

Apr-13-06 Corzine Signs Postpartum Depression Screening Bill

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HACKENSACK - Governor Jon S. Corzine today signed legislation requiring health care professionals providing postnatal care to screen new mothers for postpartum depression, and requiring health care professionals providing prenatal care to educate women and their families about the disorder. Governor Corzine signed the bill at a public ceremony at Hackensack University Medical Center where he was joined by Senate President and former Governor, Richard J. Codey and his wife Mary Jo Codey.

"The birth of a child is a time for celebration, but also a time for concern as 80 percent of women in New Jersey experience some form of depression after giving birth," Corzine said. "This new law will make postpartum depression screening a requirement rather than an option, and that's a significant and positive step for New Jersey's mothers, newborns and families."

Approximately 80 percent of women in New Jersey experience some level of depression after childbirth. Typically the symptoms begin two days after birth and last approximately two weeks. However, one in eight women who give birth, and approximately 11,000 to 16,000 women in New Jersey, experience a more serious condition known as postpartum depression each year.

"I know, first-hand, the grief caused by postpartum depression and it is not something that any woman should have to suffer alone in silence." said Senator Codey. "This law will make sure that every woman facing the fear and uncertainty of postpartum depression will have someone to look out for them, to

help them recognize the signs of postpartum depression and to get them the help they need. Today we are not just providing a safety net, we're building a support system."

The law will increase the likelihood that new mothers suffering from postpartum depression will get appropriate treatment and will be able to overcome its effects. The law goes into effect 180 days after being signed by Governor Corzine. The Department of Health and Senior Services will work with hospitals and health care providers to implement the new law.

The legislation (S-213/A-1325) was sponsored by Senate President Richard J. Codey (D-Essex) and Senator Diane Allen (R-Burlington, Camden). An identical bill was sponsored in the Assembly by Peter Biondi (R-Morris, Somerset) and Christopher Bateman (R-Morris, Somerset). The bill passed both houses unanimously.