



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE TUCSON

Arizona Perinatal  
Psychiatry Access Line

June 2023 -  
March 2025

# IMPACT REPORT



This photo is a stock image intended for illustrative purposes only. These individuals are models.

## APAL Financial Support



FOUNDATION FOR  
**COMMUNITY & HEALTH**  
ADVANCEMENT



# What is the Arizona Perinatal Psychiatry Access Line (APAL)?

Established in 2023, the Arizona Perinatal Psychiatry Access Line (APAL) is dedicated to enhancing mental health care for women who are pregnant and up to one-year postpartum - known as the “perinatal period” - by supporting frontline providers across the state. We understand the profound impact of maternal behavioral health on the long-term well-being of both mothers and children as well as the lack of resources for treatment within Arizona. To address these gaps in care, APAL offers free, timely, and high-quality consultation, education, and resources to help callers confidently manage complex mental health challenges. By strengthening the capacity of healthcare providers across the state, we improve access to care, promote early intervention, and ensure that no mother faces behavioral health struggles alone.

## What We Do: Statewide Services



### Phone Consultation

APAL provides guidance to medical professionals through free, live phone consultations with perinatal psychiatrists, followed by an email with written treatment recommendations.

APAL also offers free, one-time direct patient evaluations to provide increased support for complex cases.

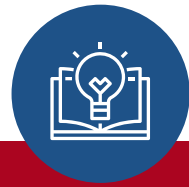


### Resource Network

APAL provides resources for professionals including screening and treatment guidelines.

For moms and families, APAL has a resource library including local, state and general resources.

The APAL team connects families with county, state, and national resources for perinatal patients.



### Education

APAL creates educational material and provides education on maternal behavioral health topics to increase the capacity of healthcare providers to care for struggling moms.

APAL provides free continuing medical education (CME) credits through their monthly grand rounds series and individualized trainings tailored to providers.

# Why APAL?

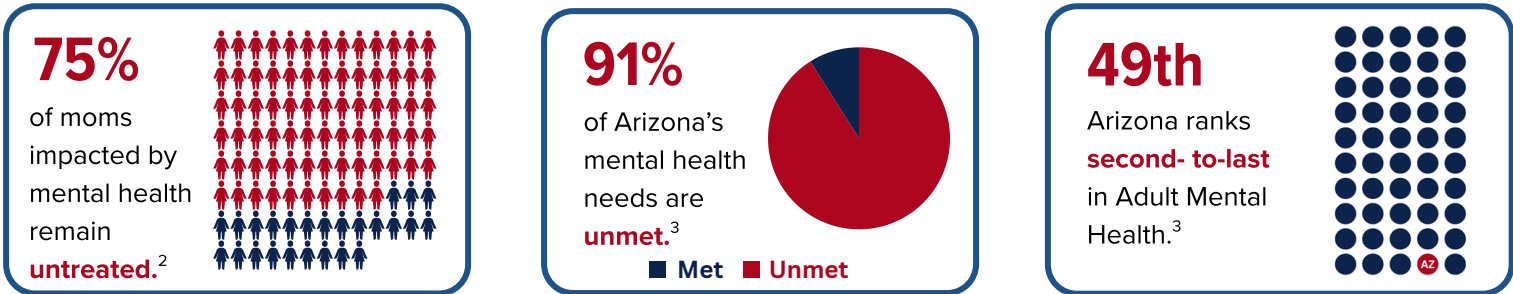
Mental Health Conditions are the most common complication of pregnancy.



