

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2004 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 844

(Delegate Feldman, *et al.*)

Health and Government Operations

Finance

Hospitals and Health Care Facilities - Maternity Patients – Providing
Information about Postpartum Depression

This bill requires hospitals or health care facilities that provide maternity and obstetrical services to provide written information about postpartum depression to a maternity patient before the patient's discharge. Failure to meet the bill's requirements may not create a private right of action.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill would not directly affect governmental operations or finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Hospitals are required to provide a variety of educational information to patients such as: (1) a copy of the Patient's Bill of Rights; (2) information on mammograms; and (3) HIV testing information to pregnant women. Existing statute and regulations do not require notification regarding postpartum depression to maternity patients.

Background: The National Mental Health Association reports that up to 80% of new mothers develop postpartum "blues," typified by mood swings, within three to five days after delivery. The "blues" are caused by the hormonal fluctuations occurring during and

immediately after a child is born and subside when the hormonal levels stabilize. The mood swings generally last for up to a few weeks.

Between 10% and 20% of new mothers develop postpartum depression, which has all the symptoms of clinical depression. A woman can develop postpartum depression any time after delivery and it usually lasts for one year. Symptoms include dramatic changes in motivation, appetite, or mood and may include excessive preoccupation with the baby's health or thoughts of harming the baby. Postpartum depression may be caused by hormonal changes in the woman's body, the stress of childbirth and of any other major event that happens around childbirth, and the stress of being a new mother.

Antidepressant medication and counseling with a trained therapist may be used to treat postpartum depression. Talking with support groups and friends, exercising, maintaining good nutrition, and avoiding caffeine also aid in recovery.

The National Mental Health Association recommends physicians screen women to determine their risk for developing postpartum depression.

State Fiscal Effect: The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) reports that it already produces a maternal depression pamphlet which is sent to providers upon request. DHMH estimates that, as a result of this bill, an additional 30,000 pamphlets might be requested per year and distributed to 16 facilities. Any costs for DHMH to provide these pamphlets to the hospitals could be absorbed within existing resources. Regardless, the bill does not require DHMH to provide these pamphlets to the hospitals.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, National Mental Health Association, Department of Legislative Services

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