

EMPOWERED

PROACTIVELY ADDRESSING OPIOID USE AMONG PREGNANT WOMEN

As the opioid epidemic grips our nation, St. Rose volunteers tenderly cradle its youngest sufferers – the babies born dependent on the substances their mothers used during pregnancy. This cuddly form of humankindness is just one feature of St. Rose’s grant-funded **EMPOWERED** (*Empower Mothers for Positive Outcomes with Education, Recovery and Early Development*) program.

Babies born to opioid addicted mothers may experience neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) characterized by withdrawal symptoms such as tremors, seizures, problems sleeping, irritability, and weight loss. The Baby Cuddler program provides NAS babies the comfort and security they need to recover and thrive.

According to Holly Lyman, Director of Community Outreach, St. Rose’s doctors, pharmacists and community health educators designed EMPOWERED to positively impact the lives of opioid addicted pregnant women and their babies. “Our aim is to help pregnant mothers and their babies achieve healthy, addiction-free futures,” says

Holly. By collaborating with the St. Rose Dominican Health Foundation, the EMPOWERED program team secured a \$356,000 Nevada State Targeted Response Grant to launch the program.

EMPOWERED offers pregnant women who test positive for opioid or other substance usage – and who accept help – access to mental health services and St. Rose’s Outreach Centers array of offerings: group peer support, WIC, lactation support, parenting classes, and NAS education. After birth, babies born at St. Rose are provided neonatal intensive care including cuddling. Once they leave the hospital, they are monitored by a physician and receive physical, occupational and speech therapy assessments at their first, third and sixth months.

A 2016 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study of 28 states found on average, six in 1,000 babies were born with NAS in 2013, up from 1.5 in 1,000 in 1999. Nevada’s rate at the time was 4.8 in 1,000 babies born addicted.

To support the EMPOWERED program, please call 702-616-5750 to make a gift or request more information.



ST. ROSE LEADS STATE'S POSTPARTUM SUPPORT SERVICES

Last year, St. Rose, manager of the grant-funded Nevada Statewide Maternal Child and Health Coalition, provided postpartum mood and anxiety disorder (PMAD) recognition and response training to more than 500 health professionals statewide to ensure those affected are identified for treatment and support services.

Welcoming a baby is a blessed occasion that is expected to be blissful. Quick cases of the “baby blues” are often anticipated, but PMAD symptoms such as depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress can occur up to two years after giving birth. In fact, PMAD, including postpartum depression, is the leading complication of childbirth, affecting 1 in 7 women with higher rates experienced among women of low socioeconomic status. What's more, fathers are also susceptible to PMAD.

To ensure those affected are identified for treatment and support, St. Rose surrounds expectant and new parents with support through PMAD awareness discussions during childbirth classes, hospital tours, and community outreach presentations. After baby is born, PMAD parents have access to one-on-one therapeutic counseling services and telephone support, co-facilitated Mommy Mixers and PMAD support groups at St. Rose's three Community Wellness Centers. Support groups are shown to alleviate the PMAD parent's feelings of guilt, shame, and isolation; reduce the stigma and risk factors of the disorder; and, encourage healthy bonding with baby.

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT: ONE MOM'S GLOWING REPORT

Hopeless and helpless. When you suffer from perinatal mood and anxiety disorder (PMAD), you feel both. You want a baby but do not expect this additional dark stranger. It makes each day a struggle to take care of your family.

I'd beaten PMAD before, but after my second baby, it engulfed me. I tried medications, weekly therapy and finally called Postpartum Support International at my breaking point. They gave me Jacqueline Kennedy's name at St. Rose Dominican hospitals. Her voice was soothing and compassionate, and she told me about a new support group. That gave me hope!

I left my first support group gathering feeling like I was no longer alone in this darkness. Others felt what I was feeling. They helped me find the light. A year later, I attended St. Rose's Afterglow PMAD training to help the facilitator, Alicia Mattera, strengthen the support group. I was moved to see the room filled with people concerned about the crisis of losing mothers, children, and families to PMAD. Help, support, and education can end the stigma of this real, dark battle.

With St. Rose's support, my PMAD journey has taught me a great deal about myself and others. I now have an amazing Mama Tribe and a passion to help others through the darkness.

– Christina (pictured left)



Please Support PMAD Intervention. St. Rose is receiving ever increasing requests for PMAD therapy and support. We are expanding our PMAD efforts and opening new Community Wellness Centers at our four neighborhood hospitals to offer health education and outreach services valley wide. Your support of the program and our new centers can make a difference in a young family's future. Call 702-616-5750 or visit supportstrose.org to make a gift or request more information.