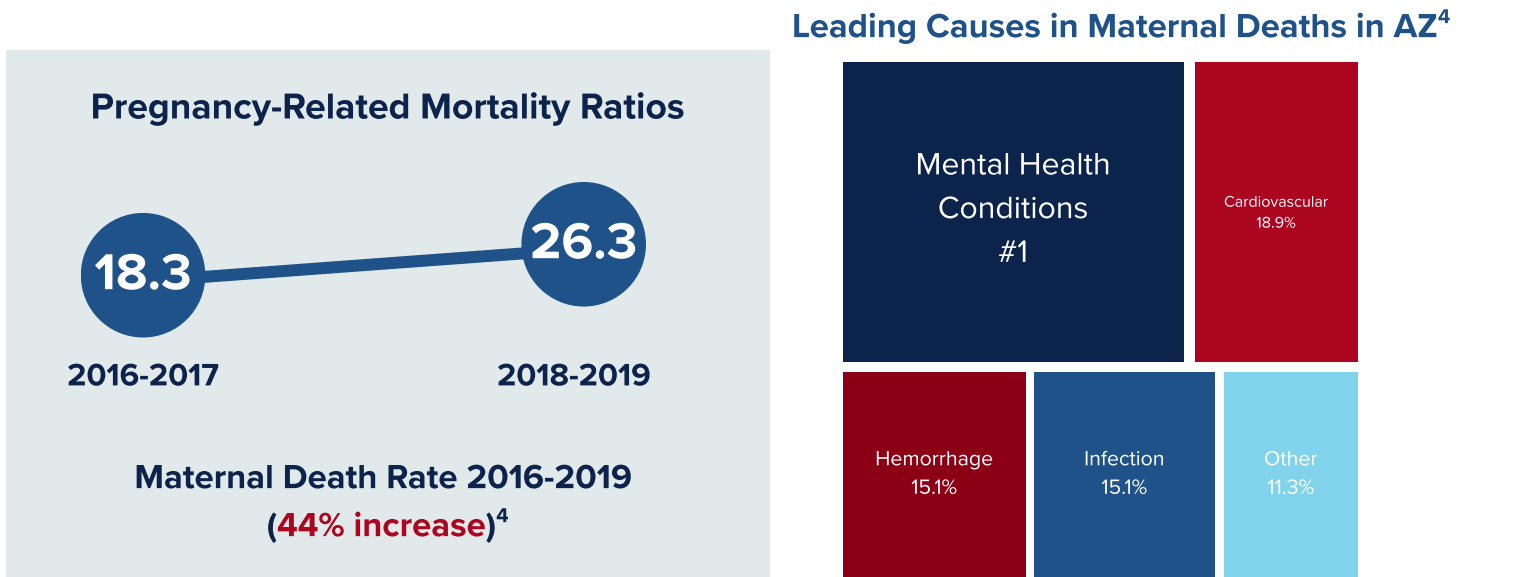
One in five women experiences a mental health or substance use disorder during pregnancy or in the first year after childbirth.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, almost 80% of women who need treatment never get it.<sup>2</sup>

While these illnesses are treatable, Arizona has been unable to meet the need.



This impacts not only mothers, but families and communities, and leads to the death of mothers.



APAL helps close this gap in access to services - not only supporting moms and families, but also saving Arizona at least \$399 Million/ year.



# APAL Initiatives

**Direct access to free perinatal psychiatry consultation statewide:** APAL’s free telephonic guidance supports the ability of providers of all specialties statewide to provide high-quality, evidence-based perinatal mental health care. This reduces delays in starting crucial treatment.

**Support care with specific focus on increasing access to evidence-based substance use care for pregnant and lactating women:** Substance use is a leading cause of death in the perinatal period, APAL helps keep providers informed on current best practices and assists them in caring for these patients.

**Provide training and education in perinatal psychiatry:** APAL offers monthly virtual grand rounds and customized, on-request trainings for providers, all with free CME. Recorded webinars and CME-accredited presentations are available on our website, along with a blog featuring expert insights on evolving treatment guidelines.

APAL reduces barriers and expands access to quality perinatal mental health care, with a focus on underserved, rural, and historically marginalized communities. We also help bridge Arizona’s healthcare workforce gap by empowering frontline providers to deliver expert, timely care.

