Their Families

Research from 'All Our Babies' cohort (a prospective community-based pregnancy cohort of ~3000 women and their children in Canada). The following strategies show promise to influence child wellbeing and development in the face of adverse maternal mental health conditions in the family.

- **public health and early intervention strategies that support interpersonal relationships**
- **social support (for mothers and the family)**
- **optimism (i.e. hope it can be better)**
- **work–life balance**
- **limiting children's screen time**
- **establishing good sleep habits in the child's first 2 years of a child's life**

McDonald, Kehler, & Tough, 2016

Take Away Points and Questions

- Severe maternal mental health conditions are rare, but have a serious effect on child wellbeing and child protective service involvement
- Identifying and treating mild, moderate, and severe maternal mental health disorders positively affects children
- There are long-term effects for children, and cumulative effects for children, experiencing multiple adverse childhood events related to parental mental health conditions
- Simple strategies can be very effective in improving the lives and wellbeing of children with parents who have mental health struggles
- Supporting mothers and families, supports children!

Questions?