



Postpartum Depression & Maternal Mental Health

There's *life* beyond the blues.



Perinatal & Postpartum Depression Communications Activation Guide

May 2026

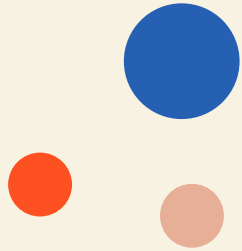
Table of Contents

Introduction.....03

Campaign Tool.....11

Earned Media Tools27

Blue Wall Activation in a Box.....29



Introduction



Campaign Milestones

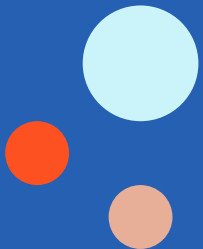
May 8
Campaign
Announcement
to Media
(Earned Media)

May 8
Campaign
Launch
(VDH Hub &
Paid Media)

May 26
Richmond Public
Library Community
Activation & Earned
Media Event

June 30
Paid Campaign
Wrap &
Reporting

How to Use This Guide



This communications activation guide supports the VDH Office of Family Health Services (OFHS) and the Department of Behavioral Health initiatives to bring awareness of maternal mental health and provide resources to those who may be suffering with perinatal or postpartum depression, as well as those who care for and support them.

Included in this guide are communications materials to use as you in your own initiatives in our shared vision of spreading the awareness of maternal mental health and letting Virginians know how to get the help they need.

This playbook features the creative assets in English and Spanish that are included in a digital toolkit that is available at:

vdh.virginia.gov/beyond-the-blues

Thank you for your support.

A decorative graphic consisting of four circles of varying sizes and colors: a large blue circle at the top left, a smaller red circle to its left, and two smaller light blue circles below the blue one.

Creative Campaign Executive Summary





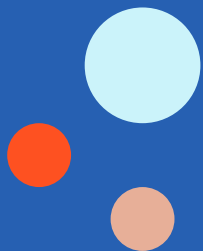
Legislative Mandate HB2446

In 2025, the Virginia General Assembly took decisive, compassionate action to address a silent and often invisible crisis: **perinatal and postpartum depression.**

Through the passage of the Postpartum Depression Education Act (HB2446), the Commonwealth charged the Virginia Department of Health and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services with developing a **public awareness campaign that reduces stigma, increase recognition of symptoms, and connect families to timely, life-saving resources and support. An online resource hub will also be part of the deliverables.**

Beyond the Blues Awareness Campaign

Launch Date: May 8



The Virginia Department of Health and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, led the creation of the *Beyond the Blues* public awareness campaign. The campaign was developed from a mixed-method research approach that aligned community lived experience, clinical realities, statewide data, and community resources into a campaign-ready roadmap to increase awareness, reduce stigma, and improve access to care.

Our learnings made way for a comprehensive and integrated awareness campaign using paid media, earned media, community activation events, and a creative toolkit to provide messaging and asset support to local health districts and support groups across the state.

This approach will maximize impact and support our goals of raising awareness of maternal mental health, reducing stigma, and promoting early treatment and access to support. By shifting how maternal mental health is understood and discussed, the campaign will enable earlier recognition and earlier support, leading to better outcomes for parents and families across Virginia. It will advance health equity, save lives, and fulfill the intent of HB2446 with compassion and impact.

Intentionality: Beyond the Blue Dot

For years, the blue dot has existed as a symbol for postpartum depression, aspiring to the ubiquity of breast cancer's pink ribbon but often lacking a pulse. When we set out to build this campaign for the Virginia Department of Health, we wanted to use the blue dot, but give it a soul. We began by listening, bringing survivors, clinicians, and community leaders in for individual interviews and ultimately a full-day workshop of radical honesty. They gave us three words—**Validation, Help, Hope**—that became the filter for every piece we created and decision we made. It meant bypassing advertising "polish" and committing to a process that was, at times, uncomfortably real.

That commitment to integrity turned our production into an ecosystem of lived experience. We didn't seek out actors, and we rejected the shortcuts of AI. We instead cast real families and worked with a mother-led creative and production team who all understood the weight of the stories we were telling. Even the music—a minimal track by Dear Nora that is simultaneously haunting and hopeful—was chosen because it felt like a chorus of women's voices reaching across generations. More than a campaign, we wanted to give voice and beauty to the raw, spiritual, and vulnerable reality of motherhood, proving that a symbol can become a lifeline when it feels honest and human.

