

MATER: Innovative Programs for Maternal Addiction Education Treatment and Research

Opioid dependence among pregnant women is a pressing public health issue. It is estimated that of the 4% of pregnant women who report using non-prescription drugs prenatally, opioids rank second, following marijuana, as the drug most commonly used.¹ Mothers with opioid use disorder face a multitude of barriers to their recovery and successful parenting, including unemployment, incarceration, and physical and mental health problems.² The response to the opioid use epidemic has been focused towards prevention, medications to combat overdose, and medication and non-medication assisted treatment of the substance use disorders.

Within the Jefferson Health system, treatment efforts extend to the past 40 years. During the 1960's, women with opioid dependence largely avoided prenatal care for fear their child would be taken away from them. As a result of the growing need, and lack of services to treat infants and mothers affected by opioid dependence, Loretta Finnegan MD, a neonatologist at Philadelphia General Hospital, established the Family Center outpatient clinic in the early 1970's, through grant funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the state and city. The clinic noted a decrease in premature delivery from 48% (prior to Family Center inception) to 18% in just a few years. In 1976, Family Center moved from Philadelphia General Hospital to Thomas Jefferson University Hospital. A decade and a half later, My Sisters Place, a comprehensive, medically monitored short- and long-term residential treatment program, was established by Karol Kaltenbach, PhD through a NIDA demonstration project grant.

Both Family Center and My Sisters Place were established to meet the continuously growing need for services for mothers with opioid dependence. They are both integrated services of the Division of MATER (Maternal Addiction Treatment Education and Research), a division of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University. Diane J. Abatemarco, PhD, MSW is the Director of MATER, and has a significant academic research agenda for this vulnerable population. MATER has a history of serving as a national and international model opioid treatment center and is supported by federal, state, city funds, and private foundations.

Women enter these programs via several referral routes. Currently, the most common referral route is through the emergency department at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital. Pregnant women with opioid use disorder present at the emergency room and are admitted for inpatient stabilization on methadone over several days. A nurse and peer specialist from MATER meet with women being stabilized to assess their need for either outpatient or residential treatment and begin the intake process to the appropriate program. MATER also receives referrals from other treatment programs, the criminal justice system, and Philadelphia's extensive network of crisis response centers. To be admitted to our programs, women must be at least 18 years old, pregnant or parenting, and meet the Pennsylvania Client Placement Criteria for one of the levels of treatment offered for substance use disorders. Women who meet criteria for outpatient or intensive outpatient treatment are inducted into Family Center, and women who meet

criteria for short- or long-term medically monitored residential treatment go to My Sister's Place. Payment for services at Family Center or My Sister's Place are covered by Medical Assistance plans and sliding fee scales are available.

Family Center is a comprehensive women-centered outpatient treatment program for women with substance use disorders who are pregnant, parenting, or working towards reunification with their child. The program is licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs to provide methadone and buprenorphine medication assisted treatment (MAT) as well as drug-free treatment. All women at Family Center receive comprehensive psychological and medical services including: individual, group, and family psychotherapy, psychiatric care, 12-step meetings, methadone anonymous meetings, nutrition education, mindfulness-based stress reduction, peer support from a certified peer specialist, case management including coordination of prenatal care and pediatric care, smoking cessation assistance, HIV testing and counseling referral, parenting education, parent-child activities, child care and education, child developmental screening and referral, and art therapy. While the majority of admissions to Family Center are pregnant women, all women are welcome to receive Family Center's care after the end of their pregnancy; some women transfer to clinics closer to their homes or leave treatment altogether.

My Sister's Place is a medically monitored short- and long-term residential treatment program serving up to 22 mothers. Women typically receive treatment at My Sister's Place for 6 months to one year,

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depending on their progress. Women may bring up to three of their children aged 0-6 years to reside at My Sister's Place. The number of children admitted is determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on space available. Women receiving treatment at My Sister's Place receive the same range of comprehensive services as women in outpatient treatment at Family Center, provided for more hours per week and at lower client-to-staff ratios. Women at My Sister's Place also receive daily living skills training, financial management assistance, medication management, and on-site early intervention services for children. Women are referred off-site for GED, literacy, and vocational training. When women no longer require the intensive treatment that the residential clinic provides, they may transition to Family Center's outpatient care or to other programs in the city.

Considering the public health impact of the opioid epidemic, MATER is in a unique position as it is also the site for a growing research portfolio. The Division is currently the site for a federally funded grant by the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Children's Bureau entitled, "Practicing Safety Mindfulness Project for Mothers in

Drug Treatment." This grant aims to prevent the toxic stress imparted on the developing child that is often seen in families with substance use issues. The components of this grant include: 1) a Mindfulness-Based Parenting Intervention for mothers at Family Center, which was recently nominated for an innovation award by the [Scattergood Foundation](#), 2) a quality improvement aspect entitled "Practicing Safety" at Jefferson Pediatric clinic, and 3) enhanced case management between the social worker at Jefferson Pediatric clinic and the case manager at Family Center. Outcomes level data for this grant include: examining the impact of the intervention on parenting; parenting stress; mindfulness; child wellness visits; and adherence and timeliness of pediatric immunizations. MATER research includes the impact of a mindfulness-based childbirth intervention on preterm birth, interventions targeting tobacco cessation, as well as epidemiologic analyses on neonatal abstinence syndrome. MATER is also conducting research developing novel behavioral interventions to reduce use of tobacco and illicit drugs among pregnant, methadone-maintained women.

MATER continues to evolve and adapt to the population it services, honoring the women and their commitment and journey

to recovery through its outpatient and residential services, as well as its research. It has been internationally recognized as a premier treatment model due to the founding leadership and decades of work of Drs. Finnegan and Kaltenbach. With Dr. Abatemarco's leadership, MATER is poised to expand mindfulness throughout its treatment approaches with its clients, continue to evaluate and improve the services it offers, and grow its research feeding back results to the research community and the mothers it serves.

For more information on MATER, contact Diane J. Abatemarco, PhD, MSW at Diane.Abatemarco@Jefferson.edu. For more information on the "Practicing Safety Mindfulness Project for Mothers in Drug Treatment", please contact the author at Meghan.Gannon@Jefferson.edu.

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