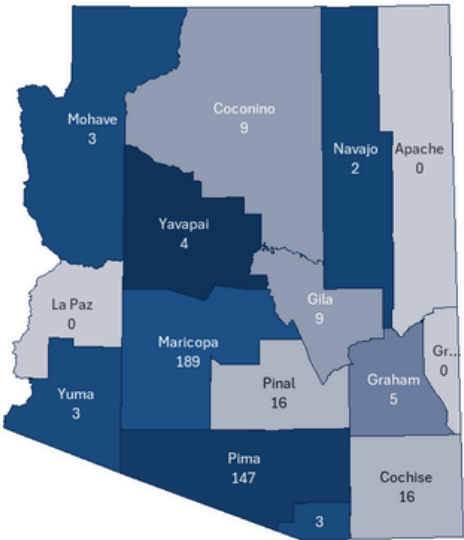
## Outcomes & Impact by Initiative

### Direct access to free perinatal psychiatry consultation statewide

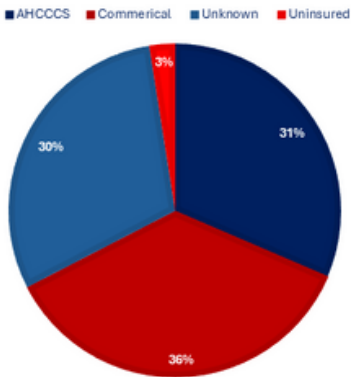
APAL provides essential support to rural counties with limited behavioral health care resources and has a statewide reach, receiving calls from over **85%** of Arizona's counties. Of the counties that have received APAL support, Gila, Graham and Santa Cruz have no psychiatrists at all. Mohave, Santa Cruz, Cochise, Graham and Gila counties have no one with Perinatal Mental Health Certification. Santa Cruz and Gila counties have no OB/GYN and/or Certified Nurse Midwives practicing.

In addition to supporting rural and under-resourced counties in Arizona, APAL provides support to vulnerable populations across the state. Our distribution of calls based on economic status includes **46.2%** of patients falling into low economic status, exceeding the estimated **13%** of Arizonans living at or below the poverty line and the **30%** of Arizonans who qualify for AHCCCS.

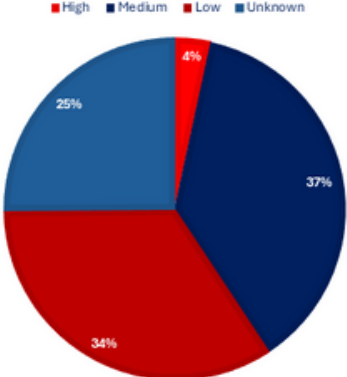
June 2023 - Mar 2025 County Calls



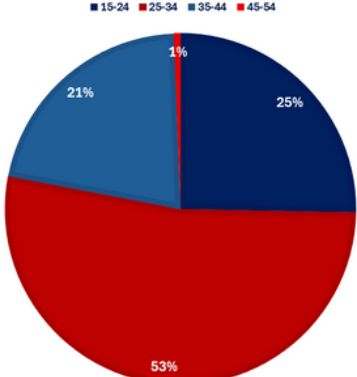
Insurance Type



Economic Status



Patient Age





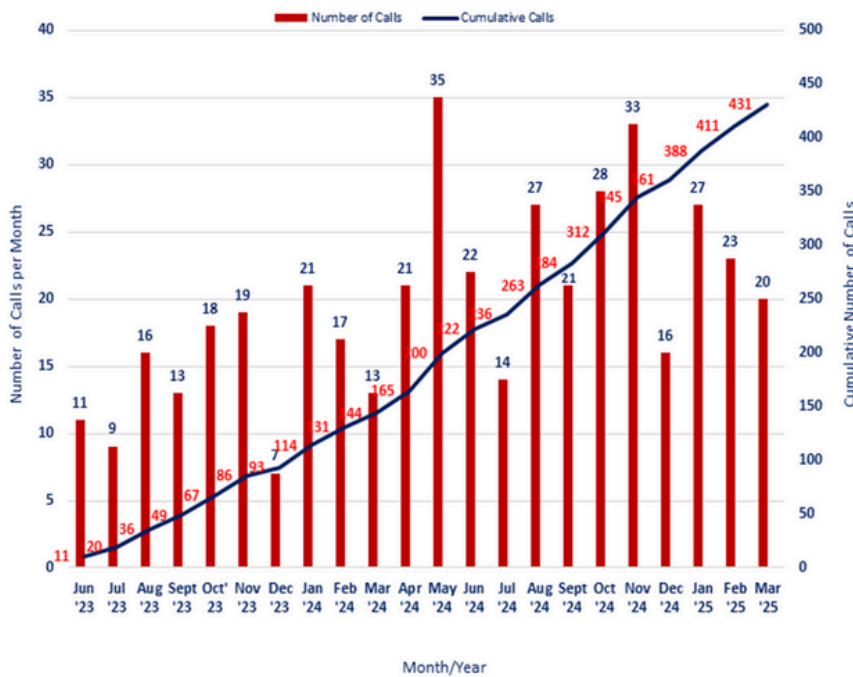
## Call Volume

From June 2023 to March 2025, APAL responded to **431 consultation calls**.

