

Tulane, Blue Cross Foundation launch free programs to help new parents and babies

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TBEARS and NOLA Strong at Tulane University are being funded by a new grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Louisiana. (Photo by Shutterstock)

Becoming a parent can be exciting but overwhelming, and new programs through Tulane University aim to give new moms and dads the tools they need to bond with their babies.

The programs, Tulane Building Early Relationships (TBEARS) and NOLA STRONG (Strengthening Resources for Nurturing and Growth) for Moms are offered through a collaboration between Tulane University School of Medicine and Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. The programs are being funded through a new grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation.

TBEARS provides support to any infant caregiver struggling with their child's behavior. It could be a newborn having trouble sleeping, or a mom not feeling a strong sense of connection with her infant. The support begins when a frustrated parent calls TBEARS. All calls are returned within 24 hours during the weekdays, and TBEARS providers schedule sessions either at the office or in the family's home.

"When the sessions take place in the home, we're able to see what the environment is like and ways to help with some the parents' struggles," says Sherryl Heller, program director and clinical associate professor of psychiatry at Tulane School of Medicine. "We can be in a home anywhere from an hour to three hours, depending on what that family's need is at the moment, and most families have four sessions with us."

NOLA STRONG brings together new mothers who are battling postpartum depression and anxiety, using an evidence-based approach to help ease stress.

“This allows moms to join a group of people they can connect with who are having the same struggles,” Heller said. “Research shows that social connection piece can be very helpful in alleviating depression.”

Parents can reach TBEARS by visiting www.tbears.org or by calling (504) 988-9222.