Campaign Platform

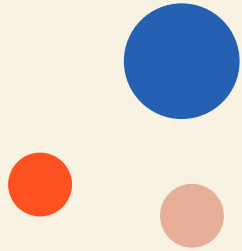
Maternal mental health struggles exist beyond the baby blues. And with the right help, people who are suffering can move beyond these deeper blues, too.

Beyond The Blues reframes maternal mental health struggles as something that exists on a spectrum — before pregnancy, during it, after it. These experiences can be hard to name and easy to dismiss.

In our creative approach, warmer colors convey hope, support, and empowerment, reinforcing the positive and encouraging tone of the campaign.

We want every person who sees this campaign to know: you don't have to understand it or fix it yourself. You just have to tell someone. There are people who have heard it all before and know exactly what to do. They can help you find a path that works for you. Color can come back.

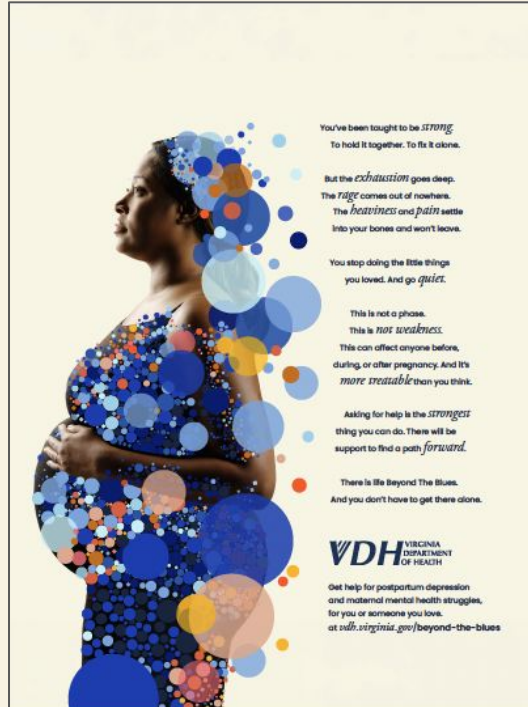
There's a lot of life *Beyond The Blues*.



Campaign Toolkit



Posters



The poster features a silhouette of a pregnant woman filled with a pattern of colorful circles in shades of blue, orange, and yellow. The text is arranged in a clean, sans-serif font, providing information about postpartum depression and where to seek help.

You've been taught to be *STRONG*
To hold it together. To fix it alone.

But the *EXHAUSTION* goes deep.
The *RAGE* comes out of nowhere.
The *HEAVINESS* and *PAIN* settle
into your bones and won't leave.

You stop doing the little things
you loved. And go *QUIET*.

This is not a phase.
This is *NOT WEAKNESS*.
This can affect anyone before,
during, or after pregnancy. And it's
MORE TREATABLE than you think.

Asking for help is the *STRONGEST*
thing you can do. There will be
support to find a path *FORWARD*.

There is life beyond The Blues.
And you don't have to get there alone.

VDH VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH

Get help for postpartum depression
and maternal mental health struggles,
for you or someone you love,
at vdh.virginia.gov/beyond-the-blues



The poster features a silhouette of a woman holding a baby, filled with a pattern of colorful circles in shades of blue, orange, and yellow. The text is arranged in a clean, sans-serif font, providing information about postpartum depression and where to seek help.

Te enseñaron a ser *fuerte*.
A aguantar. A poner a los demás primero.
Pero algo cambió.

El *CAJALISTIA* es profundo.
La rabia aparece sin razón aparente.
Un peso desconocido invade tu cuerpo
y no se va.

Dejas de hacer las pequeñas cosas
que antes disfrutabas. Y te quedas en
silencio.

Esto no es solo una etapa.
Esto no es *debilidad*.

Cualquier mujer puede
experimentar estos síntomas
antes, durante y después del
embarazo. Es *más tratable* de lo que
piensas. No estás *sola*.

Pedir ayuda es lo más *valiente*
que puedes hacer.
Se puede *salir adelante*.

Hay vida más allá de la
tristeza posparto.