Call volume has grown steadily each quarter, demonstrating APAL's expanding footprint across Arizona. We average a **13.2%** increase in calls each quarter.

Comparing Q1 2024 to Q1 2025, APAL Perinatal experienced a **37% increase in call volume**, reflecting growing trust and reliance on our services by frontline providers.

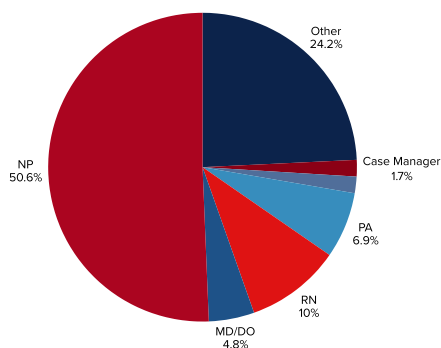
## June 2023-Mar 2025 Call Volume



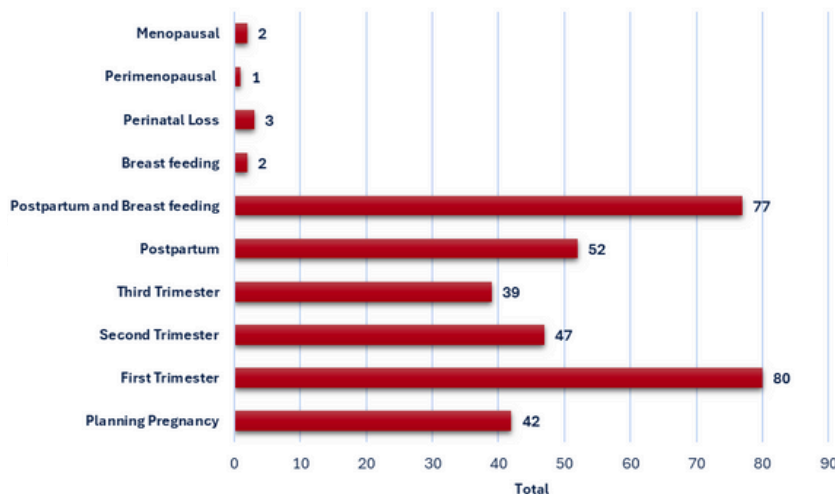
## Who's Calling and Why?

The majority of APAL Perinatal consultations come from Nurse Practitioners, who make up over half of all callers (**50.6%**).

### Provider Types



### Perinatal Status



### Patient Diagnoses

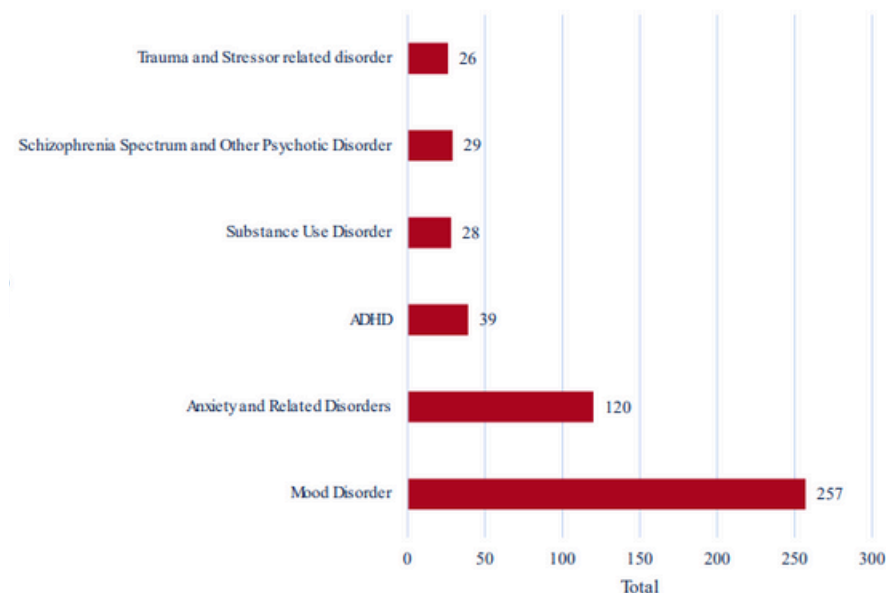
APAL supports providers with real-time consultation across a range of diagnoses:

