

Post-adoption blues expert on depression screening recommendations

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A new recommendation on screening mothers during pregnancy and postpartum for depression also should include parents who are adopting children, says a Purdue University expert on "post-adoption blues."

"I commend the United States Preventative Services Task Force for its recent recommendation to screen women during pregnancy and after giving birth. And in addition to birth mothers, adoptive mothers and fathers should also be screened for depressive symptoms before and after placement of a child," says Karen J. Foli, an associate professor of nursing and co-author of "The Post-Adoption Blues: Overcoming the Unforeseen Challenges of Adoption."

The United States Preventative Services Task Force published its [recommendations](#) Tuesday (Jan. 26) in *JAMA*, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The recommendation is to screen all adults for [depression](#), especially women during pregnancy and postpartum. It's estimated that 10 to 15 percent of new mothers experience postpartum depression, and the rate for post-adoption depression may be higher.

"We are trying to understand why," Foli says. "What we've found so far is that adoptive parents hold high expectations of themselves as parents, their children, their friends and family, and society that often are unmet or unrealistic. The adoption process is rigorous and intrusive as parents apply for a 'license' to parent. They frame themselves as 'superparents' in order to pass the tests of the home study, the financial disclosures, and

the psychological interviews. Now, we better understand how additional psychological symptoms and interpersonal variables may affect a parent."

Because of the adoption process and the standards that they hold themselves to, adoptive parents are not as likely to share concerns about their mental health.

"Mental health professionals also need to be aware of the dynamics specific to the adoptive process to best support their patients," says Foli, who collaborates with Susan South, an associate professor of psychological sciences, and Eunjung Lim, an assistant professor at the University of Hawaii.

"Preliminary evidence collected by our team, indicates that parental depression may exist prior to and after placement of a child for certain [adoptive parents](#)," says Foli, who is looking at post-adoption depression in a long-term study to better understand predictors and buffers to [depressive symptoms](#) for both adoptive [mothers](#) and fathers.

Provided by Purdue University

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