VDH DEPARTAMENTO
DE SALUD DE
VIRGINIA

Obtén ayuda para la depresión posparto
y problemas de salud mental materna,
para ti o para algún ser querido en
vdh.virginia.gov/beyond-the-blues

English & Spanish

Specs: 8.5x11

Flyers

Someone you love
before pregnancy, during it, after it -
might not
be ok.

Pain they can't explain.

Anger that comes out of nowhere.

A reassurance that won't lift.

Loss of joy in things they used to love.

Not recognizing themselves anymore.

Thoughts they won't say out loud.

Disappearing from loved ones.

Loss of joy in things they used to love.

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Disappearing from loved ones.

VDH VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Find out how to help them get Beyond The Blues.

We have people and resources to help everyone get through this.
www.virginia.gov/beyond-the-blues

Insert Logo Here

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Insert Logo Here

“Symptom Checker” English

Specs: 8.5x11, available in color and black and white

Flyers

Alguien a quien amas
antes, durante o después del embarazo...
puede que no
esté bien.

Malestar
Inexplicable.

Je sin
motivo
aparente.

Alejamiento
de sus seres
queridos.

Ansiedad
que no
desaparece.

Pensamientos
que no se
atravien
a expresar.

Pérdida de la
alegría en
cosas que antes
disfrutabas.

No se
recuperan
a sí
mismas.

VDH DEPARTAMENTO
DE SALUD DE
VIRGINIA

Descubre cómo
ayudarles a superar
la tristeza posparto.

Contamos con especialistas y recursos
para ayudar a reducir y superar esta situación.
vdh.virginia.gov/beyond-the-blues

Insert Logo Here



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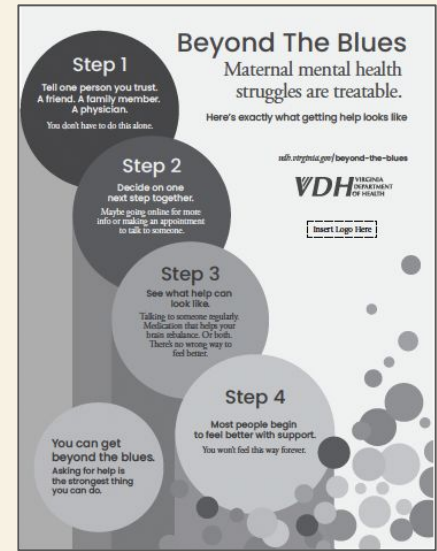
Insert Logo Here



“Symptom Checker”: Spanish

Specs: 8.5x11, available in color and black and white

Flyers



“Checklist”: English

Specs: 8.5x11, available in color and black and white

Flyers

Más allá de la tristeza
Los problemas de salud mental materna tienen tratamiento.
Aquí te explicamos cómo obtener ayuda.

Paso 1
Cuéntaselo a una persona de confianza. Un amigo. Un familiar. Un médico.
No tienes que hacerlo sola.

Paso 2
Decidan juntos el siguiente paso.
Quisiera buscar más información en línea o programar una cita para hablar con alguien.

Paso 3
Descubre qué opciones de ayuda existen.
Habla con alguien reguladamente. Medicamentos que ayudan a tu cerebro a recuperar el equilibrio. O ambas cosas. No hay una forma incorrecta de sentirse mejor.

Paso 4
La mayoría de las personas empiezan a sentirse mejor con apoyo.
No te sentirás así para siempre.

Puedes superar la tristeza.
Pedir ayuda es lo más importante que puedes hacer.

vdh.virginia.gov/beyond-the-blues
VDH DEPARTAMENTO DE SALUD DE VIRGINIA
Insert Logo Here

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VDH DEPARTAMENTO DE SALUD DE VIRGINIA
Insert Logo Here

“Checklist”: Spanish

Specs: 8.5x11, available in color and black and white

Flyers

Text someone you're worried about.

From fertility to pregnancy to loss, if a person in your life is struggling — don't wait for the perfect words. Don't feel awkward. Just send a text. Maternal mental health struggles can improve, and you can help them get beyond the blues. Here's a few texts scripts you can send to check in.

Hi! Haven't heard from you in awhile. ❤️ Can I bring some coffee or lunch over today?

I've been thinking about you a lot lately. You don't have to reply. You don't have to be ok. Just know I'm here. ❤️

Can I come over and sit with the baby for a couple hours so you can sleep? No need to talk. ❤️ Just rest.

