

HealthySteps Annual Report 2020





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THE VANGUARD
OF PEDIATRIC
PRIMARY CARE



THE VANGUARD OF PEDIATRIC PRIMARY CARE

Pediatric primary care presents an incredible opportunity to meet families where they are with people they trust—**90% of all babies and toddlers regularly see a pediatric primary care provider**. No other system has the same consistent and positive connection to families with young children.

Investing in team-based pediatric care ensures that every child has a strong start in life. When we combine early childhood development expertise with pediatrics, we make sure every family has the support and tools they need to foster their child's healthy development. This requires providing support beyond a focus on physical health—although life-saving vaccines are more important now than ever—to work with families to comprehensively support the social-emotional and behavioral health of the youngest members of our society. ZERO TO THREE's HealthySteps has successfully used this approach in primary care practices for 25 years.

The pandemic disrupted primary care, leading to dramatic declines in well-child visit attendance and vaccine rates, and the closing of thousands of primary care practices. However, practices using the innovative HealthySteps model fared better than their counterparts. HealthySteps practices remained open and quickly pivoted to make sure no opportunity was missed to help address families' new or ongoing needs, like sudden job loss and food insecurity. Many families were afraid to visit the medical setting, but HealthySteps was there to reassure and support them.

"I've been meeting all of our 9-month-old babies. They were born into this pandemic. It is amazing to meet with the babies and say, 'the world changed when you came into it.' I tell parents, you are not alone. And that I love being able to help you."

DANIKA DANKER, BS, BA,
HEALTHYSTEPS SPECIALIST

HealthySteps families are among the hardest hit by the pandemic, which is disproportionately harming those already most affected by poverty, inequity, and systemic racism. HealthySteps is an invaluable resource to ensure families have what they need, survive the pandemic, and truly thrive. We transform the promise of pediatric primary care across the nation by responding to family needs and supporting our pediatric colleagues.

Because of the comprehensive support HealthySteps provides and our track record of success, national media including [*NPR*](#), [*USA Today*](#), [*PBS Newshour*](#), [*Fox News*](#), and [*The New York Times*](#) featured HealthySteps and our experts as the vanguard of pediatric primary care. We now reach more than 300,000 children in over 180 sites nationwide, and as demand for our cutting-edge program grows, our scale accelerates.

We're well on our way to meeting our goal—serving more than 1 million young children and families annually by 2032.

Making a Difference Everyday

Bernadette flips through a stack of warm papers she just picked up from the office printer. There are urgent requests for basic support and questions filled with worry. As COVID-19 spreads, her stack has been getting larger as more and more families are in need. There are more requests for clothing and food, but also mental health support for parents. She adeptly navigates the tangled web of community providers and nonprofits to secure whatever her families need: food, diapers, and transportation. Her team makes sure that “no baby is left behind.”

The Ellis Medicine pediatric clinic hums with activity despite disruptions COVID-19 has brought to every aspect of daily life. It’s business as usual, with a twist. They schedule sick visits in the morning and well visits in the afternoon. While babies and toddlers still get their vaccinations, physicals, and screenings, parents are also able to talk about their fears and worries. Each appointment brings a new opportunity for Bernadette to connect families to what they need, and to offer support and hope amid the crisis.

For Bernadette, HealthySteps isn’t just about “cuddling bouncing babies and showing parents how to bond with newborns. It’s about providing wraparound services for families in need. Our families are in need all year round, pandemic or no pandemic.”

Later, she is on the phone because another family can’t find baby formula at the store. Bernadette has a solution for that. The parent’s relief is a physical lift for Bernadette. These small moments build trust and make the exhausting days all worth it; they buoy her motivation to support families, no matter what. With every medication accessed, every well-child visit scheduled, Bernadette sends out the message again and again that families are not alone.



Bernadette McDaniel, MSW, is a HealthySteps Specialist, HealthySteps National Ambassador, and is the recipient of a 2021 Bright Lights award from the New York State Association for Infant Mental Health.



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DEDICATION
TO SUPPORT

"It's amazing what [my HealthySteps Specialist] does. If I didn't have her in my corner then I definitely don't think that I would be where I am today with these kids."

