



# HEALTHY STEPS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN PROGRAM

## PROTOCOL: LINKAGES TO COMMUNITY RESOURCES

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### I. DEFINITION

As an expanded system of primary care for young children, Healthy Steps<sup>SM</sup> helps mothers and fathers gain access to resources, services, and information available in their communities that can help them cope with their responsibilities, and can reduce the isolation that new mothers and fathers often experience. To facilitate such linkages, Healthy Steps practices will make available, in their offices, parent-to-parent bulletin boards, lending libraries, and binders or rolodexes containing information on community resources, such as child care, parent/play groups, educational activities, and referral and treatment programs. They will reach out to families through a practice newsletter and may want to set up Internet home-pages. The Healthy Steps Specialist will coordinate and supervise the operation, production, and/or maintenance of these resources to ensure their accuracy, relevancy, and timeliness. These linkages extend the role of the practice to serve as an enriched resource center for children and families.

#### Objectives:

- Promote the exchange of information among Healthy Steps families in the practice.
- Provide mothers and fathers with easy access to available information on the practice and community resources related to family health and child development.
- Encourage mothers and fathers to seek assistance, if needed, by providing information on referral and treatment programs.

### II. SPECIFICATIONS

#### A. Linkage Mechanisms:

**1. Community resources.** Healthy Steps Specialists, in cooperation with other staff of the practice, will compile a binder/rolodex or a comparably useful set of informational materials regarding available community resources, including:

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|----------------------------|------------------------|
| • Health                   | • Child care           |
| • Mental health/counseling | • Financial aid        |
| • Nutrition                | • Job training         |
| • Clothing                 | • Transportation       |
| • Housing                  | • Support groups       |
| • School/education         | • Alcohol/drugs        |
| • Recreation/activities    | • Emergencies/Hotlines |

Copies of the binder should be available for mothers and fathers to consult at any time during their visit--in the waiting room, exam rooms, nursing office, Healthy Steps Specialists' office. Mothers and fathers should have opportunities to look up

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The Healthy Steps protocols were originally developed as program requirements for use in the national evaluation phase of the program. In order to ensure the integrity of the evaluation, all sites needed to implement Healthy Steps in virtually the same manner. Because evaluation concerns will not affect new practices beginning Healthy Steps operations, these practices will have considerable flexibility in shaping their Healthy Steps programs. New practices should therefore use these protocols as guidance in their decision making.

## LINKAGES TO COMMUNITY RESOURCES

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information on their own, and with reasonable privacy, since they may feel uncomfortable asking for resources on sensitive issues (such as Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, Domestic Violence Hotline, etc.). Practice staff should consult the binder or rolodex when making referrals. In addition, the Healthy Steps Specialist could create handouts listing key community resources for a specific area.

**2. Parent-to-parent bulletin board.** This bulletin board will be displayed in an area clearly visible to Healthy Steps families. Mothers and fathers will be able to use three-by-five colored index cards for many purposes, including: (1) sharing information on child care and babysitting opportunities, or informal play groups; (2) advertising a skill/trade useful to other families; (3) advertising used child care equipment; (4) sharing ideas and child care tips; and (5) posting notices for community activities and services. The Healthy Steps Specialist will maintain or oversee the upkeep of the bulletin board. The Healthy Steps team should encourage mothers and fathers to consult and contribute to the bulletin board.

**3. Lending library.** If office space permits, the practice may choose to create a lending library for Healthy Steps families, providing an informational resource of suggested books and videos on a range of child health and development issues. Rules should be established governing the use of library materials, such as due dates or the number of items a family can borrow at one time.

**B. Reference:** Chapter 7 of *Strategies for Change: Child Development in Primary Care for Young Children* addresses making referrals.

**C. Documentation for Implementation:** The Healthy Steps team will document the number and type of referrals made to the community resources for families enrolled in Healthy Steps on the Healthy Steps Encounter Form.

### III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES (EXAMPLES)

- Mothers and fathers will avail themselves of resources described above.
- Information on the practice, child care issues, and community resources will be readily available to mothers and fathers.
- Mothers and fathers will have greater knowledge of community resources.
- The Healthy Steps Specialist will make appropriate referrals to community resources.

### IV. MEASURES FOR LINKING FAMILIES WITH COMMUNITY RESOURCES (PARTIAL LIST)

- Number of referrals by the Healthy Steps Specialist.