No one tells you how hard this can be. I know, I've been there. Here if you ever want to chat. ❤️

Find out how to help them get Beyond The Blues.
vdh.virginia.gov/beyond-the-blues



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“What to Say”: English

Specs: 8.5x11, available in color and black and white

Flyers

Si estás preocupado por alguien, envíale un mensaje.

Desde la fertilidad hasta el embarazo y la pérdida, si alguien en tu vida está pasando por dificultades, no esperes a encontrar las palabras perfectas. No te sientas incómodo. Simplemente envía un mensaje. Las dificultades de la salud mental materna pueden mejorar, y tú puedes ayudar a que reciban ayuda.

¡Hola! Hace tiempo que no sé de ti. ¿Te puedo llevar café o algo de comer hoy?

Últimamente, he estado pensando mucho en ti. No tienes que contestar. No tienes que estar bien. Solo quiero que sepas que estoy aquí.

¿Puedo ir a tu casa y cuidar al bebé un par de horas para que puedas dormir? No hace falta que hablemos. Solo descansa.

Nadie te dice lo difícil que puede ser esto. Lo sé, lo he vivido. Estoy aquí si alguna vez quieres hablar.

Descubre cómo ayudarles a superar la tristeza posparto.

www.organo.gov/beyond-the-blues

VDH DEPARTAMENTO DE SALUD DE VIRGINIA

Insert Logo Here

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VDH DEPARTAMENTO DE SALUD DE VIRGINIA

Insert Logo Here

“What to Say”: Spanish

Specs: 8.5x11, available in color and black and white

Social Share Best Practices Guide

Social media best practices.

Perinatal and postpartum depression affects 1 in 5 new mothers and many go without help. VDH and DBHDS's Beyond the Blues campaign gives your organization ready-to-use social content to spread awareness, reduce stigma, and connect families to support. This guide will help you use that content effectively on Facebook and Instagram.

Be sure to include:

VDH [@vadbhds](#) [#BeyondTheBlues](#) [@viriniadepthhealth](#)

How to *share* the content

Repost our posts

For on Facebook or Instagram, use the Share/Repost button so attribution is automatic and the link carries through.

On Facebook:

- **Share** the post directly to your page. Add a sentence introducing why it matters to your community.
- **Like and comment** to boost algorithmic reach. A brief "Sharing this important resource with our community" is enough.
- **Tag your network.** Mention sister organizations or local providers in comments.

On Instagram:

- Use **Add Post to Story** or the **repost button** on the post (next to the comment button) to share VDH content.
- On **Stories**, add a sticker or brief message. Add the link to [vdl.gov/beyond-the-blues](#) to the story to give your audience direct resources.

Post on your page

Use the social resources from *Beyond the Blues Resource Hub*. Download the graphic(s), paste the suggested caption, and include [vdl.gov/beyond-the-blues](#) in every post. Use the link in bio on Instagram to add the link to your list and then reference it in captions.

Caption Tips

- Lead with empathy, not statistics. Feel free to share stories.
- Always end with a clear call to action: "Learn more at [vdl.gov/beyond-the-blues](#)"
- Use inclusive language. PPD affects all birthing people
- Avoid clinical jargon; write as if speaking to a friend

Responding to Followers in Distress: If a follower shares that they are struggling or in crisis in your comments or DMs, respond with warmth and direct them to available resources. Do not attempt to counsel through social media. Suggested reply: "We hear you, and you are not alone. Please reach out to the 24/7 Suicide & Crisis Helpline (call or text 988) or talk to your provider. Warm support is available at [vdl.gov/beyond-the-blues](#)."

