

**A
BILL**

further to amend the Mental Health Ordinance, 2001

WHEREAS it is expedient further to amend the Mental Health Ordinance, 2001 (Ordinance VIII of 2001), in its application to the Islamabad Capital Territory, for the purposes hereinafter appearing;

It is hereby enacted as follows: -

1. Short title and commencement. - (1) This Act may be called the Mental Health (Amendment) Act, 2026.

(2) It shall come into force at once.

2. Amendment of section 2, Ordinance VIII of 2001. - In the Mental Health Ordinance, 2001 (Ordinance VIII of 2001), hereinafter referred to as the said Ordinance, in section 2, in sub-section (1),-

(i) after paragraph (j), the following new paragraph shall be inserted, namely:-

"(ja) **"maternal mental health"** means the mental health and emotional well-being of women during pregnancy and up to one year postpartum;"

(ii) after paragraph (q), the following new paragraphs shall be inserted, namely:-

"(qa) **"postpartum depression"** means a mental health condition characterized by feelings of sadness, anxiety, fatigue and difficulty coping with daily tasks that occur during the postpartum period;

"(qb) **"postpartum psychosis"** means a severe mental health condition following childbirth, involving hallucinations, delusions and an impaired sense of reality;"

3. Amendment of section 3, Ordinance VIII of 2001. - In the said Ordinance, in section 3, in sub-section (7),-

(i) in paragraph (c), for the semi-colon ";" occurring at the end, a colon ":" shall be substituted and thereafter, the following proviso shall be added, namely:-

"Provided that special community support programs shall be established, including support groups for new mothers and counselling services for families;"

- (ii) in paragraph (i), for the semi-colon ";" occurring at the end, a colon ":" shall be substituted and thereafter, the following proviso shall be added, namely:-

"Provided that special public awareness campaigns shall be conducted to educate families and communities about postpartum mental health;"

4. Amendment of section 6, Ordinance VIII of 2001. - In the said Ordinance, in section 6, after sub-section (3), the following new sub-section shall be added, namely:-

"(4) The Federal Government shall establish specialized maternal mental health units within existing hospitals in Islamabad, equipped with:

- (a) psychiatrists, psychologists and trained counsellors specializing in maternal mental health;
- (b) facilities for inpatient care for mothers experiencing severe postpartum psychosis.

These units shall collaborate with maternity wards to ensure integrated care for new mothers."

5. Insertion of new section 7A, in Ordinance VIII of 2001. - In the said Ordinance, after section 7, the following new section shall be inserted, namely:-

"7A. Maternal Mental Health Care. -Federal Government shall set up the following facilities for maternal mental health care in Islamabad Capital Territory:

- (a) all public and private healthcare facilities in Islamabad must screen women for postpartum mental health conditions during prenatal and postnatal visits. Screenings shall include assessments for postpartum depression, anxiety and psychosis;
- (b) women diagnosed with postpartum mental health conditions shall be entitled to free or subsidized mental health care at public facilities; and
- (c) provision of maternal mental health services, including postpartum care, shall be prioritized in all public and private mental health facilities. Special attention shall be given to rural and underserved areas within Islamabad."

6. **Insertion of new section 56A, in Ordinance VIII of 2001.** - In the said Ordinance, after section 56, the following new section shall be inserted, namely:-

"56A. Training of Healthcare Professionals. -All healthcare professionals working in obstetrics, gynaecology and paediatrics must receive training on identifying and managing postpartum mental health conditions."

STATEMENT OBJECTS AND REASONS

Research indicates that postpartum depression (PPD) affects a significant percentage of women in Pakistan, with studies reporting prevalence rates ranging from 28% to 63%, depending on socioeconomic, cultural and healthcare factors. And whereas the lack of awareness, stigma, and insufficient mental health care services exacerbate maternal mental health issues, leading to adverse outcomes for mothers, infants, and families. The amendments proposed through this bill seek to prioritize maternal mental health care, recognizing postpartum depression and related conditions as significant public health concerns. It emphasizes early detection, comprehensive treatment, public awareness and community support to ensure the mental well-being of mothers in Islamabad. Addressing to maternal mental health issues, particularly postpartum depression and to enhance mental health care services for mothers in Islamabad is one of the most significant basic rights of a mother, pregnant women and new born baby.

2. This Bill has been designed to achieve the said purpose.

SENATOR SAMINA MUMTAZ ZEHRI
MEMBER-IN-CHARGE