Presented by Michelle “Mickie” Loucraft, LPC, PMH-C

EXPLORING SPECIALIZATIONS IN PERINATAL AND INFANT MENTAL HEALTH FOR COUNSELORS: UNDERSTANDING CAREER PATHS, TRAINING, AND CLINICAL OPPORTUNITIES.

OBJECTIVES

1. Define core concepts in perinatal and infant mental health relevant to counseling practice.
2. Identify common mental health concerns affecting parents and infants and how these specialties overlap.
3. Acknowledge complex situations related to perinatal mental health care that may evoke strong political perspectives and how they impact the counseling profession.
4. Gain understanding of initiatives and policy work in Connecticut to support perinatal/infant mental health work
5. Explore specialization pathways and training opportunities.

A LITTLE ABOUT ME

LPC, Adjunct Professor and PhD Candidate

Advanced Trauma-Informed Counseling certified

Perinatal Mental Health Certified

Trained in Infant Mental Health and Attachment (currently working on endorsement)

Trained in Adlerian Play Therapy (working towards RPT)

Mum to 4 adult children

Nana to 9 grandchildren

Reading, karaoke, camping, hiking, working out, and prayer/meditation

The Perinatal period is typically defined as:

a) Conception through six months postpartum

b) Conception through the first year postpartum, sometimes extending to 2-3 years

c) Pregnancy only

d) The first three months postpartum

WHAT IS PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH?

- Around (peri) birth (natal)
- Conception (start of birth) ---------->> up to 1 year after birth
- PMADs
- Brief history of perinatal mental health
  - Hippocrates 460BCE
  - Louise Victor Marce 1858
  - Next 150 years – wax and wane
  - DSM 1994 “postpartum depression” as onset
- Beyond “Baby Blues”
- More than postpartum depression
- PMADs = anxiety, ocd, depression, mood disorders (bipolar), and psychosis

750,000

PERINATAL PERSONS IN THE UNITED STATES HAD TO SEEK MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION IN 2015 AS REPORTED BY THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

https://policycentermmh.org/state-report-cards/#viewreportcard

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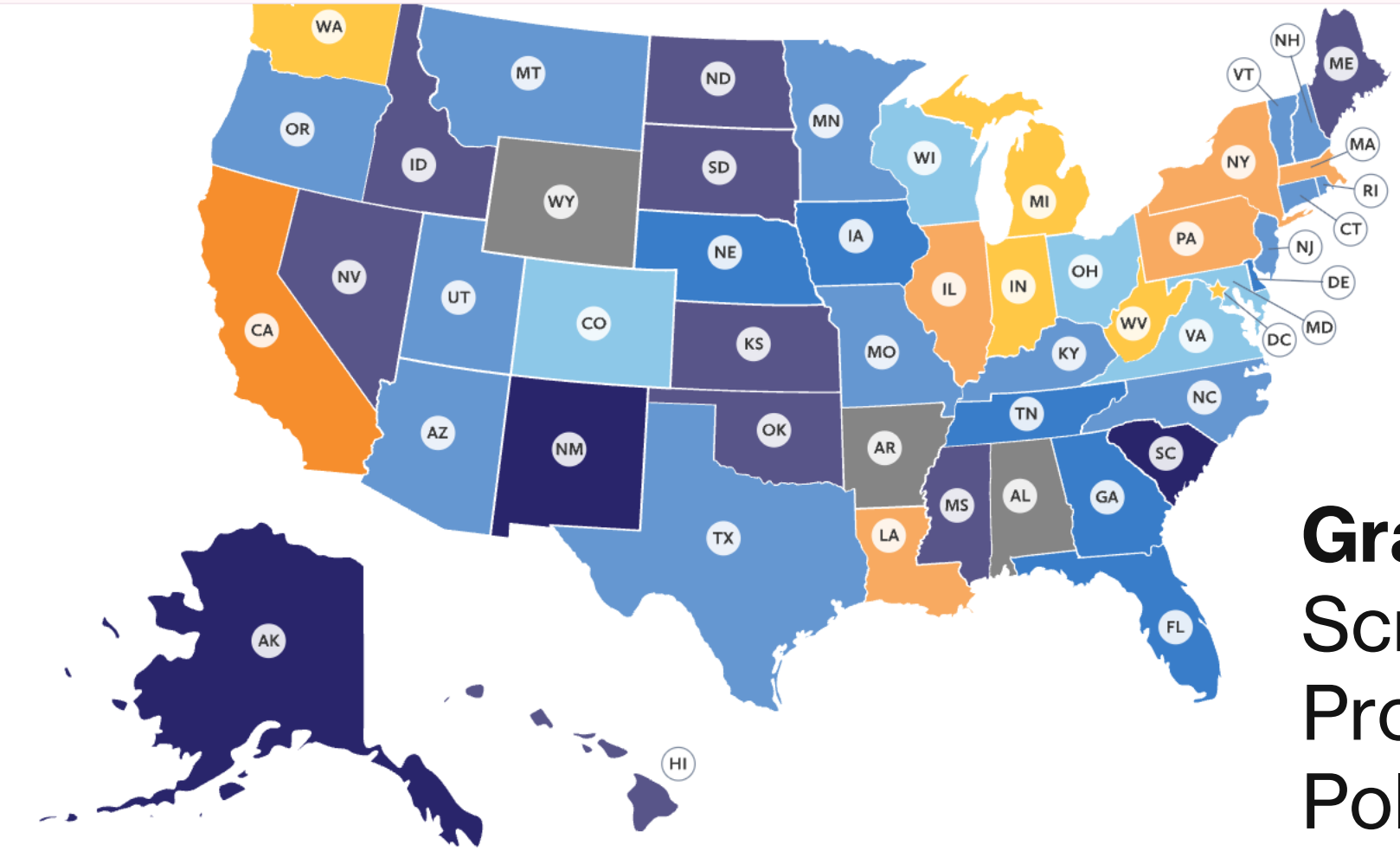
2026 Maternal Mental Health State Report Card

