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Tallahassee to host annual, statewide maternal mental health conference after eight years



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Maternal mental health is known to be a crisis across Florida — and throughout the nation.

That's why Florida State University's College of Medicine and the Florida Maternal Mental Health Collaborative (FLMMHC) will host the state's eighth annual Perinatal Mental Health Conference this Thursday, Dec. 7, and Friday, Dec. 8.

The conference will be at the FSU Alumni Center, 1030 W. Tennessee St. in Tallahassee. This year marks the conference's first time taking place here since 2015. The annual event is also the state's only conference that focuses on perinatal — the weeks right before and after birth — and maternal mental health.

“Every year, we identify what the needs are in the state and we mobilize stakeholders from the organization to see what we can do to address them,” said FLMMHC Co-Founder Heather Flynn, also an FSU professor and chair of the College of Medicine's Department of Behavioral Sciences and Social Medicine.

Other FSU news: 'Climbing': FSU president's state of the university speech focuses on what's on the horizon

The collaborative was established in 2015 with the goal of ensuring every woman in Florida, along with their family, receives support for optimal mental health and well-being. Maternal mental health is the No. 1 health complication of pregnancy and birth, according to the organization, and approximately one in five women (and one in 10 men) experience a mental health complication during the time of pregnancy or after delivery.

In addition, only five states across the country — California, Illinois, Louisiana, New Jersey and Oklahoma — require their OB/GYN doctors to conduct mental health screenings during prenatal and postpartum visits, according to George Washington University researchers.

“We still see one of the biggest challenges being the ability to detect and treat mental health and substance use in pregnancy and the postpartum period,” Flynn said. “It's one of the most common complications of pregnancy, but unfortunately, most people don't get the treatment they need during pregnancy and after they deliver their babies.”

Other news: Grief and gratitude: How one Tallahassee mother goes on after losing one of her twins

During the two-day conference, which will be held both in-person and virtually, keynote speakers Robert Ammerman, a psychologist, and Omari Maynard, a healthcare activist, will discuss the importance of mental health during the perinatal period.

A pre-conference workshop will also be held 1 p.m.-5 p.m. Thursday — facilitated by Jennie Joseph, a midwife and 2022 TIME Woman of the Year — to address steps to make Florida safer for families when it comes to maternal mental health.

If you go

Both the workshop and the conference are open to the public.

The cost of attending the pre-conference workshop is \$50. Student admission for the two-day conference is \$75 and general admission is \$200.

Tickets can be purchased on Eventbrite (<https://tinyurl.com/4y6fwpvv>), and a full schedule of events can be found on FLMMHC's website, at www.flmomsmatter.org/conference.

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