

Who is the HS Specialist?

Practices should consider the role of the HS Specialist, their credentials, and implications for sustainability when hiring.

The candidate hired in the role of HealthySteps Specialist (HS Specialist) is an integral part of implementing the HealthySteps model. We recognize the importance of selecting someone who is a great fit for your practice, as its location, current staffing, and local workforce will inform the characteristics and skills of your HS Specialist.

What qualifications should they have?

At a minimum, the HS Specialist must hold a bachelor's degree in early childhood or a related field (any exceptions require HealthySteps National Office approval). Aside from this, the educational background of a HS Specialist can vary. It is ideal to have a master or doctoral-level HS Specialists serving families at your practice. Based on the responsibilities of a HS Specialist (see [sample job description](#)), we highly recommend that your practice hire a candidate with a mental health background (ideally early childhood mental health). Mental health professionals are well-suited for the position due to their clinical training, skills related to reflective practice, and ability to provide consultation and care coordination.

Implications for Billing and Reimbursement

Please be aware that the degree and credentials of HS Specialists have implications for future service reimbursement and overall program sustainability. In most states, licensed mental health professionals can bill for certain services. The credentials of your HS Specialist will not only affect salary and benefits but will determine your site's ability to bill and/or be reimbursed for services provided. Billing and reimbursement differ by provider type (i.e., the codes that can be billed and their reimbursement rates) and type of site (e.g., Federally Qualified Health Centers often have restrictions that prevent billing for multiple services on the same day), making it important to consider billing implications when identifying the desired credentials and qualifications for the HS Specialist. We understand that each state has different guidelines around billable services, recognized credentials, and reimbursement. Our policy and finance experts are available to answer general questions related to your state.