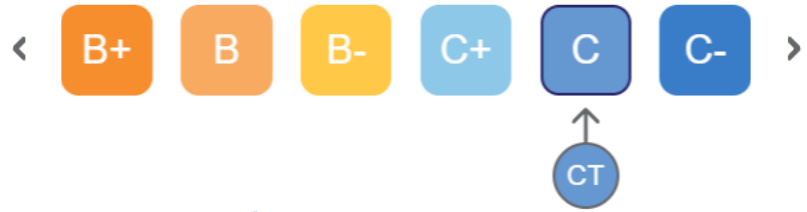
The US is failing to adequately support Maternal Mental Health:

National Grade of **C**

The U.S. earned an **F** in the new "Parental Support " Domain

No states earned As





Connecticut - 2026 Report Card

Grading Domains:

Screening & Detection

Providers & Treatment

Policy & Payment

Parental Support

Top performer on the HEDIS "postpartum

WHY THE UNDERDIAGNOSIS OF PMADS?

- Symptoms can present differently
- Social stigma
- Lack of screening

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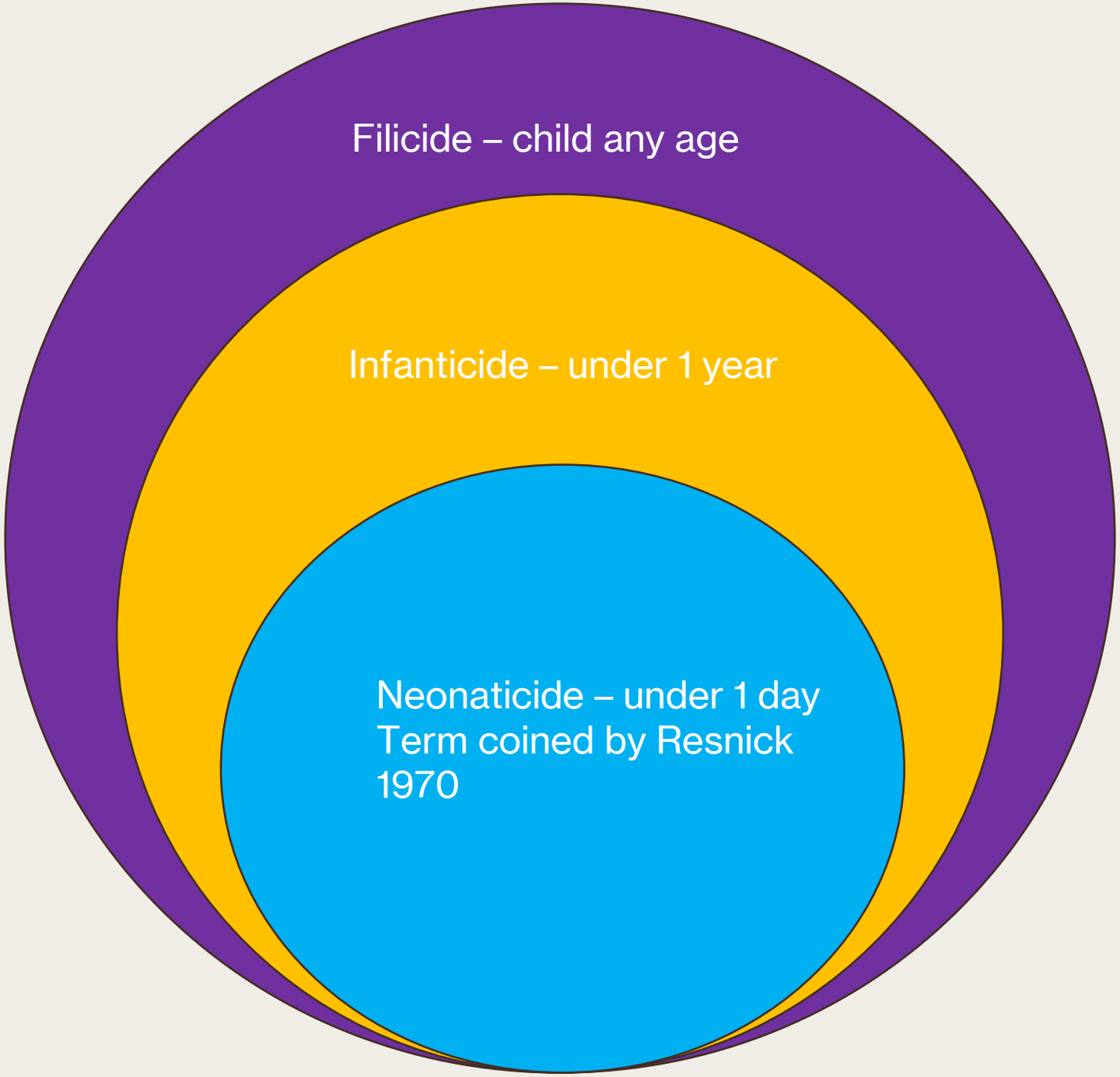
PREVALENCE OF PMADs