**53%** Mood disorders (e.g. perinatal depression, bipolar disorder)

**28%** Anxiety disorders

**6.5%** Substance use disorders

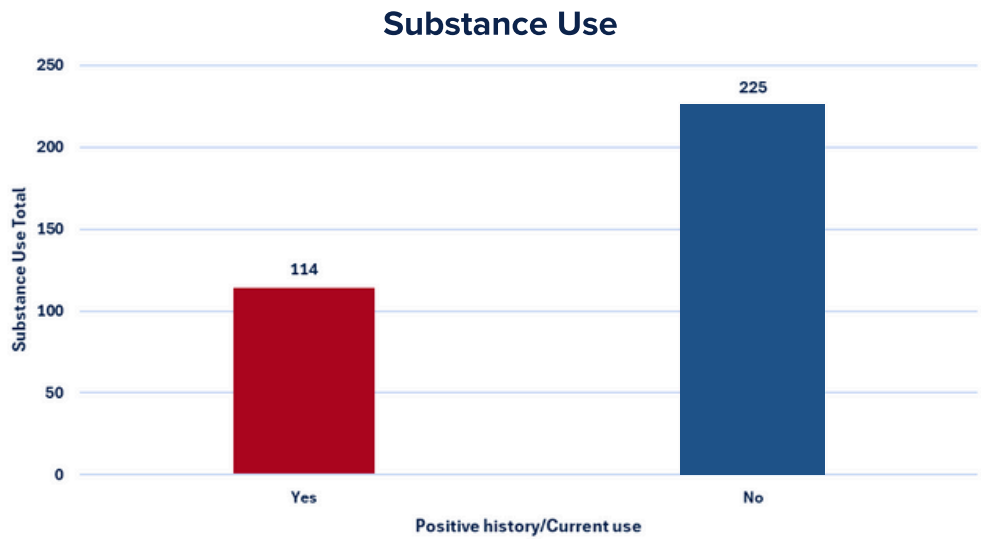
These clinical areas represent the most common and pressing mental health challenges in the perinatal period, and highlight APAL's impact in helping providers deliver timely, informed care.



# Addressing Workforce Shortage

APAL helps close workforce gap by supporting frontline providers —with real-time psychiatric consultation, treatment guidance, and referral support. Instead of adding pressure to an already limited psychiatric workforce<sup>6</sup>, APAL equips primary care teams to confidently manage behavioral health needs within their practice. APALs services not only improve patient outcomes, but reduce physician workload and increase physician retention.<sup>7</sup>

