

HealthySteps Advances Health Equity

By nearly every measure, children living in families with low incomes and children of color face the biggest obstacles, such as low birth weight, unstable housing, and limited access to early learning experiences. When we remove these barriers, greater access to opportunity and flourishing is possible for everyone.



BRING HEALTHYSTEPS TO YOUR COMMUNITY

HealthySteps is committed to promoting the health, well-being, and school readiness of all babies and toddlers.

To learn more, visit

healthysteps.org/our-impact/health-equity



HealthySteps is an evidence-based, team-based pediatric primary care model that promotes the health, well-being and school readiness of babies and toddlers, particularly in areas where there are persistent inequities for families of color or with low incomes

THE HEALTHYSTEPS NATIONAL NETWORK SPANS **25 STATES, WASHINGTON, D.C., AND GERMANY**



HEALTHYSTEPS IS CURRENTLY IN **260+ PEDIATRIC PRACTICES SUPPORTING 405,000+ CHILDREN**



HEALTHYSTEPS MEETS FAMILIES WHERE THEY ARE WITH PEOPLE THEY TRUST

As many as 1 in 5 babies are born to families living below the poverty line; Hispanic and Black infants and toddlers are more than twice and three times, respectively, as likely to live in poverty as their white counterparts. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed and exacerbated these disparities and structural barriers, which have harmful and life-altering effects that begin even before birth and can last a lifetime. When we remove these barriers, greater access to opportunity and flourishing is possible for everyone.

That's where **ZERO TO THREE's** HealthySteps comes in. The innovative HealthySteps approach is based on the latest scientific understandings of how early childhood development works and how it might be best supported, so all babies and toddlers thrive.

HealthySteps provides early childhood developmental support to families where they are most likely to access it – the pediatric primary care office. HealthySteps pairs the expertise of a child development and behavioral health promotion and prevention expert, the HealthySteps Specialist, and the pediatric primary care provider, to promote nurturing caregiving and successful foundations for young children.

Just at the time when the brain is developing most rapidly, HealthySteps brings focus to the important array of skills needed for families to foster healthy child development and life-long well-being, leading to improved outcomes, especially in areas where there have been persistent inequities for families of color or those with low incomes.

HEALTHYSTEPS LEADS TO IMPROVED OUTCOMES IN AREAS WHERE THERE ARE PERSISTENT INEQUITIES FOR FAMILIES OF COLOR OR WITH LOW INCOMES.



BREASTFEEDING

In addition to nutritional benefits, breastfeeding provides an opportunity for mother and infant to get in sync. It promotes cognitive development and social and emotional interactions. However, less than half of babies in families with low incomes were still breastfed at 6 months compared to 65% of babies in families above low income.

HealthySteps helps mothers find success with breastfeeding. HealthySteps mothers felt **significantly more supported to breastfeed** and had higher rates of continued breastfeeding (longer than 6 months).



EARLY INTERVENTION

Early Intervention (EI) services work, but only when children are identified as early as possible and successfully connected to services. Without a clear referral and/or follow up protocol, many families cannot access the services they need.

HealthySteps connects families to EI services by centering family concerns and ensuring that the systems of care are well coordinated. Among a sample of children with Medicaid, **preliminary evidence demonstrated that HealthySteps children had higher rates of EI Service receipt than their counterparts** in a comparison group, which also held true for Hispanic HealthySteps children.



MATERNAL DEPRESSION

Untreated maternal depression and anxiety affect parent-child attachment and the healthy development of young children. African American and Hispanic mothers have the highest rates of postpartum depression among all racial and ethnic groups, but are less likely to receive treatment, due to lower screening rates and less successful referrals.

HealthySteps ensures more frequent screenings, creates more opportunities for prevention, and supports treatment. Mothers with depressive symptoms reported **significantly fewer symptoms** after receiving HealthySteps and that **symptoms decreased at a faster rate** than comparable mothers.



EARLY NUTRITION

Healthy early nutrition is foundational to long-term health and well-being. Data from the Women, Infants, and Children Program found that children ages 2-4 from families with low incomes have a 14.5% obesity prevalence rate, which significantly exceeds the national average of 8.9% for a similar age group.

HealthySteps provides age-appropriate nutritional guidance. Mothers were significantly less likely to **prematurely give newborns water or introduce cereal**. HealthySteps children "at risk" of social-emotional challenges had **significantly lower rates of obesity at age 5** than comparable children not participating in HealthySteps.



SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Social-emotional development is a building block of mental health. Yet, people of color and those living at or below the federal poverty line have a disproportionately higher prevalence of adverse childhood experiences and mental health concerns.

HealthySteps strengthens early social and emotional development. Children whose mothers reported childhood trauma **scored better on a social-emotional screening after receiving HealthySteps** than comparable children. Among a sample of children with Medicaid, preliminary **evidence demonstrated that HealthySteps children had a significantly higher rate of any developmental or social-emotional screening** than their counterparts in a comparison group, which also held true for both Hispanic and Black HealthySteps children.



WELL CHILD VISIT ATTENDANCE

Well Child Visits (WCV) are critical for children's health and development. Although almost 90% of children attend WCVs, and WCV adherence has increased nationally over time, disparities persist. Children are more likely to miss WCVs if they live in rural areas, have lower family incomes, have parents with lower education levels or are uninsured or publically insured.

HealthySteps children were **more likely to attend all of the first 10 recommended well-child visits** and **more likely to attend six or more visits in the first 15 months of life** (a key indicator of quality care). Preliminary evidence suggests that a sample of Black and Hispanic HealthySteps children with Medicaid received more well-child visits and were more likely see the same provider during a one-year period than their counterparts in a comparison group.