1:5-7 Women
1:10 Men

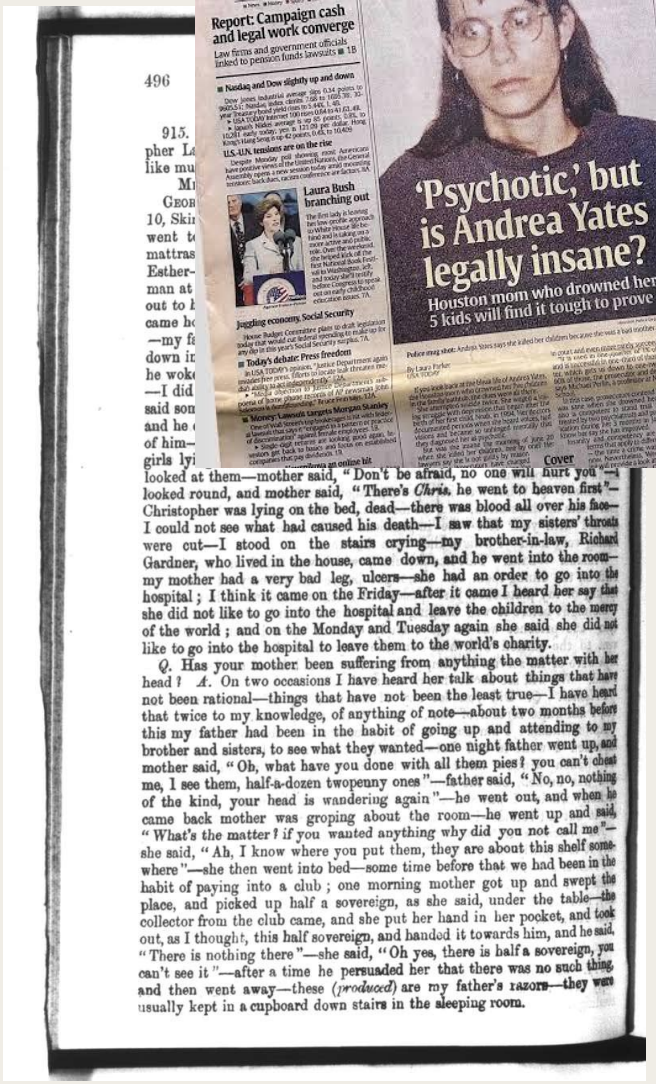
1:2 in 1,000 postpartum women will develop perinatal psychosis

5% will die by suicide
4.5% will commit infanticide

50% no prior hx
-onset usually within the 1st 2 weeks after birth


Filicide – child any age
Infanticide – under 1 year
Neonaticide – under 1 day
Term coined by Resnick
1970

(West, 2007)



looked at them—mother said, "Don't be afraid, no one will hurt you"—I looked round, and mother said, "There's *Chris*, he went to heaven first"—Christopher was lying on the bed, dead—there was blood all over his face—I could not see what had caused his death—I saw that my sisters' throats were cut—I stood on the stairs crying—my brother-in-law, Richard Gardner, who lived in the house, came down, and he went into the room—my mother had a very bad leg, ulcers—she had an order to go into the hospital; I think it came on the Friday—after it came I heard her say that she did not like to go into the hospital and leave the children to the mercy of the world; and on the Monday and Tuesday again she said she did not like to go into the hospital to leave them to the world's charity.

Q. Has your mother been suffering from anything the matter with her head? *A.* On two occasions I have heard her talk about things that have not been rational—things that have not been the least true—I have heard that twice to my knowledge, of anything of note—about two months before this my father had been in the habit of going up and attending to my brother and sisters, to see what they wanted—one night father went up, and mother said, "Oh, what have you done with all them pies? you can't cheat me, I see them, half-a-dozen twopenny ones"—father said, "No, no, nothing of the kind, your head is wandering again"—he went out, and when he came back mother was groping about the room—he went up and said, "What's the matter? if you wanted anything why did you not call me"—she said, "Ah, I know where you put them, they are about this shelf somewhere"—she then went into bed—some time before that we had been in the habit of paying into a club; one morning mother got up and swept the place, and picked up half a sovereign, as she said, under the table—the collector from the club came, and she put her hand in her pocket, and took out, as I thought, this half sovereign, and handed it towards him, and he said, "There is nothing there"—she said, "Oh yes, there is half a sovereign, you can't see it"—after a time he persuaded her that there was no such thing, and then went away—these (*produced*) are my father's razors—they were usually kept in a cupboard down stairs in the sleeping room.

MOTHER CHARGED WITH MURDER

VERDICT OF "GUILTY BUT INSANE"

Before Mr. Justice Macnaghten at the Central Criminal Court yesterday MARGUERITA MCNICHOLL, 32, a married woman, of Gledwood Drive, Hayes, Middlesex, was found *Guilty* but insane on an indictment charging her with the murder of her infant son, Colin McNicholl, aged 3½ months. She pleaded "Not Guilty."

The JUDGE directed that she should be detained during his Majesty's pleasure.

Mr. Maxwell Turner prosecuted, and Mr.

Viewers keep seats as Downs' trial starts

By DANA TIMS
Correspondent, The Oregonian

EUGENE — Elizabeth Diane Downs walked confidently through a gauntlet of television cameras Tuesday, nodding and smiling at reporters she has gotten to know in the troubled 12 months since one of her children was killed and two others shot.

Downs, 28 and seven months pregnant, is no stranger to television lights. Representatives of six TV stations, from Portland and Eugene, were on hand as she walked along a passageway into the Lane County Courthouse after she was brought from the county jail.

