

Southcoast Health set to expand maternity support program with MA grant

The Massachusetts Health Policy Commission (HPC) has approved an award of up to \$287,541 for Southcoast Health as part of the Cost-Effective Coordinated Care for Caregivers and Substance Exposed Newborns (C4SEN) Investment program.

The HPC awarded \$1.46 million across five hospitals statewide for the C4SEN program, the goal of which is to improve quality, efficiency and access to care for substance-exposed newborns (SEN) and their caregivers.

“On behalf of Southcoast Health and the South Coast region, I offer our great thanks to the HPC,” said Southcoast Health President and CEO Keith Hovan. “This grant is the latest example of how much this vital agency contributes to the health and well-being of all residents of the Commonwealth. Southcoast is profoundly grateful for the HPC’s support in our collective efforts to ensure that the communities we serve have equitable access and opportunity, regardless of individual circumstances.”

This HPC grant will help Southcoast Health expand New Beginnings, founded in 2016, which provides prenatal and postpartum support to substance-exposed newborns and mothers planning to deliver at Charlton Memorial or St. Luke’s to improve long-term outcomes in the region, according to officials at the not-for-profit community health system.

“It was a competitive selection process, so we’re honored and excited that the HPC has decided to work with us and help us expand our program,” said Southcoast Health Director of Community Benefits Rachel Davis. “These are funds that enable us to hire a Community Outreach Specialist who can work

individually with moms and strengthen relationships with the external programs patients are referred to.”

Lauren Sousa, RN, Southcoast Health Postpartum Care Coordinator, agreed.

“One of our main goals is to connect mom with the services that both she and her family need to succeed, and the HPC grant will help make this process even more effective,” Sousa said. “This includes not only recovery services, but also her wellness visits, postpartum care with her OB-GYN, her baby’s well visit, early intervention and referrals to any resources she needs to address social determinants of health.”

Secondary to the high rates of Opioid Use Disorder, state data from recent years show that areas of southeastern Massachusetts have the second-highest percentage of opioid exposure during pregnancy in the Commonwealth.

The New Beginnings Program accepts mothers as early as possible in their pregnancy. Prenatal care includes an introduction to the program, assistance developing a plan of safe care, education about Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) and information on what to expect at delivery.

After delivery, the program works with mothers on a personalized plan of care, offering additional support and referrals to services they may need. The program plans to incorporate postpartum depression and domestic violence screenings as part of this care in the coming months. Focused on the success of both mother and baby, the program is a critical resource, offering 18 meetings with mothers throughout the first year postpartum.

“Connecting with moms earlier in their pregnancy has an increased success rate at keeping moms with their babies,” Sousa said.

In the past year, the New Beginnings Program – also made

possible by the generosity of the Anthony F. Cordeiro Charitable Foundation, The Carney Family Charitable Foundation, The Island Foundation, and The Robert F. Stoico/FIRSTFED Charitable Foundation – has helped 130 babies and provided postpartum care to 87 mothers, Southcoast officials said.

To learn more about the New Beginnings program, visit <https://www.southcoast.org/community-benefits/new-beginnings/>.