Downloadable Guide

Social Sharables Carousel



“Symptom Checker”:
English
Specs: 1200 x 628

Caption: If someone you know is suffering, they can't push through alone. Learn how to offer support or help them find help.
vdh.virginia.gov/BeyondTheBlues

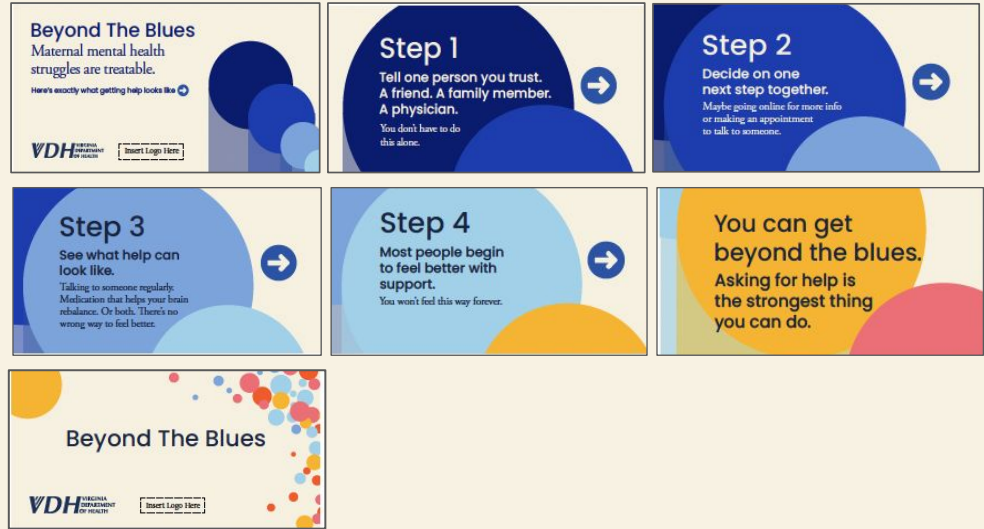
Social Sharables Carousel



“Symptom Checker”:
Spanish
Specs: 1200 x 628

Caption: Si alguien que conoces está pasando por un mal momento y no puede superarlo sola, aprende cómo apoyarla o ayúdala a buscar apoyo.
vdh.virginia.gov/BeyondTheBlues

Social Sharables Carousel



“Checklist”

English

Specs: 1200 x 628

Caption: For anyone navigating maternal mental health — or supporting someone who is. Swipe through to see what getting help actually looks like. It's more possible than you think. Beyond the Blues.
vdh.virginia.gov/beyond-the-blues

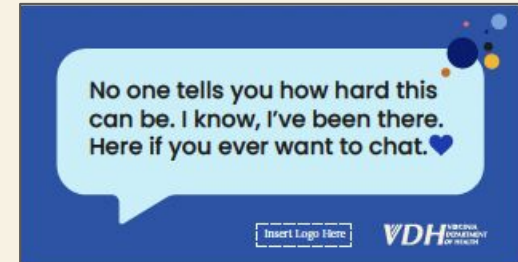
Social Sharables Carousel



“Checklist”
Spanish
Specs: 1200 x 628

Caption: Para cualquiera que esté pasando por problemas de salud mental materna, o que esté apoyando a alguien que los esté pasando, desliza la pantalla para ver cómo pedir ayuda. ¡Es más fácil de lo que crees!
vdh.virginia.gov/BeyondTheBlues

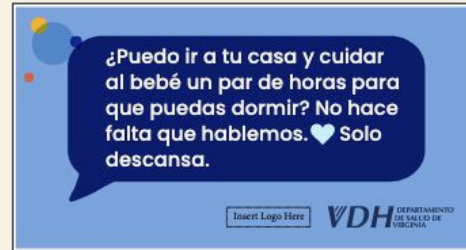
Social Sharables Carousel



“What to Say”
English
Specs: 1200 x 628

Caption: From fertility to pregnancy to loss, if a person in your life is struggling — don't wait for the perfect words. Don't feel awkward. Just send a text. Maternal mental health struggles CAN improve, and you can help them get help.
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/beyond-the-blues>

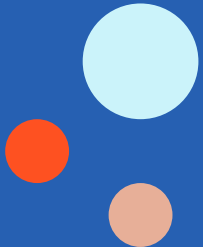
Social Sharables Carousel




Caption: Ya se trate de problemas de fertilidad, embarazo o pérdida, si alguien cercano está pasando por un mal momento, no esperes a encontrar las palabras perfectas. Simplemente envíale un mensaje. Los problemas de salud mental relacionados con la maternidad pueden mejorar, y tú puedes ayudar.

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/beyond-the-blues>

“What to Say”
Spanish
Specs: 1200 x 628



Email Blast



You don't have to "fix" postpartum depression alone.

Help is real. Hope is real.

