

The Gift of Hope: New Horizons in Perinatal Mental Health Treatment

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By Frances Sahrphillips

December is a joyful time of year filled with holiday cheer. Planning time with family and friends, sharing cultural and religious celebrations, and the festive decorations around every turn. However, not everyone gets the elf-like cheer. Some people feel more like a humbug because the season can also increase feelings of grief, sadness, and depression. The colder temperatures can increase isolation, contributing to worsening symptoms.

Many women, especially those in the perinatal period, suffer in silence, focusing on their children and families instead of their own mental health. Approximately 1 in 5 women suffer from perinatal depression. Perinatal depression is one of the leading causes of maternal morbidity and mortality. This is due to many factors, including isolation, lack of support, and an increase in substance abuse.

As more women share their experiences, the knowledge base grows and is shifting the landscape of treatment. Traditional treatments include therapy and medication, such as antidepressants. The study of perinatal depression has led to a newer, fast-acting drug, Zuranolone, that can improve symptoms within days. This is an improvement over traditional antidepressants that can take much longer to work. There are more treatment options on the horizon, making them more available.



Navigating Perinatal Mental Health during the holidays can be challenging. Here are some helpful tips:

- **Manage Expectations:** Set realistic expectations for holiday events, focusing on connection over perfection.
- **Prioritize Rest:** The holidays often bring sleep disruption; having good sleep hygiene for mental well-being. This can be challenging with a newborn.
- **Seek Support:** Utilize support systems. Family, friends, childcare, as well as public resources such as the Maternal Mental Health Hotline (1-833-TLC-MAMA), a nationwide resource for new and expectant mothers.
- **Recognize Anxiety vs. Normal Concern:** Take a step back and ask yourself if you're being a concerned, detail-oriented parent or experiencing consuming anxiety or worry.
- **Telehealth Opportunities:** There is expanded telehealth capacity in many areas that can provide new avenues for mental health support. This can be especially helpful for isolated perinatal women.

- **Stigma Reduction:** Having open conversations about mental health is helpful to decrease the stigma associated with mental health issues.
- **Policy Changes:** Health organizations like ACOG and the HRSA are increasingly focused on better screening and comprehensive postpartum care guidelines to identify and treat quickly. These changes have led to extended Medicaid postpartum coverage for 12 months. These efforts are to helping to decrease the maternal morbidity and mortality rate.



If you feel like you or someone you know is suffering from Perinatal Mental Health issues, please reach out or encourage them to reach out to their healthcare provider or a hotline for assistance.

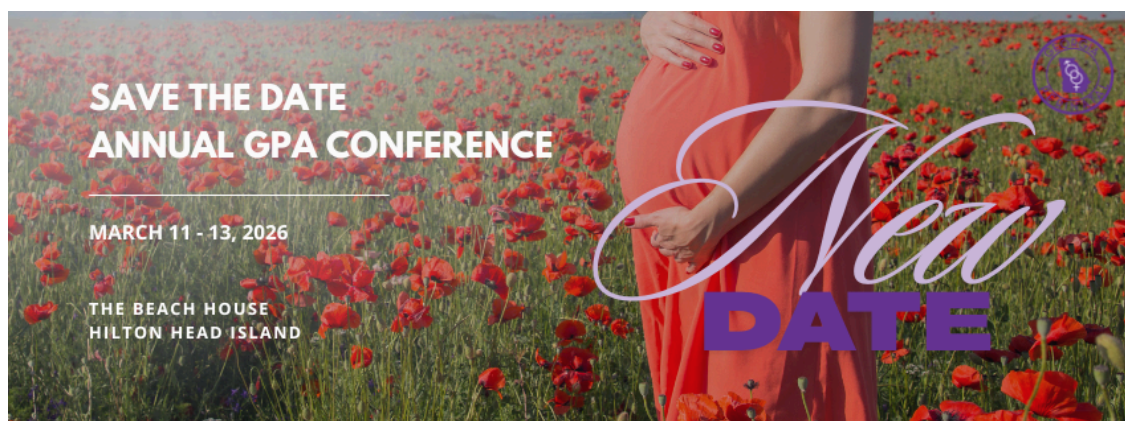
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline | 1-(800)-273-8255
- National Maternal Mental Health Hotline | 1-(833)-852-6262
- National Crisis Text Line | Text HOME to 741741
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline | Call 988
- Georgia Crisis & Access Line (GCAL) | 1-(800)-715-4225



If you would like more information, there are a variety of events and resources related to perinatal health, including webinars on mental health (e.g., December 11, 2025 webinar on maternal mental health from the American Public Health Association and [December 16th webinar from PNQINMA](#)), publications from December 2023 on topics like public health approaches to perinatal substance use ([Maternal and Child Health Journal special issue](#)), and discussions about maternal mortality and improving maternal mental health care, including the disparities that exist.