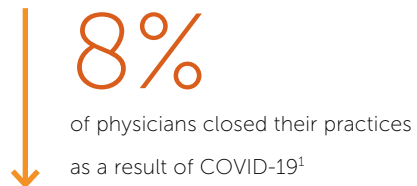
CANDACE SHARP,

A SINGLE PARENT RAISING THREE KIDS UNDER 4, INCLUDING XAVIER, HER 3-YEAR-OLD WHO HAS CHRONIC LUNG DISEASE, SLEEP APNEA, AND ASTHMA...AS SHARED WITH ARIZONA PUBLIC RADIO STATION KJZZ.

DEDICATION TO SUPPORT

HealthySteps sites around the nation mobilized to adjust their clinic flow, introduced telehealth into their practice, and continue to connect with patients remotely via phone, text, and even WhatsApp. As families faced growing needs, HealthySteps providers were resourceful in finding diapers, wipes, and formula for families.

To bolster their efforts, our National Office piloted a partnership with [Baby2Baby](#) to provide direct relief to families. Baby2Baby distributed **more than 12,000 diapers and 30,000 wipes** to HealthySteps practices in south Florida to meet families' essential and urgent needs. We are expanding this pilot to more sites across the country.



1. The Physicians Foundation's 2020 Survey of America's Physicians



HealthySteps Breaks the Mold

Anand still comes into the sterilized clinic but no longer sees families in person. He misses the warm handoffs and welcoming families into a physical space and introducing himself. Now, he's in their homes, chatting to them through video. While he misses connecting in the clinic, he's still in their lives and has access he didn't have before. When visiting with a family, he models for mom how to encourage her picky eating 3-year-old to try new foods and offers her strategies to manage her stress around mealtimes. He would model this in the clinic, but being in the apartment with them, joining mom and her son where they share meals, is an opportunity he's glad to have.

When families don't have internet, he provides the same support over the phone. "I remember a desperate mother who had twin babies and a 3-year-old. She lost her husband to COVID-19. I remember this very well because she was going through the unimaginable. He was the breadwinner, so she had no financial support and needed help to support her children materially and emotionally. I call every week and we talk about how she is doing, how her babies are. It created hope for her and me."

Anand knows this is nothing like what he's experienced before, but despite the cascade of hardships COVID-19 brought, he's optimistic: "We can think outside the box and be creative and realize that the role of the HealthySteps Specialist is not confined to just what we were doing before the pandemic."

Anand Patel, PsyD, is a HealthySteps Specialist at Montefiore Medical Group in Bronx, New York.



INNOVATION IN CARE

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INNOVATION IN CARE

In a year that saw primary care practices closing and health care systems struggling to stay afloat, the adoption of HealthySteps continued. When in-person training for new sites abruptly stopped in March, we quickly picked up speed in May and transitioned to a fully virtual training experience, onboarding 18 new sites before the year ended. Together, we're changing the trajectories of children's lives.