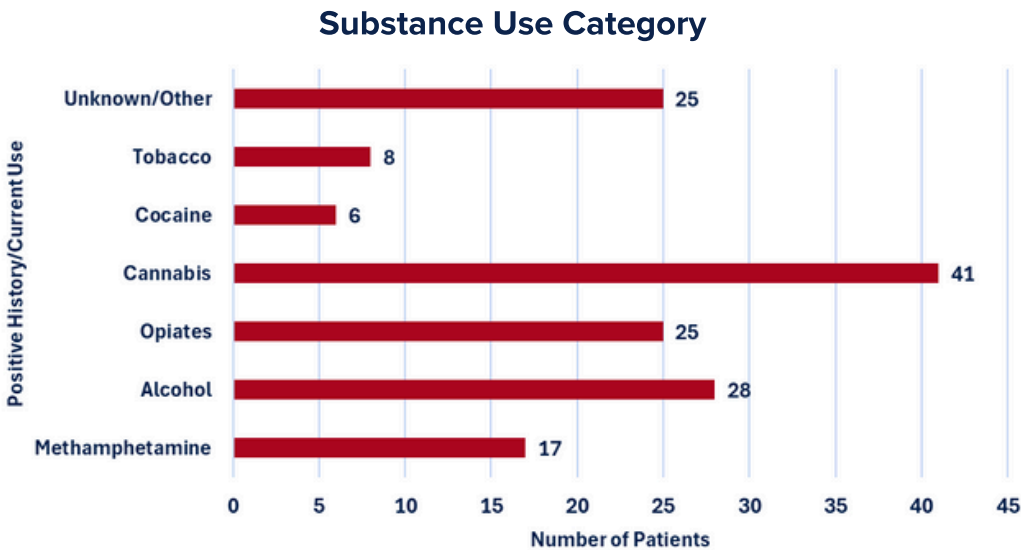
Support mothers and families with focus on increasing access to evidence-based substance use care for pregnant and lactating women.



Nationally, 8-16% of calls to perinatal psychiatry access lines involve substance use; however, **30%** of our consultations are for patients with current or previous drug or alcohol use.

APAL supports frontline providers in managing perinatal substance use, with cannabis, alcohol, and opioids as the most common concerns.

We offer real-time consultation and medication-assisted treatment (MAT) guidance to ensure timely, evidence-based care.



**430+** Calls made to the Perinatal Line



From **255** Healthcare Professionals



**400** Practices Enrolled



**87%** of Arizona's counties reached



**22min** average call time

## Provider Call Feedback

To assess the impact of APAL consultations on provider decision-making and patient outcomes, we collect feedback through post-consultation surveys. The results demonstrate high provider satisfaction and highlight APAL's role in enhancing perinatal mental health care delivery across Arizona.

- ▶ APAL consultations enhance provider confidence, ensuring that mothers receive appropriate treatment more quickly.
- ▶ Providers find APAL's guidance highly valuable in case management, leading to improved care coordination and decision-making.
- ▶ High likelihood of repeat consultations suggests that APAL is a trusted and integral resource for perinatal mental health support in Arizona

**43%** With an astounding 43% call-back rate, APAL has become a crucial and trusted resource.

**100%**

of providers who called APAL stated they were extremely likely to call again in the future.

**100%**

of providers stated consulting APAL assisted them in making treatment decisions.

**92%**

of providers stated the information they received was helpful in managing the case they called about.

**92%**

of providers stated the consultation made them feel more confident in providing care.

## Consultation Testimonials

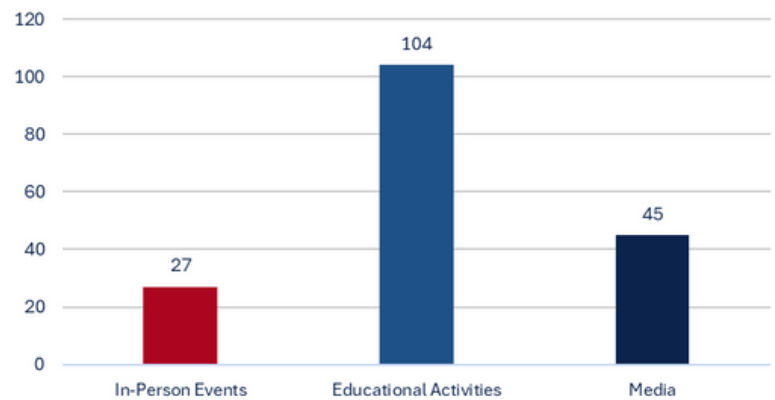
“ The APAL line has been an invaluable resource as a physician who has many perinatal and postpartum patients in need of reproductive psychiatric services. Access to the line has allowed me to manage complex cases safely and with clinical confidence.   
*-- Alicia Halbert, DO*

“ I am profoundly grateful that the Arizona Perinatal Psychiatry Access Line exists. For providers who are not trained in perinatal psychiatry, there is so much uncertainty in treating this population. When I called APAL, I had a mom who really needed help. I was quickly connected to an expert perinatal psychiatrist who provided clear, evidence-based guidance. After the call, I felt reassured and confident moving forward and my patient didn't have to wait to see a specialist to start treatment. This resource not only helped my patient but contributed significantly to my own education on this topic.   
*-- Anonymous Provider*

