

# HealthySteps Exploration Guide

*What You Should Know Before You Begin Your HealthySteps Journey*



We are delighted you're interested in becoming a site.

HealthySteps, a program of ZERO TO THREE, partners with pediatric primary care providers to support parents and improve the health and well-being of babies and toddlers so they are prepared for school and life.

Pediatric primary care is the only system in the entire country that reaches nearly all young children. No other system is as trusted by the community or as frequently accessed by families and their young children for parenting or health information. That's why we partner with pediatric primary care as an engine to drive better developmental outcomes for young children.

**We're excited you are considering bringing HealthySteps to the families you serve.**

HealthySteps has demonstrated positive outcomes for children, families, and the practices that serve them—from vaccination rates to maternal depression to social determinants of health.

HealthySteps also increases the efficiency of the medical system and supports team-based comprehensive care. Practices that implement HealthySteps successfully operationalize the [American Academy of Pediatrics' Bright Futures](#) recommendations. The HealthySteps Specialist, a child development expert, joins your team to support practice-side universal screening, provide successful interventions, referrals, and follow-up to the whole family.

The HealthySteps National Office at ZERO TO THREE (National Office) will support your practice through important processes like site readiness, hiring, training, and implementation planning to ensure you are set up for success and can implement HealthySteps to fidelity.

Please use this guide to help your practice decide whether to move forward with HealthySteps. It will help you complete the Practice Assessment, understand how to secure funding, prepare for training, and move through the implementation process.

We encourage you to bookmark and explore some of our relevant webpages:

- [The HealthySteps tiered model and eight Core Components](#)
- Becoming a HealthySteps site and the [HealthySteps Institute](#)
- [Evidence of our impact](#)

The HealthySteps national network spans more than 20 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. HealthySteps is currently in more than 165 pediatric primary care practices serving more than 200,000 children. **We're on the way to reaching more than 1 million children and families annually by 2032—we hope you'll join us!**

## HealthySteps Reporting and Model Fidelity

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Implementing HealthySteps with fidelity is critical to ensure that each site can achieve the intended outcomes of the model. The fidelity metrics are designed to support the implementation of the model's core components with consistency across practices. That said, the model itself is intentionally flexible in order to meet the specific needs of each practice's population and community.

Consistent data collection and reporting of key elements is required to support the implementation and sustainability efforts of your site and of the HealthySteps national network. HealthySteps sites can also use the data they report to the National Office each year for clinical and quality improvement purposes: to track families' progress; discuss care plans as a team; modify or improve practice workflows; advocate for their program within their community; report to funders and other key stakeholders; and measure the program's outcomes.

The National Office uses the service delivery metrics—for example, the percent of children who received a developmental screening each year—to ensure that the model is being implemented consistently across the network, key for our collective ability to achieve the intended outcomes and to track progress toward our collective goal to reach more than 1 million young children and families by 2032.

## HealthySteps Funding and Sustainability

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Once it has been determined that HealthySteps will meet the needs of your practice, it is important to outline your program costs and explore funding opportunities to launch and sustain the model.

### Assessing Costs for Implementation

The cost to implement HealthySteps largely consists of the HealthySteps Specialist's (HS Specialist) salary and benefits (ongoing) and the cost of the HealthySteps Institute (one time) but varies based on several factors including:

- HS Specialist's licensure and credentialing and geographic location of the site
- Number of children ages birth to three served annually in the practice
- Site-specific adaptations, enhancements, or innovations to the model (beyond the 8 Core Components)
- Funder-specific administrative requirements

Ideally, funding one fulltime HS Specialist allows a practice to provide the Tier 1 [universal components of the model](#) to up to 2,000 children annually. From that population of 2,000, HS Specialists can provide short-term child development and behavior consults (Tier 2) to up to 300 children annually and comprehensive services (i.e., ongoing, preventive team-based well-child visits, or Tier 3) to up to an additional 300 children annually.

## Budgeting for Implementation

As noted above, the two **primary costs** are the HS Specialist salary and benefits (ongoing) and the initial HealthySteps Institute (one time). Additional **ongoing costs** are all optional and may include program materials and supplies for families as well as general IT costs associated with any equipment the HS Specialist may need, including cell phones, computers, and printers. There may be other costs depending on the scope of your program (i.e., supervision, travel, etc.). Also, sites that add enhancements, such as home visiting, may incur additional costs. Review *Your Investment in HS: Understand HS Implementation Costs*.

