Maternal health plays a key role in the healthy development of a child at every stage. Mothers need to be healthy, have access to the care and services they need, and have the necessary resources to meet basic needs throughout their pregnancy, birth, and after welcoming a new child.

Postpartum depression is a common condition in which new mothers, within the weeks and months after giving birth, feel sad, hopeless, and have little interest in doing things they once enjoyed. More severe than the “Baby Blues”, this condition often interferes with daily activities and caring for the baby and, if left untreated, can cause problems sleeping and eating. Maternal depression also impacts the baby, including early brain development and behavioral health conditions later in life.

Maternal Mortality in the Commonwealth:

In Kentucky, over 90% of maternal deaths are considered preventable and more than 25% have mental health conditions as a contributing factor. State data highlights disparities among the cases of maternal mortality with the rate among Black women more than doubling that of White women. Social factors, such as income and access to quality health care, also place Black women at increased risk for experiencing postpartum depression. Improving access to necessary care and responsiveness of providers can help address the disproportionate rate of Black mothers dying within one year of giving birth.

Blueprint for Kentucky’s Children Policy Solution:
Support maternal mental health by requiring postpartum depression screenings at appointments after birth

At least 1 in 8 women experience postpartum depression, but it is often undiagnosed and underreported.

Effectively treating and managing maternal depression starts with identifying the problem and can have long-term impacts for both mother and baby. Supporting a mother’s mental health during the early stages of a child’s life supports healthy development and mental health for children in years to come.