The trial, which got under way Tuesday, is expected to be among the most unusual in Lane County's judicial history. Downs is charged with one count of murder, two of attempted murder and assault.

Cheryl Lynn Downs, 7, was shot and killed during a nighttime attack last May 19 on a deserted road northeast of Springfield.

Christie Ann Downs, 9, and Stephen Daniel "Danny" Downs, 4, were wounded in the incident, with Christie now recovered to the point where she is expected to play a key role in testifying for the prosecution against her mother. Elizabeth Downs sustained a single gunshot wound to the left forearm; she says a shaggy-haired stranger attacked them while trying to commandeer her car.

Upstairs in Circuit Court Judge Gregory G. Foote's courtroom, more than 35 people jammed into the benches not reserved for prospective jurors. Spectators, who included three artists in the front row and at least 10 reporters representing statewide TV and radio stations and newspapers, elected to pass up taking advantage of morning and afternoon recesses for fear of losing their seats.

Seattle author Ann Rule, who has signed a $250,000 contract to write a 400-page book on the trial for Signet Books, was not present as court opened, but plans to be here after a book promotion tour.

Not in court but expected to cover in person portions of the trial are news organizations including the Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, two Seattle newspapers, Reuters of London, United Press International and The Associated Press.

Not surprisingly, that kind of exposure has added an extra edge to a trial already considered rife with legal dilemmas.

Foote, who is presiding over his first murder trial after spending most of his Circuit Court time as a juvenile court judge, called a meeting with local news representatives two weeks ago to discuss his concerns about coverage of Downs' pretrial evidence hearing. He remains concerned about trial coverage, particularly since Christie Downs will be on the stand for the prosecution.

"My main concern is that I don't want publicity to adversely affect this trial," Foote said. "I don't mind having the press cover this as long as they don't involve themselves."

All eight Lane County circuit judges called another media meeting last week, during which the Downs trial became a prime topic. A majority of the judges expressed concern that a jury viewing of the murder scene on Old Mohawk Road could be obstructed by media coverage, especially if cameras photograph individual jurors.

Foote said sheriff department's members have talked of blocking off the entire road to prohibit cameras, while the district attorney's office has discussed staging the viewing at night to approximate the conditions on the road the night of the shooting incident.

"We are going to be concerned all the way through the trial that jurors are not made privy to information that they are not to suppose to have," Foote said. "What we will do to ensure that, I don't know yet. We will just have to see what comes along."

Regardless of any eventual precautions, the case has already attracted enough attention, much of it national, to ensure a thorough coverage throughout its expected four to seven weeks.

"The amount and frequency of the coverage on this has made it one of the most bizarre Oregon court cases in a long time," said Eric C. Mason, Portland's KOIN-TV's mid-Willamette Valley bureau reporter. "Having a 9-year-old testifying against her mother should be a highlight, as well as the jury viewing of the murder scene."

Bob Valdez, a reporter for Eugene's KUGN radio, said a recent vacation to Seattle revealed that "everyone up there knows about this and is interested in the outcome. I was surprised at the notoriety this case has gotten."

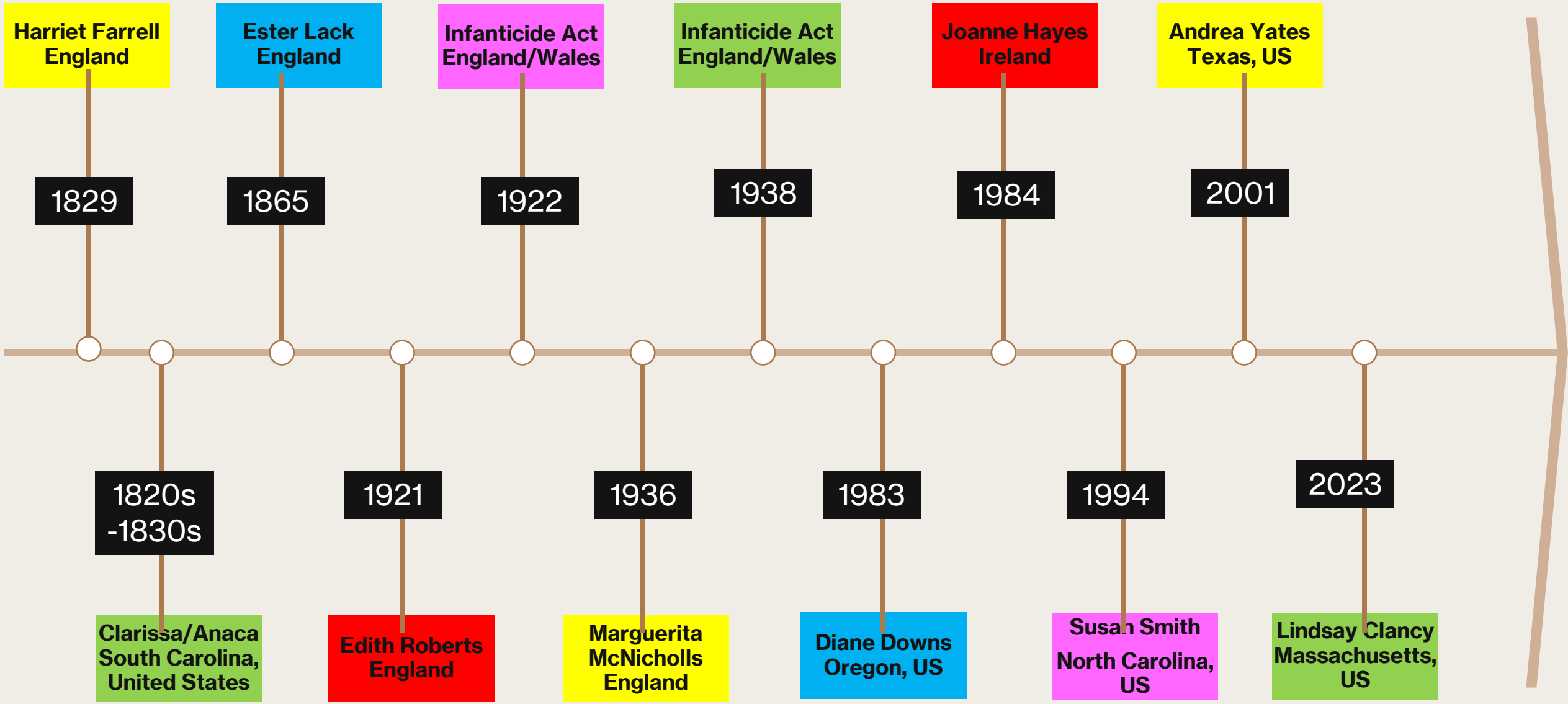
Sandy G. Poole, a reporter for Portland's KATU-TV, said she has already been to Eugene at least five times to cover aspects of the case.