Before pregnancy, during it, or long after — maternal mental health struggles don't always look like sadness. Sometimes they look like exhaustion that sleep won't fix. Rage that comes out of nowhere. Pain you can't explain. Going quiet. Stopping the small things that used to bring you joy.

These struggles are more common than most people know.
And more treatable than most people believe.

You are not weak. You are not alone. There are resources and people who are ready to help.

Find help and resources at vdh.virginia.gov/beyond-the-blues

[Learn more](#)

VDH VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Subject Line: Is it more than just the baby blues?
Specs: 700 width max

A decorative graphic consisting of four circles of varying sizes and colors: a large blue circle at the top left, a smaller red circle to its left, and two smaller light blue circles below the blue one.

Earned Media Tools



Key Messages Guide

Best used for: press releases, talking points, speech writing, email communications

Spotting the blues.

Virginia Department of Health and Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services' *"Beyond the Blues"* campaign was built to help Virginians recognize emotional changes earlier, reduce stigma, and connect parents and families to support before challenges become a crisis.

Talking about Perinatal and Postpartum Depression in Virginia.

Maternal mental health exists on a spectrum.
A parent can look "fine" and still need support. It can show up as sadness, anxiety, rage, numbness, fear, or simply feeling unlike yourself. Oftentimes early symptoms get dismissed and severe symptoms can feel shameful.

These struggles are common and treatable.
Perinatal and postpartum depression are a significant yet often invisible crisis across Virginia. Remind parents they don't have to be in crisis to deserve help. Asking for support is not weakness. It is a step toward healing.

Stigma keeps too many parents silent.
Fear of judgment, or of being seen as unfit, stops parents from speaking up. Support should feel safe, human, and free of judgment for every family.

Support is a community responsibility.
Partners, family, friends, faith leaders, healthcare providers, and neighbors all have a role. One conversation can make a difference.

Trusted voices and spaces matter.
Parents turn to people and places they already know. That's why VDH and DBHDS are teaming up to create this campaign and provide resources where parents are.

75% of people struggling with maternal mental health never get help.

VDH VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Connect with your community.

For partners & community

You don't have to have the right words. Just showing up and asking matters more than you know.

For parents

You are not alone. You do not have to know what is wrong before asking for help. If something feels off, that matters.

For healthcare providers

You are a trusted touchpoint. How you ask is just as important as whether you ask.

The people closest to a parent are often the first line of support. You don't need to be an expert. You just need to show up. Check in even when someone says they're fine. Take early signs seriously. Offer something specific: a meal, a ride, an hour of childcare. One conversation can change everything.

Maternal mental health struggles can happen at any point before, during, or long after pregnancy. If something feels off, that feeling matters even if you can't name it. You don't have to be in a crisis to need or deserve support. Caring for yourself is part of caring for your family. Help is available, and recovery is real.

Screening opens the door but how we ask, listen, and respond determines whether parents walk through it. Use plain language and normalize the conversation before asking sensitive questions. Recognize the barriers that affect disclosure: racism, trauma, and fear of consequences. Always offer a clear next step, not just a referral. Community partners, doulas, and health workers are force multipliers for trust and access.

Be mindful.

Do say: maternal mental health, postpartum depression, "common and treatable", "support is available", "you are not alone"; "you do not have to be in crisis to deserve support"; "support networks have a role to play"

Skip saying: "just baby blues", hormonal, crazy, unfit, "bad mother", "severe cases only", "ask your doctor" as the only call to action, overly "medical" jargon like PMADS, anything that implies the parent is responsible for solving this alone

Share the resource of
vdh.gov/beyond-the-blues

VDH VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Downloadable Guide

A decorative graphic in the top left corner consisting of four circles: a large blue circle, a small red circle, and two smaller light blue circles.

Activation in a Box: Blue Dot Message Wall



Activation Summary

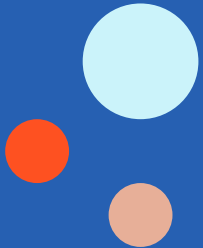
From Awareness to Action

The activation and earned media efforts extend the *Beyond the Blues* campaign beyond paid media and into trusted community spaces where parents and their support networks already seek connection, information, and support.

Rooted in authentic storytelling and trusted voices, the Blue Dot Message Wall creates a visible, welcoming moment for Virginians to engage with maternal mental health through messages of encouragement, lived experiences, and practical tools for recognizing when support may be needed.