## Provide training and education in perinatal psychiatry

- ▶ APAL completes an average of **4-5 educational activities per month** - completing over 100 in less than two years. Similar lines complete an average of 1-2 educational activities per month.
- ▶ We offer free CME with our monthly virtual grand round series
- ▶ APAL provides training to diverse audiences, including psychiatry residents, family practice physicians, Ob/gyns, NPs, PAs, family law attorneys, birth workers, and community members.

APAL Educational Initiatives



### In post-training evaluation surveys, APAL attendee reviews showed:

- ▶ **100%** total overall satisfaction rate, with **94%** of attendees stating they were extremely satisfied
- ▶ **98%** stated that the training met or exceeded their expectations
- ▶ Only **11%** of attendees had called APAL prior to attending a training. After the training, **98%** claimed they were likely to call APAL for assistance
- ▶ **98%** would recommend APAL services to other providers
- ▶ **99%** stated the trainings were interactive and engaging
- ▶ **99%** stated the instructor was knowledgeable, prepared, and organized

## Training in Perinatal Substance Use Disorders

APAL completed 16 trainings on Substance Use Disorders in pregnancy and breastfeeding across the state. Three trainings were open statewide to providers including an ECHO presentation and two APAL grand rounds.

## Training Testimonials

“

Thank you so much for such a fabulous presentation and all that you do to help dispense this information. I learned a lot that I look forward to bringing with me to my next shift. I work in the emergency department and frequently diagnose women with new, often unplanned pregnancy, and I now feel better informed to have some of these important discussions with the patients to help with harm reduction. — **Caroline Schmidt, PA-C**  
*Tuba City Regional Healthcare*

“

Thank you for facilitating such an amazing conversation this afternoon. We have received an enormous amount of positive feedback and truly appreciate you taking the time to engage with our PMH-C community. — **Kelly Donahue, PhD, ABPP**  
*Postpartum Support International*



## APAL's Outreach Efforts

Awareness of our program is an essential component of engagement. Without a dedicated marketing team, as of March 2025, APAL has connected with over 800 clinics across Arizona, visited more than 285 practices across metro and rural Arizona, and built strong visibility through both community and professional events. Through a strategic mix of in-person visits, targeted mailings, phone outreach, and participation in key community and professional events, we've expanded our footprint and deepened relationships across the state.



## APAL Needs Your Help to Continue Its Efforts

As we look ahead, the Arizona Perinatal Psychiatry Access Line (APAL) remains committed to strengthening maternal behavioral health care across the state. Despite our demonstrated impact and growing demand, APAL's funding was abruptly terminated due to federal budget cuts that eliminated the grant supporting the program.

**Without immediate and sustainable funding, this essential program is at risk of shutting down.**

APAL is the only resource of its kind in the state to address Arizona's worsening maternal mental health crisis and rising maternal death rate- there is no organization or program to replace us. Without APAL, medical providers already stretched thin will lose needed support and mothers will suffer. Outside of the devastating cost to Arizona families and the long-term societal and healthcare impacts to mother and child, the state will continue losing \$400M per year.

Supporting APAL makes a difference. By equipping providers with real-time psychiatric consultation and support, APAL helps mothers receive timely, effective care, improving outcomes, preventing deaths and strengthening Arizona families.

APAL is a smart investment that pays off—both in lives changed and dollars saved. In fact, **APAL can cover every woman of childbearing age in Arizona for \$0.75 per woman per year.**

We are calling on partners, stakeholders, and funders to act **now**. Arizona mothers, their families, and frontline providers deserve continued access to timely, expert behavioral health support. The need is real, the demand is growing—and with your support, APAL can continue to meet it.

**Please contact us to discuss ways to keep this vital state resource in operation.**

**Contact Us:**

**APAL.arizona.edu | 888-290-1336 | team@apal.arizona.edu**

# History of APAL

## Operational

### November 2022 ●

The Arizona Perinatal Psychiatry Access Line (APAL) received funding from the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS).

