TOP 10

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT OF NICU PARENTS

Essential evidence-based practices that can transform the health and well being of NICU families and staff

based on the National Perinatal Association’s Interdisciplinary Recommendations for Psychosocial Support of NICU Parents

1. **PROMOTE PARTICIPATION**
   Honor parents’ role as primary caregiver. Actively welcome parents to participate during rounds and shift changes. Remove any barriers to 24/7 parental involvement and avoid unnecessary separation of parents from their infants.

2. **LEAD IN DEVELOPMENTAL CARE**
   Teach parents how to read their baby’s cues. Harness your staff’s knowledge, skills, and experience to mentor families in the principles of neuroprotection & developmental care and to promote attachment.

3. **FACILITATE PEER SUPPORT**
   Invest in your own NICU Parent Support program with dedicated staff. Involve veteran NICU parents. Partner with established parent-to-parent support organizations in your community to provide continuity of care.

4. **ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH**
   Prioritize mental health by building a team of social workers and psychologists who are available to meet with and support families. Provide appropriate therapeutic interventions. Consult with staff on trauma-informed care – as well as the critical importance of self-care.

5. **SCREEN EARLY AND OFTEN**
   Establish trusting and therapeutic relationships with parents by meeting with them within 72 hours of admission. Follow up during the first week with a screening for common maternal & paternal risk factors. Provide anticipatory guidance that can help normalize NICU distress and timely interventions when needed. Re-screen prior to discharge.

6. **OFFER PALLIATIVE & BEREAVEMENT CARE**
   Support families and NICU staff as they grieve. Stay current with best practices in palliative care and bereavement support. Build relationships with service providers in your community.

7. **PLAN FOR THE TRANSITION HOME**
   Set families up for success by providing comprehensive pre-discharge education and support. Create an expert NICU discharge team that works with parents to find specialists, connect with service providers, schedule follow-up appointments, order necessary medical supplies, and fill Rx.

8. **FOLLOW UP**
   Re-connect with families post-discharge. Make follow-up calls. Facilitate in-home visits with community-based service providers, including Early Intervention. Partner with professionals and paraprofessionals who can screen families for emotional distress and provide timely therapeutic interventions and supports.

9. **SUPPORT NICU CARE GIVERS**
   Provide comprehensive staff education and support on how to best meet families’ psychosocial needs, as well as their own. Acknowledge and address feelings that lead to “burnout.”

10. **HELP US HEAL**
    Welcome the pastoral care team into your NICU to serve families & staff.

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Welcome!