The Richmond Public Library launch will serve as the first community activation and earned media moment, generating local and regional visibility while sparking meaningful conversations across communities. From there, digital and physical activation kits will help local health departments, libraries, and community partners replicate the experience statewide.

Together, these efforts make the campaign more personal, accessible, and scalable across Virginia.



Blue Dot Message Wall



A Community Message & Support Experience

Goal

The goal is to create a visible, welcoming community moment that helps parents feel seen and gives supporters simple ways to respond.

Audience

- *Primary:* Pregnant and postpartum parents across Virginia
- *Secondary:* Partners, family members, and support networks
- *Messengers:* Healthcare providers, community organizations, and trusted local voices

The Idea

This approach centers on the Blue Dot Message Wall as a community activation anchor, bringing together real stories from Virginia parents, visible messages of support, and simple tools that help people understand what maternal mental health can look like and how to support someone who may be struggling.

Earned Media Opportunity

This activation creates a strong visual and community-driven moment that can be shared through local and regional media, highlighting real stories and community participation.

Reference: Activation Poster Kits available. “Beyond the Blues Local Media & Partner Outreach Materials”

Uses: downloadable templates for a press release, media advisory, and newsletter/email blurb.

How It Comes to Life



What It Looks Like

A one-day kickoff activation hosted in a high-traffic, accessible community location (such as a library, clinic, or community center), featuring a branded message wall, integrated story elements, and a small action station with take-home tools. This activation is meant to be approachable and interactive, and have the feeling of a visible pop-up community experience rather than a large public event.

Core Elements

- **Message Wall:** A large, branded 5 X 5 poster where community members can leave notes of encouragement and support for new parents.
- **Real Stories:** Short, printed quotes from Virginia parents integrated into the wall to reflect lived experiences.
- **Action Station:** A small, staffed or self-guided table with simple prompts and scripts that show people how to check in on a parent or offer support

Earned Media Opportunity

A visual, community-driven activation that can be pitched to local and regional media, highlighting real stories and community participation.

Reference: Activation Poster Kits available. “Beyond the Blues Local Media & Partner Outreach Materials”

Uses: downloadable templates for a press release, media advisory, and newsletter/email blurb.

What People Experience



At the center of this activation is a simple, guided experience designed to help people move from awareness to action and leave with both a sense of connection and a clear next step.

At the Activation

- Hear or see real stories from Virginia parents that reflect a range of postpartum experiences
- Contribute a message of encouragement to someone who may be struggling
- Learn simple, practical ways to check in and support a parent
- Take an immediate action (send a text, start a conversation, or share a resource)

Takeaway Materials

- Toolkit Flyers
- Use QR code linking directly to VDH resources and support services

Trusted Voices

- Presence of healthcare providers or community partners to guide conversations
- Opportunities for informal, one-on-one support and questions

Designed for Scalability

Beyond a Single Event

This activation begins with a flagship community event and is designed to be replicated across Virginia through local partners.

Toolkit Approach

A simple, ready-to-use “activation in a box” toolkit allows local partners to replicate the experience in their own communities. Each toolkit is designed to be easy to implement using simple, low-cost materials and can be set up by partners in under an hour.

Where It Can Live

Local partners can host this activation in trusted, high-traffic community spaces, including:

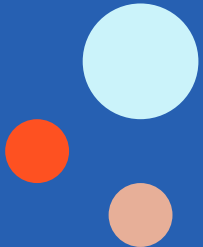
- Local health departments
- Clinics and hospitals
- Libraries and community centers
- Parent groups and community organizations

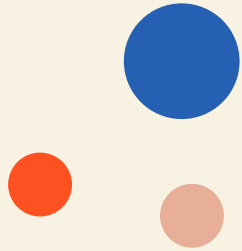
Long-Term Impact

By embedding the activation in trusted community spaces, the campaign can continue to reach parents and their support networks over time—reinforcing messages and encouraging ongoing support behaviors.

Reference: Activation Poster Kits available. “Beyond the Blues Local Media & Partner Outreach Materials”

Uses: downloadable templates for a press release, media advisory, and newsletter/email blurb.





Thank you.

vdh.virginia.gov/beyond-the-blues