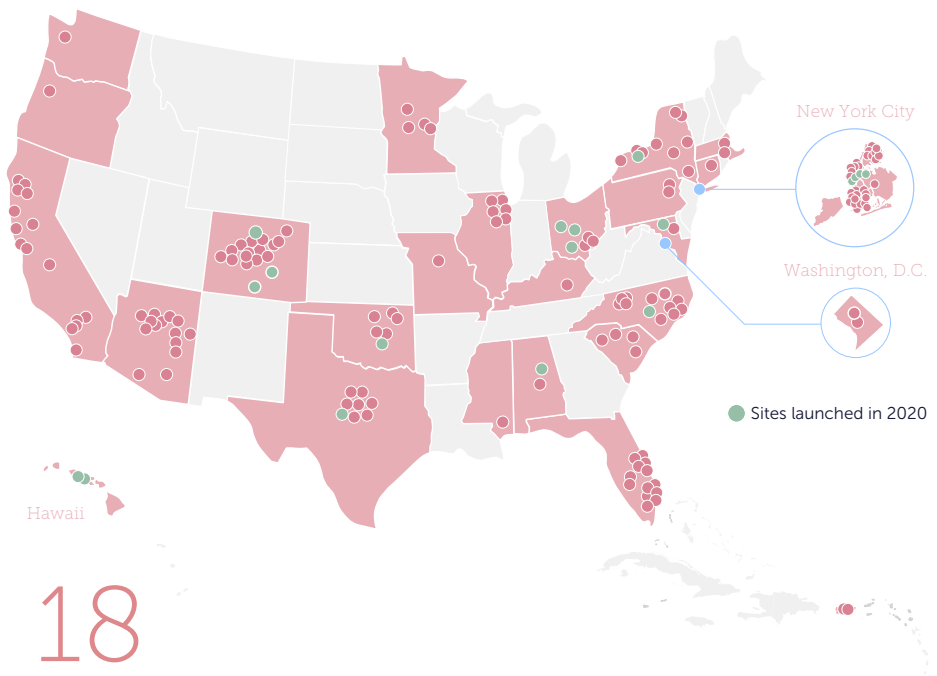
OUR IMPACT

300,000+

Children and families reached

250+

HealthySteps Specialists



18

New sites

3

New military bases: Fort Bragg, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, and Marine Corps Base-Hawaii

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New state: Hawaii



"I believe more than ever HealthySteps is serving as a buffer for families. The other day I was talking with a family with a 2-year-old and recognized that due to the pandemic, half of his life has been spent living in a small New York City apartment. This is isolating and different. Our outreach gives families a sense of trust. It lets them know someone is looking out for them. It really reinforces our role in nurturing and holding the parents so they can, in turn, hold their children and help them grow."

ALBA CABRAL, PHD,
HEALTHYSTEPS SPECIALIST



POWER OF PREVENTION

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POWER OF PREVENTION

Across the country health care payers, states, federal agencies, and the media recognized HealthySteps and our team of experts as the leader in preventive team-based pediatric primary care. We continued to build momentum and galvanize support for sustainable funding for the cutting-edge HealthySteps model.

- Colorado maintained its state-level investment in HealthySteps despite the pandemic.
- More than half of New York HealthySteps sites received reimbursement through Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program.
- We secured a first-of-its-kind billing pathway to pay for prevention from the largest Medicaid health plan in San Francisco County.
- We pioneered partnerships with state Title V Maternal & Child Health Bureau and Medicaid administrators to advance health equity in rural communities in South Carolina.
- The Office of the California Surgeon General cited HealthySteps as an exemplary program in the first-ever report, *Roadmap for Resilience: The California Surgeon General’s Report on Adverse Childhood Experiences, Toxic Stress, and Health.*
- The *Prenatal-to-3 Policy Clearinghouse* includes HealthySteps as an effective comprehensive screening and referral program.



BUILDING BACK BETTER

Even before COVID-19 shook the world, families with young children faced challenges that risk many babies' and toddlers' healthy development, especially babies and toddlers of color and those in families with low incomes, according to the [*State of Babies Yearbook: 2020*](#).

As the Biden-Harris administration prepared to take office, it faced choices that would profoundly affect the trajectory of the youngest among us. We urged the incoming Biden administration to respond to the immediate needs created by the pandemic and to build a better foundation for babies and toddlers.

HealthySteps is a promising solution to bolster the health and well-being of America's youngest children and their families and lay a strong foundation for our future. The Biden administration can put forth a robust budget that comprehensively funds pediatric preventive care and can ultimately transform how we care for children in this country. The Biden K-12 campaign agenda describes using the approach embodied by HealthySteps in Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and pediatric practices with high percentages of patients enrolled in Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program. FQHCs are the logical place to start, given the high proportion of children in families with low incomes served in these facilities and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid's ability to shape the care they provide.

To deliver on this promise, we recommended creating a new Primary Care Child Development Initiative as a signature proposal to be included in President Biden’s first budget proposal for fiscal year 2022.

Because of our innovative approach and extensive experience implementing HealthySteps in FQHCs and other settings serving families with low incomes, we are uniquely positioned to support the new administration’s ambitious goal.





Baby Carlie Avoids the Hospital

Sarah arrives for her baby's 1-month well-child checkup hoping for the best. Carlie, her daughter, was born prematurely and has not been eating very much over the last few weeks.

The COVID-19 pandemic is just starting to unfold around them, and the office is quieter than normal as many staff work from home or have reduced their schedules. The doctor's office is the last place Sarah wants to be as a mysterious new disease takes hold of the world, but it is the one place where she can get answers.

Sarah begins talking about Carlie's feeding habits and when she places Carlie on the scale, Dr. Prince, her pediatrician, looks worried. Because Carlie isn't gaining weight, she recommends admitting Carlie to a children's hospital 100 miles away in Aurora, Colorado. She knows this is not the news Sarah wants. To offer additional support to Sarah and Carlie, she connects Sarah with Renee, the HealthySteps Specialist and lactation consultant.