"It took so long to indict her (until Feb. 28) that the whole thing has grown incredibly ominous," Poole said during a court recess. "It's obvious there are a lot of eyes and ears turned this way."

FIRST DAY IN COURT — Elizabeth Diane Downs is led in handcuffs into the Lane County Courthouse on the first day of her trial on accusations that she shot her three children, one fatally. Her case has attracted widespread attention, as evidenced by the television cameras that followed her.

The Oregonian/ CLAUDIA J. HOWELL

11/2/2026


Harriet Farrell England
1829
Ester Lack England
1865
Infanticide Act England/Wales
1922
Infanticide Act England/Wales
1938
Joanne Hayes Ireland
1984
Andrea Yates Texas, US
2001
1820s -1830s
Clarissa/Anaca South Carolina, United States
1921
Edith Roberts England
1936
Marguerita McNicholls England
1983
Diane Downs Oregon, US
1994
Susan Smith North Carolina, US
2023
Lindsay Clancy Massachusetts, US

WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL SKILLS OF A PERINATAL HEALTH SPECIALIST?

Assessment and Diagnosis

Specialized Techniques

Screening and Risk Assessment

- **Beyond Edinburgh**
- **Screenings for Fathers**
- **Perinatal anxiety/OCD**
- **OCD vs. psychosis**

Pharmacology knowledge

Trauma-Informed

Collaboration

(Devooght, et al., 2023).

POSTPARTUM SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL

- Complete the 14-hour Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders: Components of Care
- Complete the 6 -hours of advanced certificate training specific to your professional track.
  - Advanced Psychotherapy for Perinatal Mental Health
- After completing 2 years of working with the perinatal population and time approved by a supervisor
  - Application with PSI to be eligible to sit for the exam
- Pass Exam

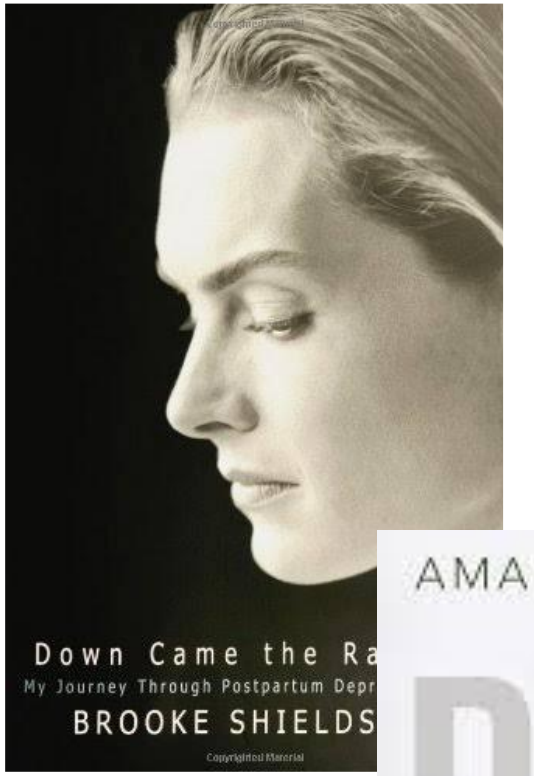
- Maintain 12 CEUs specifically in Perinatal Mental Health every 2 years

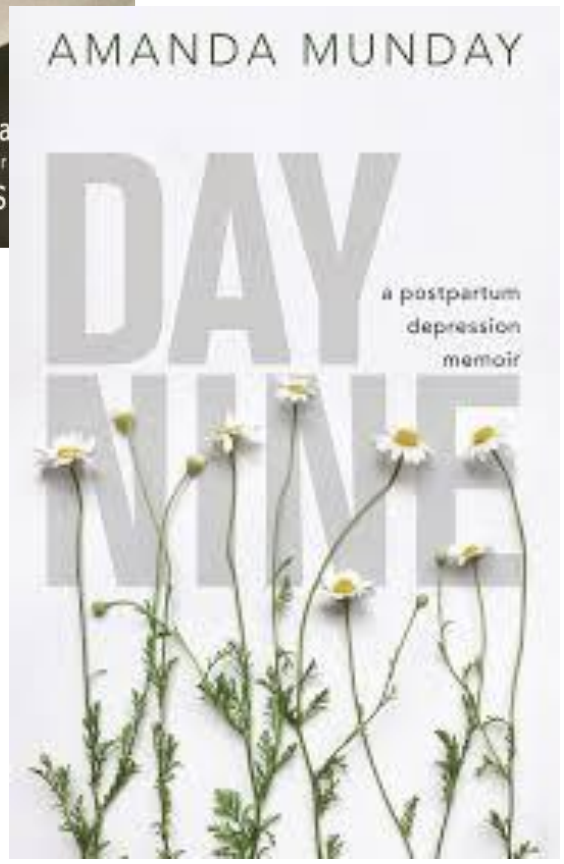
POLICY CENTER FOR Maternal Mental Health™