## Sample Budget Worksheet\*

This is a sample budget worksheet for your practice to use to begin conversations around associated costs. It should be used as a starting point and your practice should adjust the budget lines to fully reflect your specific costs and needs. Your categories and definitions may differ.

Standard HealthySteps Budget Categories	Annual Budget
<b>Personnel and fringe benefits</b>	
HS Specialist salary	\$
Fringe and benefits	\$
<b>Total personnel costs</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>Direct costs</b>	
Initial one-time onboarding costs (including HealthySteps Institute, and subsequent technical assistance)*	\$
Ongoing professional services (including supervision, continuing education)	\$
Office Supplies	\$
Information Technology (including data extraction and EHR modifications)	\$
Communication (including associated technology and materials)	\$
Printing, copying and other program materials for families	\$
Office space and occupancy costs	\$
Travel and meetings	\$
Other (including conference registrations and materials for presentations and stakeholder engagement)	\$
<b>Total direct costs</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>Indirect costs</b>	
	\$
<b>Total indirect costs</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>Total annual costs</b>	<b>\$</b>

\*The HealthySteps Institute is required for all practices. Other costs listed are suggested, but not required, budget lines.

**Tip:** At some sites, an existing team member has the capacity and skillset to be trained as a HS Specialist. Assuming their position is already fully funded, this significantly reduces the new funding required to implement HealthySteps. Please note that some larger practices and/or health centers with multiple HealthySteps sites include a HealthySteps manager on their team. This staff member can be essential in completing administrative tasks and data collection.

### How Do Sites Pay for HealthySteps?

Given the model's intentional flexibility and the variability of each practice, no two sites are funded identically.

**Short-term funding plans (prior to HealthySteps Institute—3 years)** generally include time-limited grants from government agencies, philanthropic foundations, or local entities. Grant funding is an excellent means of initially implementing a HealthySteps program, but solely relying on grants may not provide a pathway to longer-term sustainability.

**Long-term funding plans (3+ years)** should braid together a diverse set of funding mechanisms to support ongoing program costs. To the extent possible, sites should maximize sustainable revenue by billing public and private health care payers for allowable services and exploring innovative payment options beyond traditional service reimbursement (e.g., value-based purchasing, direct contracting with health plans, and capitated service arrangements). **Other long-term funding sources** to consider include:

- Health system reinvestment and department funds
- Municipal, county, state, and federal funds, including budget line items, tax monies from tobacco and cannabis sales, and publicly funded grants
- U.S. Department of Defense and Indian Health Service
- Philanthropic funders to support specific opportunities (e.g., evaluation, expansion and innovation)

Review our [Funding Snapshots](#) for real-life site funding examples.

### Billing for HealthySteps

HealthySteps provides additional services to children and families beyond what is typically delivered during a well-child visit. This creates opportunities to bill for services such as:

- Maternal depression screening
- Social-emotional and developmental screening
- Family protective and risk factor screening
- Child development and behavior consults

Reimbursement varies greatly from state to state, across payers, and depending on the professional licensing of the HS Specialist and type of practice. For example, licensed clinical psychologists and

licensed clinical social workers can bill for a wider range of services than bachelors-level child development specialists.

The National Office’s policy and finance experts provide the network with general billing and coding guidance and may be available to provide more individualized levels of technical assistance to sites, including federally qualified health centers, as they pursue reimbursement.

## What to Expect as You Move Through the Process of Becoming a HealthySteps Site

The National Office will send your practice the following documents to be completed in succession. Please refer to [Charting Your Path](#) to further illustrate the process.

Document	Purpose	Estimated Length of Time to Complete	How You Will Receive the Document
Practice Assessment	Assess practice’s current functioning related to the HS Core Components	30 mins	Emailed to site by Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) team. You will have a call with the T/TA team to review and discuss this document after submission.
Network Agreement Information Form	Provide information to populate network agreements	30 mins	Emailed to the site by T/TA team
Network Agreements (Affiliate Agreement and Trademark & Licensing Agreement)	Legal agreements ensure that site will implement HS with fidelity	Length of time varies significantly between sites	Contracts are sent via email
Implementation Plan	Begin documenting implementation of program at practice	Plan is created over time through consultation with implementation team*	Implementation Plan is submitted online

\* The make-up and function of the Implementation Team is described on page 8.