Renee reassures Sarah and offers some feeding suggestions while they wait for Dr. Prince to complete the hospital admissions process. They try several techniques and Carlie immediately sucks down her bottle. Sarah is thrilled. Her baby had not eaten like this, ever. Renee is thrilled too and rushes to find Dr. Prince, who gladly ends her call with hospital admissions. The team agrees to observe Carlie for 24 hours, and everyone is feeling optimistic as Carlie eats. Sarah drives home, feeling a huge weight roll off her shoulders.

After several visits and Carlie's great progress, Dr. Prince and Renee spot a small challenge with Carlie's breathing, which might have contributed to her early struggle to gain weight. Eventually, Sarah and Carlie make the trip to the hospital for surgery to correct the breathing issue. Sarah, still a little uneasy about the surgery, feels better knowing she has Renee on her care team.



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COMMITTED
TO IMPACT

COMMITTED TO IMPACT

While the adoption of HealthySteps accelerates each year, we're committed to supporting our sites to implement the model with fidelity to ensure evidence-based positive outcomes.

Given the demands placed on practices by the COVID-19 pandemic, we offered sites the option of completing a newly developed Fidelity Self-Assessment (FSA) instead of doing full-scale Annual Site Reporting (ASR). The FSA was a flexible option for sites so that HealthySteps practices could assess their progress toward our metrics and identify opportunities for improvement while avoiding a more time-intensive data report during a crisis. We designed the FSA utilizing implementation science methods and it consists of fidelity scales, a scorecard, and an action plan. The majority of HealthySteps sites are well on track to achieve their model fidelity goals. And because of our robust fidelity support infrastructure, they have a pathway to ensure they'll get there.



90+%

response rate at the close of
the reporting period for new sites



81%

of new sites are on track to meet fidelity
or are ahead of fidelity expectation





HEALTHYSTEPS JOINS EARLY RELATIONAL HEALTH MEASUREMENT AND ACTION NETWORK

Relationships are at the heart of HealthySteps. We partnered with the [Center for the Study of Social Policy](#), [EC PRISM at the University of Oregon's Center for Translational Neuroscience](#), [Pediatrics Supporting Parents](#), and [Family Voices](#) to advance the use and acceptability of observational measurement tools of [early relational health](#) (ERH) in pediatric practices. We are focused on seeking stakeholder input in this initial phase to inform the development and testing of ERH tools and measures in pediatric primary care.

FOCUS ON QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Across the country, innovative pediatric primary care practices are using HealthySteps—as well as continuous quality improvement (CQI)—to improve the healthy development and well-being of babies and toddlers. In partnership with three HealthySteps sites, we launched the [Outcome Pilots Study](#) in 2018 to assess our model's influence on five outcomes important to healthy child development and family well-being: breastfeeding, social-emotional development, early childhood obesity, maternal depression, and well-child visit attendance. Learn more about their work, which continued despite COVID-19, in our [CQI Snapshots](#).



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OUR
SUPPORTERS

COMMITTED TO IMPACT

The HealthySteps National Office at ZERO TO THREE is grateful for the generous support of our funders, including a community of individual donors, and their shared commitment to transform the lives of young children and their families.

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OUR ADVISORS

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LITTLE
SISTER**

SUPPORT
HEALTHY STEPS
TODAY.
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TO BRING
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COMMUNITY OR
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HEALTHY STEPS.ORG

HealthySteps is an evidence-based program of ZERO TO THREE, the nation's leading nonprofit working to ensure all babies and toddlers have a strong start in life. HealthySteps transforms the promise of pediatric primary care through a unique team-based approach that integrates a child development expert, the HealthySteps Specialist, into the health care team to improve outcomes in areas where there are persistent inequities for children and families of color or with low incomes.

All children ages 0–3 and their families receive a tiered model of services, including universal screening, risk-stratified supports, care coordination, and onsite intervention. HealthySteps practices serve as trusted and valuable partners as families foster their children's healthy development.

Together, the national network of HealthySteps sites aims to reach more than 1 million young children and families annually by 2032.



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ZERO to THREE
Early connections last a lifetime