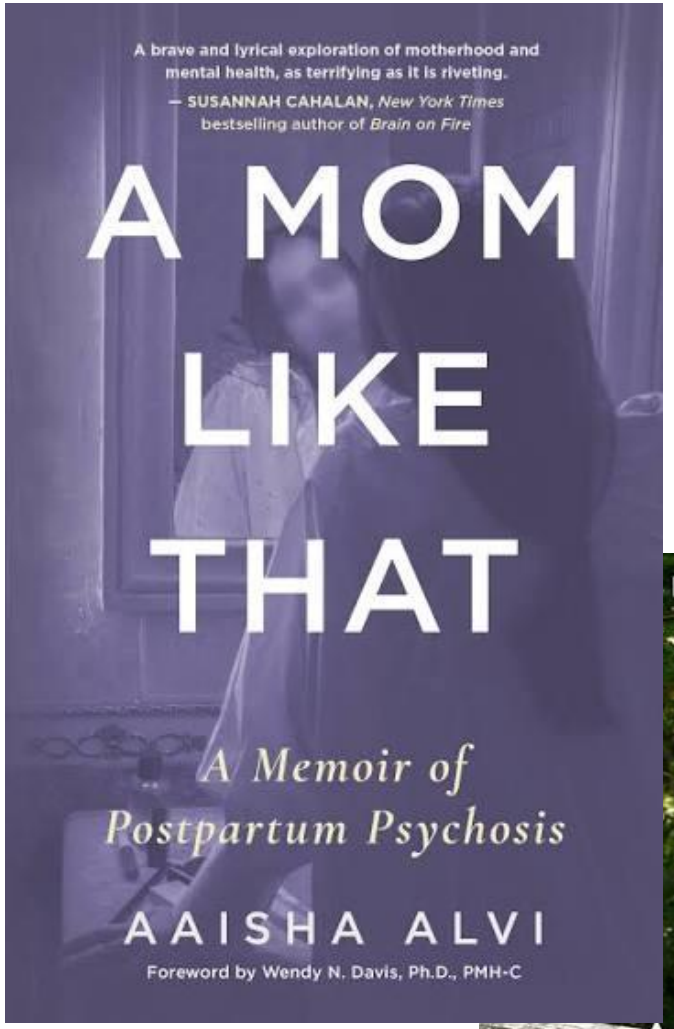
THE POSTPARTUM STRESS CENTER

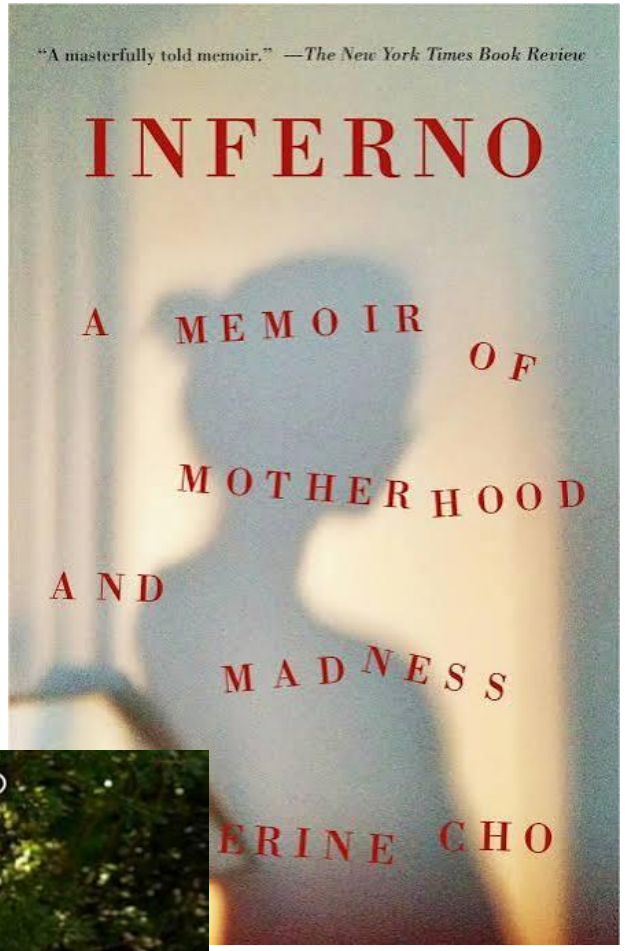
The International Marcé Society for Perinatal Mental Health