- December 11, 2025: "[Perinatal Mental Health 101](#)" webinar hosted by the Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health and presented by Postpartum Support International.
- December 16, 2025: "Perinatal Mental Health Conditions Bundle Webinar Series" webinar.
- The [Commonwealth Fund](#) highlighted actions taken in December 2024 to improve maternal and infant health, including bipartisan legislation and extended postpartum coverage.
- The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) released data in December 2023 on perinatal mortality trends in the United States.
- Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies resource list
<https://www.hmhbga.org/perinatal-mental-health>

2026 ANNUAL GPA CONFERENCE



Join us for the GPA 38th Annual Conference “Sun, Sand, and Support: Rejuvenating Perinatal Health”

We are pleased to announce that the new date for the conference is:

- **Location:** The Beach House, 1 S. Forest Beach Dr, Hilton Head Island, SC 29928
- **Dates:** Wednesday, March 11, 2026 – Friday, March 13, 2026
- **Theme:** Sun, Sand, and Support: Rejuvenating Perinatal Health

We look forward to welcoming you in March 2026. Whether you're here to learn, network, or celebrate milestones, the GPA Annual Conference is where the future is shaped — and we want you to be part of it. Thank you,

The GPA Conference Team

Topics you will hear about at the conference:

- Pre-Conference: Maternal & Neonatal Simulation Workshop: Advancing Perinatal Care Through Practice
- Individuals with Lived Experiences
- Real Life Gestational Diabetes
- Holding Joy and Fear: Supporting Pregnancy & Postpartum After Infertility
- Newborn Screening and Congenital CMV updates
- Transitions from hospital to home: Embedding Developmental Science into Everyday Activities
- Limits of Viability
- Perinatal Home Partnership Program
- RSV Prevention
- Maternal and Neonatal Escape Rooms



MARCH 11 - 13, 2026

Conference Agenda

**WEDNESDAY
MARCH 11**

11AM - 3PM

Registration and Check-in

Location: Sand and Surf Ballroom Entrance

1PM - 3PM

Pre-Conference: Maternal & Neonatal Simulation Workshop: Advancing Perinatal Care Through Practice

Rachel Wright, MSN, RNC, Jennifer Boland, MSN, RNC, Heather Wyrick, MSN, RNC, Jennifer Butler, BSN, RNC

Location: Sand and Surf Ballroom

3:45PM - 4PM

Welcome

Heather Wyrick, President GPA and Jennifer Boland, Conference Chair

Location: Sand and Surf Ballroom

4PM - 5PM

DPH Home Visiting Program

Christina Tice, CNM

Location: Sand and Surf Ballroom

5PM - 6PM

Transitions from hospital to home: Embedding Developmental Science into Everyday Activities

Kathi Frankel, BS, MS, NIDCAP, NBAS

Location: Sand and Surf Ballroom

6PM - 8PM

Welcome Reception

Location: Sky Room and Deck

GPA 38TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE AGENDA

Sun, Sand, and Support: Rejuvenating Perinatal Health





MARCH 11 - 13, 2026

Conference Agenda

**THURSDAY
MARCH 12**

7:30AM - 8:30AM
Continental Breakfast Networking
Location: Sky Room and Deck

8:30AM - 9:30AM
Vaccination in Pregnancy and Beyond
Terianne Wong, Ph.D, M.S.
Location: Sand and Surf Ballroom

9:30AM - 10:30AM
What's new in Newborn Screening
Angela Wittenauer, RN
Location: Sand and Surf Ballroom

10:30AM - 11AM
Break with Exhibitors
Location: Sky Room

11AM - 12PM
Severe Maternal Mortality
Kristina Lam, MD, MPH
Location: Sand and Surf Ballroom

12PM - 1PM
Real Life Gestational Diabetes
Jessica Adkins, DNP, CNS, CPNP-PC, BC-ADM
Location: Sand and Surf Ballroom

1PM - 2PM
Luncheon
Location: The Dunes Pavilion

GPA 38TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE AGENDA
Sun, Sand, and Support: Rejuvenating Perinatal Health





MARCH 11 - 13, 2026

Conference Agenda

**FRIDAY
MARCH 13**

7:30AM - 8:30AM

Networking Breakfast

Location: The Sand and Surf Pre-Function

8:30AM - 9:30AM

Limits of Viability

Benjamin Mackowiak, MD

Location: Sand and Surf Ballroom

9:30AM - 10:30AM

Understanding Georgia's Maternal Mortality Review: Sharing "her" story

Sarah Owens, CNM, MPH

Location: Sand and Surf Ballroom

10:30AM - 11AM

Break

Location: Sky Room

11AM - 12PM

Enhancing Staff Education

Heather Wyrick, MSN, RNC

Location: Sand and Surf Ballroom

12PM - 1PM

Maternal and Neonatal Escape Rooms

Rachel Wright, MSN, RNC - Jennifer Boland, MSN, RNC - Heather Wyrick, MSN, RNC

Location: Sand and Surf Ballroom

1PM - 1:30PM

Evaluations and Closing

Heather Wyrick, President GPA and Jennifer Boland, Conference Chair

Location: Sand and Surf Ballroom

GPA 38TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE AGENDA

Sun, Sand, and Support: Rejuvenating Perinatal Health

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MORE INFORMATION AVAILABLE [HERE](#)

Call for Abstracts

1st Annual Poster Presentation

Calling for Abstracts for Poster Presentations to be presented at
Georgia Perinatal Association Annual Conference and Meeting
March 11-13, 2026 in Hilton Head, SC.

*Presentations should be focused on improving Maternal and Infant health in Georgia.
Our membership works to promote perinatal health through education,
collaboration, and influence of state public policy.*

Entries are open to Students in Educational Programs including:

Nursing, Social Work, Medicine, Advanced Practice Providers.

Abstracts should be sent to
georgiaperinatalassociation@gmail.com
Subject: Poster Presentation 2025

Accepted Abstracts will be entered to win a \$500 Scholarship.

Deadline for Entry Jan 30, 2026.



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