## The Practice Assessment

The HealthySteps National Office requires all potential sites to complete a Practice Assessment. The assessment does not determine if a practice is “ready” to implement HealthySteps, but rather it helps National Office better understand your practice and help guide your team’s successful implementation of HealthySteps. Your responses help us tailor discussions, training, and technical assistance to meet your site’s unique needs, and help us monitor and improve how we serve those needs. This tool may also help your practice decide if HealthySteps is a good fit and may confirm (or question) your interest in pursuing implementation of the model. Finally, your responses to the Practice Assessment will provide baseline data that allow changes to be tracked over time.

### Completing the Practice Assessment

The Practice Assessment is divided into three sections:

- **Service Components** assess the practice’s use of the HealthySteps Core Components
- **Practice Scan** assess the context in which the practice is operating
- **Community Scan** — preliminary assessment of the community where the practice delivers services

When you complete the Practice assessment, think about your practice’s status on the eight Core Components and decide which statement best reflects your status **as of the moment that you are completing the assessment**. Pending or upcoming changes should not factor into your rating. Please include in the “notes” section any items on which you’d like to share additional context, which is always helpful so we can help you ensure a strong implementation plan.

In addition to completing the questions, you will be asked to upload a copy of your site's screening schedule. If your practice does not yet have a standardized screening schedule, you will be asked to upload a list of screening tools used by your practice.

## What is Implementation?

Implementation is the process of executing a plan. Part of the HealthySteps onboarding process includes drafting a preliminary Implementation Plan which will be refined during the Healthy Steps Institute. While implementation of HealthySteps starts with planning and anticipating needs and changes, it is ongoing and doesn’t end once HealthySteps is up and running at your practice.

### The Implementation Team

Successful implementation of HealthySteps depends on site level Implementation Teams to lead the charge.

A HealthySteps Implementation Team is a multidisciplinary team of at least three people. The team can be newly formed, or it could be an existing team assigned to implement HealthySteps.

The Implementation Team includes a Physician Champion, someone with authority to make practice-wide changes (usually an Administrative Manager), someone with experience creating data reports from the electronic health record, the HealthySteps Specialist, and any additional members with

behavioral health experience. It's important to include a wide variety of staff on the team, as HealthySteps is not run solely by the HealthySteps Specialist—it takes a practice-wide team to implement HS well. We will share further instruction on determining who should participate on your Implementation Team during the onboarding process.

Depending on the size of your organization, senior administrative leaders (who often function at the system level) may not be appropriate for an Implementation Team, but they will be critical support members, nonetheless. A senior leader may be involved in your grant application, executing the Network Agreements and empowering the Implementation Team to make potential adjustments to electronic health records and other high-level processes. They may be an important ally to communicate the benefits of HealthySteps to a board of directors or other important stakeholders. Be sure to receive and confirm buy-in from your senior leadership when pursuing HealthySteps implementation.

### **Additional Supports for Successful Implementation**

The HealthySteps National Office has learned of additional site supports that often promote more successful adoption and ongoing implementation of the model and can better position sites for long-term sustainability. Sometimes, these site supports include paying for Implementation Team members' time, and other times they may include securing dedicated time from additional staff. Depending on existing site resources and infrastructure, additional implementation supports may include allocated staff time/coverage for your:

- HS Specialist clinical supervisor (or HS program manager)
- Physician Champion
- IT/data staff
- Billing/coding staff

If sites anticipate significant challenges in modifying their existing electronic health record systems to capture required HealthySteps data, they may choose to allocate additional funds for supplemental IT/data staff time to provide technical support. In addition, some sites enhance their HS programs by adding a family navigator/community health worker (a dedicated staff member to follow up on referrals and help families access resources). This team member maximizes the impact of HealthySteps by allowing HS Specialists to spend more clinical time with families. Sites should consider these types of supplemental resources when considering overall implementation needs.

## Hiring a HealthySteps Specialist

The candidate hired (or repurposed) in the role of HS Specialist is an integral part of implementing the HealthySteps model. The National Office recognizes the importance of selecting someone who is a great fit for your practice—your location, current staffing, and local work force will inform the characteristics and skills of your HS Specialist. Later in the onboarding process there will be more information provided about hiring a HS Specialist, including a sample job description and interview questions.

**Thank you for your interest in HealthySteps. If you have additional questions, please contact [healthysteps@zerotothree.org](mailto:healthysteps@zerotothree.org) or your National Office contact. We look forward to welcoming you to our national network!**