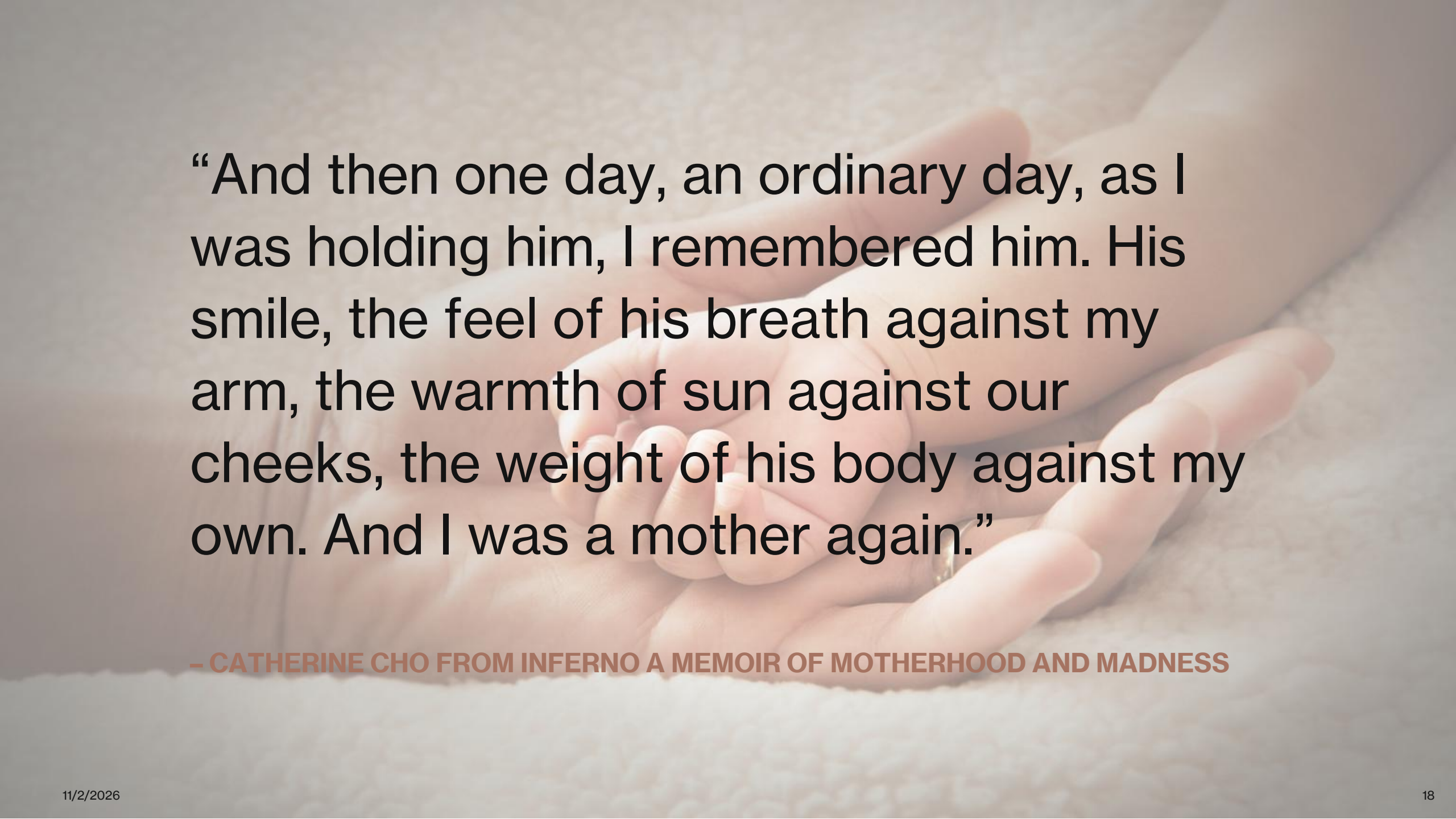
REAL WOMEN REAL STORIES











“And then one day, an ordinary day, as I was holding him, I remembered him. His smile, the feel of his breath against my arm, the warmth of sun against our cheeks, the weight of his body against my own. And I was a mother again.”

– CATHERINE CHO FROM INFERNO A MEMOIR OF MOTHERHOOD AND MADNESS

How many infants are born each year to mothers experiencing depression:

a) 100,000

b) 250,000

c) 400,000 +

d) 1 million

WHAT IS INFANT MENTAL HEALTH?

- **Study and practice of the youngest**
  - **Social and emotional health and well-being**
- **Understanding pregnancy and early parenthood**
  - **Infant and early childhood**
- **Trauma impact**
- **Resources and support services**

CHILDREN BIRTH TO FOUR YEARS:

- Have the highest incidence of maltreatment (41% of 249,887) than any other age group
- Are the largest group in foster care
- Neglect represents 76% of maltreatment types

INCIDENCE OF CONFIRMED MALTREATMENT.

ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION: KIDS COUNT DATA CENTER (2020).

WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL SKILLS OF AN INFANT MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST?

