



## Supporting Parents When Parents Experience Mental Health Challenges:

*Ready-to-Use Workshop for Service Providers*

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## Background

- 2010 survey
- Best Start Resource Centre
- Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC) staff
- All 81 respondents reported that their clients experienced mental health challenges:
  - 92% often or very often
  - 8% seldom or very seldom

Supporting Parents When Parents Experience Mental Health Challenges

The Best Start Resource Centre developed this ready-to-use workshop to meet the needs of service providers who are working with parents experiencing mental health challenges. According to a recent survey of Healthy Babies, Healthy Children staff by the Best Start Resource Centre, all 81 workers reported that 92% of their clients were experiencing some type of mental health challenge, for example depression or anxiety often or very often. Only 8% experienced a mental health challenge seldom or very seldom.

### Service providers desire greater ability to:

- Understand mental health challenges and their impact on parents.
- Support parents' attachment and bonding skills.
- Support parents' positive parenting skills.
- Support parents' behavioural change and goal setting abilities.

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Not surprising, survey participants felt they needed more support when working with these clients. Almost all of the workers (96%) expressed the need to increase their knowledge and skills.

Service providers felt their learning would be best supported through conferences, workshops, discussions and practice. This would allow them to develop competencies to support these parents adequately. They were also looking for more knowledge of local resources and links to existing resources.

This ready-to-use workshop was developed as a result of the survey. It can be delivered in four short modules. It provides information, links to other educational resources, highlights resources service providers can use on a day-to-day basis, and provides support through discussion of cases and reflective questions. Service providers will benefit most when the modules are worked through in a group format. If that is not an available option, service providers can work through each module individually in a reflective manner.

## Audience

- Public health nurses involved in home visiting
- Family home visitors
- Lay home visitors
- Parent resource support workers
- Primary care physicians
- Family practice nurses
- Service providers working in community programs for parents
- Anyone working with parents who are experiencing mental health challenges

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These ready-to-use workshops are for service providers working with parents who are expecting a baby or have young children. For example:

- Public health nurses involved in home visiting
- Family home visitors
- Lay home visitors
- Parent resource support workers
- Primary care physicians
- Family practice nurses
- Service providers working in community programs for parents
- Anyone working with parents who are experiencing mental health challenges

## Mental Health Challenges

- Postpartum depression or anxiety
- Prenatal depression or anxiety
- Other mental health disorders or symptoms occurring during the perinatal period or while parenting young children
- Chronic or acute mental illness
- Symptoms of a mental health challenge while experiencing a concurrent mental illness

For the purpose of these modules we have used the term “mental health challenges”.

These can include:

- Postpartum depression or anxiety
- Prenatal depression or anxiety
- Other mental health disorders or symptoms occurring during the perinatal period (conception to one year after the infant’s birth) or while parenting young children (e.g., bipolar depression diagnoses following a postpartum psychosis)
- Chronic or acute mental illness (e.g., unipolar depression)
- Symptoms of a mental health challenge while experiencing a concurrent mental illness (e.g., symptoms of postpartum depression in a client with a diagnosis of schizophrenia)

**Facilitator discuss what this means and what participants have experienced with clients.**

## Goal

- Increase service providers' competencies when working with parents who are experiencing mental health challenges.

## Objectives

- Information on mental health challenges and their impact on parenting.
- Strategies to assist clients experiencing a crisis
- Strategies to engage and support clients to assist them to develop and/or maintain positive parenting skills despite their mental health challenges.
- Strategies to assist clients with behavioural change and goal setting.
- Links to additional resources for education and support.

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## Goals and Objectives

The goal of this ready-to-use workshop is to increase service providers' competencies when working with parents who are experiencing mental health challenges by providing:

- Information on mental health challenges and their impact on parenting.
- Strategies to assist clients experiencing a crisis.
- Strategies to engage and support clients to assist them to develop and/or maintain positive parenting skills despite their mental health challenges.
- Strategies to assist clients with behavioural change and goal setting.
- Links to additional resources for education and support.

## Four Modules

- Overview: experiencing mental health challenges while parenting young children.
- Assessing risk and managing crises.
- Supporting parenting skills while experiencing mental health challenges.
- Supporting behavioural change using motivational interviewing.

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### **Preparation and delivery of each module:**

Each module can be completed in a 1 – 1.5 hour session or more, depending on time available. Reflection and discussion by participants will benefit from longer sessions. This makes them appropriate for various types of staff learning events within the organization. Each module lists at least one resource that participants can work through in preparation for the group event. The facilitator can prepare each module as a separate workshop or use all four modules to design a full-day workshop. Cases and reflective questions can be discussed in a small or large group format.



## Each Module

1. Module content
2. Handouts containing
  - a) Case Example
  - b) Worksheet with Questions for Reflection
  - c) Additional handouts
  - d) Resources and References

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Each module includes:

1. Module content in a set of slides for presentation
2. Module content in power point notes pages for the facilitator
3. Handouts containing:
  - Case Example
  - Worksheet with Questions for Reflection – **This is a vital part of the workshop and will contribute to discussion and application into practice.**
  - Additional Handouts related to the module content
  - Resources and References

Some preparation is required prior to each learning event.

### **Preparation for each module:**

- The handout should be distributed prior to the workshop.
- Participants should be encouraged to review one or two of the resources from the *Resources and References* handout in preparation for the workshop. All

resources listed will provide additional, educational support after the session.

- The remainder of the handout containing the *Case Example, Worksheet with Questions for Reflection* and any *additional handouts* will encourage reflection and discussion. Space for notes is provided.
- The facilitator can download the slides and notes pages and use these to deliver the module content. Reflective questions and practice examples are included on slides or notes to encourage an interactive and participatory workshop. Some participants may not wish to share their thoughts regarding the questions for reflections. The facilitator can encourage personal reflection to help all participants benefit from these educational modules.

The information in each module was taken mostly from the resources listed. These and any additional references are listed in each module's *Resources and References* handout.

## **Best Start: Ontario's Maternal, Newborn and Early Child Development Resource Centre Health Nexus**

**[www.beststart.org](http://www.beststart.org) and [www.healthnexus.ca](http://www.healthnexus.ca)**

This ready-to-use workshop has been prepared with funds provided by the Government of Ontario. The information herein reflects the views of the authors and is not officially endorsed by the Government of Ontario. The resources and programs cited throughout the workshop are not necessarily endorsed by the Best Start Resource Centre or the Government of Ontario.

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