

## 1.2.2 Maternal Depression: Connection to Services

### *Percentage of pregnant and postpartum women connected to mental health services when indicated*

#### **Purpose**

While screening is a necessary first step, its value can only be realized if mothers with an indicated need are successfully connected to services that can help them and, by extension, their children. This measure provides communities an opportunity to look at how frequently pregnant and postpartum women access needed behavioral health services once the need has been identified. This can open up important conversations about how care is coordinated when screenings and assessments indicate the need for behavioral health care, how data are shared between provider types/systems, whether there are variations in access to care in particular geographic areas or among population groups, and the impact on women's and children's outcomes.

#### **Definition**

*Maternal connection to mental health services* is defined by dividing the number of pregnant or postpartum women with young children who are connected to services for depression (the numerator) by the number of women with identified needs for such services (the denominator). *Indication of need* is defined as those who score at-risk for depression on a screening tool or are recommended by a health care professional to seek care. What is considered "at risk" will vary by screening tool. *Connected to services* is defined as the completion of the initial in-person contact that includes the completion of intake and written consent of services.

#### **Limitations**

Most of the data limitations discussed in the previous maternal depression screening measure apply to this measure as well. Data are generally only available at the program level and may be duplicated. In 2018, California's Maternal and Infant Health Assessment ([MIHA](#)) survey added questions to assess connection to behavioral health services for pregnant and postpartum women. Similar statewide surveys may increase the availability of population-level data for this measure.

#### **Opportunities**

Additional opportunities include the following:

- ▶ Analyze program data from [Screening and Treatment for Maternal Depression and Related Behavioral Disorders Program](#) grantee states.
- ▶ Strengthen definition of what qualifies as connection to services, including the timeframe and whether the verification of connection to services will be more passive (some level of confirmation from client) or more active (confirmation with a service provider).
- ▶ Analyze the full process of screening, referral to treatment, connection to services, and completion of services to better understand system performance.
- ▶ Investigate opportunities with state-level surveys to collect population-level data for this measure.