Concrete Assistance

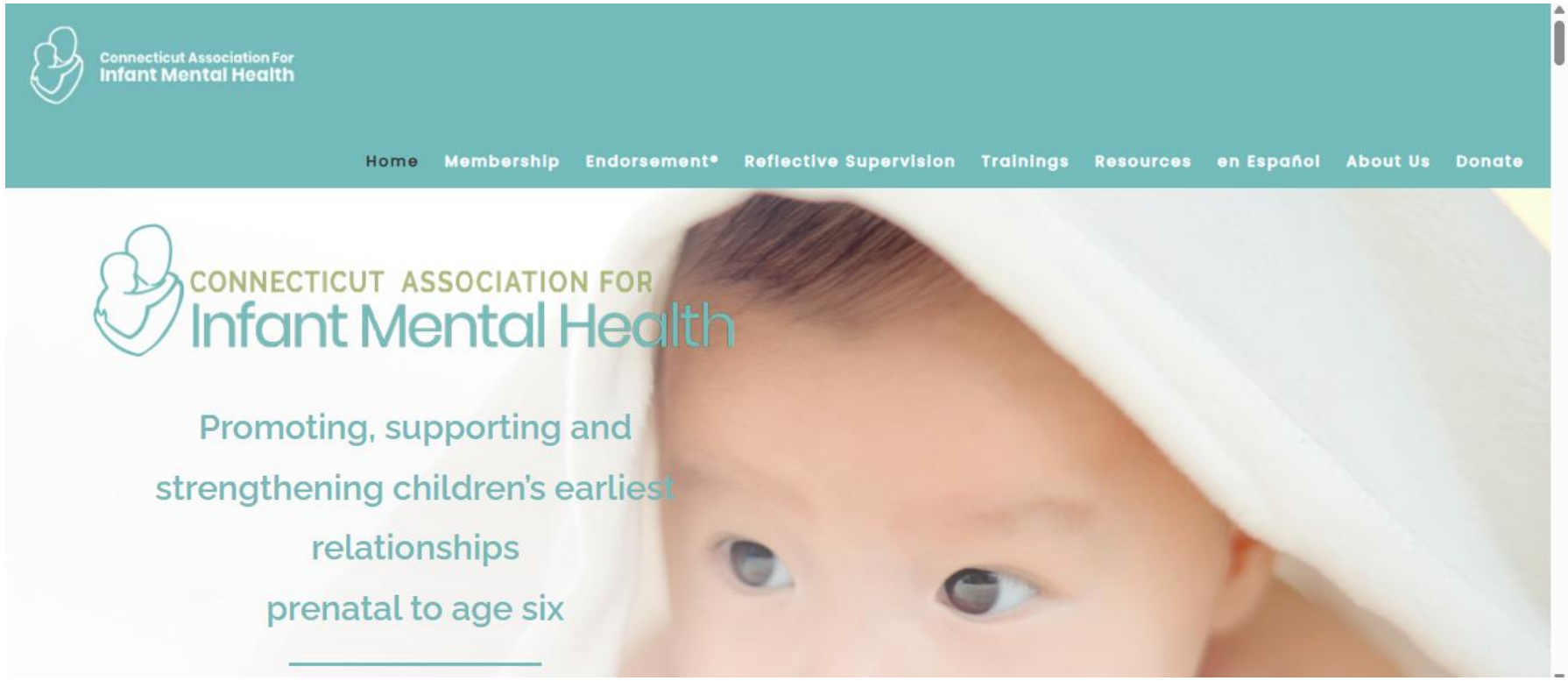
Emotional Support

Developmental Guidance

Early Relationship Assessment and Support

Advocacy

Infant-Parent Psychotherapy



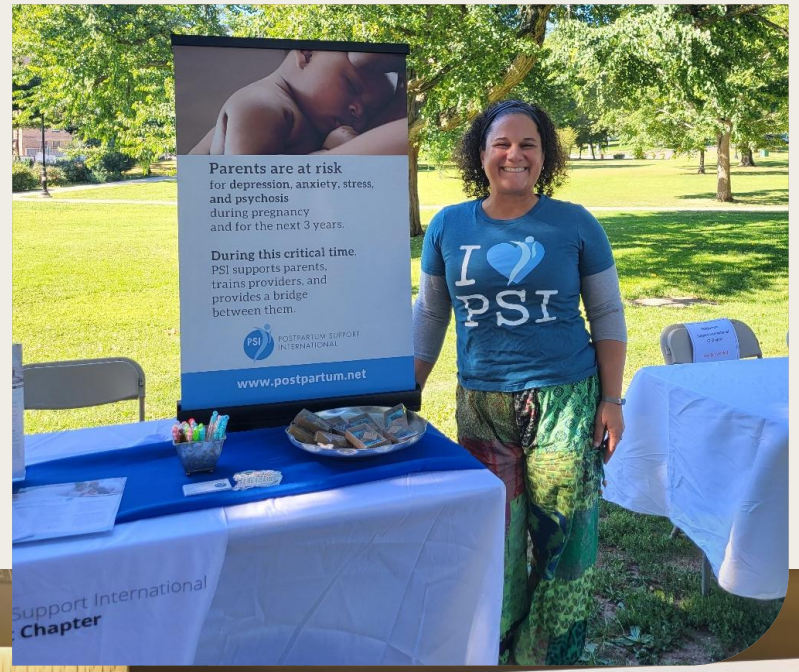
- ❑ EDUCATION
- ❑ WORK EXPERIENCE
- ❑ IN-SERVICE TRAINING
- ❑ MEMBERSHIP
- ❑ CODE OF ETHICS
- ❑ ENDORSEMENT AGREEMENT
- ❑ LEADERSHIP
- ❑ REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION
- ❑ REFERENCE RATING

Infant Mental Health/Early Childhood Mental Health

The Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health – a collaboration of 36 US states, Ireland, and Australia

https://www.allianceaimh.org/who-we-are

COLLABORATIONS AND GETTING INVOLVED



“Fire can warm or consume, water can quench or drown, wind can caress or cut. And so it is with human relationships: we can both create and destroy, nurture and terrorize, traumatize and heal each other.”

— BRUCE D. PERRY, THE BOY WHO WAS RAISED AS A DOG: AND OTHER STORIES FROM A CHILD PSYCHIATRIST'S NOTEBOOK

THANK YOU

Q & A

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