

on the issue.

But as female representation in the Legislature has rebounded to its 30.8 percent high point, and as a governor with four young children has taken office, the issue of maternal health, particularly among low-income women, has gathered momentum. Cervantes, a 31-year-old, second-term lawmaker, for example, comes out of Riverside County, where more than half of births are paid for by Medi-Cal.

As many as “one in five new or expectant mothers will experience a mental health disorder during pregnancy or the first year following childbirth, including depression, anxiety and postpartum psychosis,” Cervantes notes in her bill. Because socioeconomic factors and stigma also can prevent women from seeking treatment, the bill includes an opt-in pilot program for counties, including Riverside, to offer remote mental health teleconsultations to new mothers.

Testifying earlier this year in favor of Cervantes’ bill, Schwartz said she would like to see programs specifically for women with postpartum depression, separate from existing mental health services that don’t always take women’s unique circumstances into account. At Heritage Oaks, she said, she was placed with drug addicts and wasn’t

#### About this story:

It is an abridged version of the original, published by CalMatters and available at [calmatters.org](http://calmatters.org).

allowed to see her newborn, which only compounded her trauma.

Over the following year, she said, she was in and out of the hospital as doctors experimented with different types of medications and treatments. At her low point, during a manic episode that started when she tried to stop taking her medication, her husband, Brent, filed for divorce. “I thought I couldn’t take it anymore,” he said.

Eventually, she resumed her medication, found a sustainable treatment plan and reconciled with her husband, she said, but her recovery has been a long process. She counts herself lucky that she had the health insurance and access to care that allowed her to reclaim her life.

“I didn’t get a divorce. Most women do. I didn’t end up on the street. And I didn’t, as people I met in the mental hospital did, end up on methamphetamines or heroin,” Schwartz said. “I had health care. The fact that these women don’t is absolutely terrifying. They need it. It’s the basics of everything else. I didn’t lose my mind, because of that.” □

## WEEKLY DOSE

### Back-to-school health checklist

The first day of school is just around the corner, so take a little time to check in on the health of your kids to ensure them a happy and successful school year. First stop, an eye exam. Children often don’t complain if their vision isn’t normal, so it’s important to look for possible signs such

as squinting while reading or watching television. Ideally, school-age children should have an exam at least once every two years. Second stop, the dentist. Oral health equals good overall health, yet tooth

decay is the most common chronic disease among children. With that in mind, parents should schedule regular dental exams every six months. Lastly, make sure to get your kids their recommended immunizations. Children’s vaccines are 90 percent to 99 percent effective and protect kids from diseases such as mumps, tetanus and chicken pox. They’re also required—so don’t forget to make that appointment. These few steps may give your kids a better chance to succeed inside and outside the classroom.



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