### June 2023 ●

The Perinatal Line officially launched at half time, Monday - Friday, 12:30p.m. - 4:30p.m.

### November 2023 ●

The Perinatal Line launched full-time access, Monday - Friday, 8:30a.m. - 4:30p.m.

### February 2024 ●

The Arizona Pediatric Psychiatry Access Line (APAL) received funding from the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS).

### May 2024 ●

The Pediatric Line officially launched at half time, Monday - Friday, 12:30p.m. - 4:30p.m.

### December 2024 ●

The Perinatal Line was awarded community reinvestment funds from Mercy Care.

### February 2025 ●

The Perinatal and Pediatric Line launched full-time, live resource assistance to not only providers, but all callers in need of assistance with perinatal and pediatric resources in Arizona.

### March 2025 ●

The Perinatal Line received a Blue Cross® Blue Shield® of Arizona Foundation for Community & Health Advancement grant.

## Milestones

### November 2022 - June 2023

APAL created infrastructure and developed organizational procedures from November 2022-June 2023.

### October 2023

APAL founders developed principles for the Pediatric Line and requested AHCCCS funding.

### January 2024

The APAL Perinatal Line had provided over **100 consultations**.

### December 2024

The Perinatal and Pediatric Line had made outreach to over **800 clinics**, **visited over 200 clinics in person**, and attended multiple conferences to distribute materials and resources to providers and the public.

### January 2025

The APAL Pediatric Line had provided over **100 consultations**.

### February 2025

**The Perinatal line launched direct consultations** to increase support for complex cases.

### March 2025

The Perinatal Line had received over **400 total calls** from **85%** of Arizona's counties.

# Meet the Team

## OUR DIRECTORS



### SAIRA KALIA, MD DIRECTOR

APAL's Director Dr. Saira Kalia is a clinician, educator, and leader. She has made significant contributions to the women's behavioral health field and is known for her commitment to patient-centered care and dedication to education. She has a wealth of administrative experience having served as an outpatient medical director. She is a distinguished educator and has won multiple teaching awards. She has launched both the Arizona Perinatal Psychiatry Access Line and the Arizona Pediatric Psychiatry Access Line. Her recognition as a COM-T Women in Medicine Torchbearer underscores her trailblazing contributions to behavioral health, education, and supporting access to care for all patients.



### KATHRYN EMERICK, MD CO-DIRECTOR

APAL'S Co-Director Dr. Kathryn Emerick is a perinatal psychiatrist with a focus on academic psychiatry. She has provided education statewide on perinatal topics and received the Women's Rural Health Innovation Award for her work with APAL. In addition to her work with the access line, she continues as faculty at the University of Arizona. As faculty, she provides education and supervision to residents on perinatal topics and has received the Residency Director Award for her educational efforts.

## FACULTY



### KATHY W. SMITH, MD

Dr. Kathy W. Smith is a highly accomplished psychiatrist and educator, serving as Professor of Psychiatry and Associate Dean of Graduate Medical Education at the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Tucson. With over 20 years of experience, she is a recognized leader in the assessment and treatment of perinatal mood disorders, as well as the evaluation and stabilization of psychiatric emergencies.

## STAFF



### ANA RAMOS, BA PROGRAM MANAGER

Ana Ramos is the APAL team's Program Manager and is responsible for daily oversight of the line. Ana functions as a nexus between clinical service and project management, as well as overseeing data integration and interpretation.



### SARAH MALCOLM LOPEZ, BA CLINICAL NAVIGATOR

Sarah Malcolm Lopez is dedicated and committed to helping others. Sarah enjoys working in the mental health field and assisting others in life-changing support. She is excited to work with providers directly as the Clinical Navigator.



### ALEXANDRA HARRIS, RESOURCE SPECIALIST

Alexandra (Alex) Harris is a dedicated public health professional with experience in health education, community collaboration, and research. Throughout her career she has focused on advocating for community members and supporting programs that uplift individuals.



### AMANDA OKPISZ, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

As APAL's Administrative Support Assistant, Amanda is dedicated to providing exceptional support to the APAL team to ensure the ongoing success of the pediatric line.

## SOURCES

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**Schedule a Consult**



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