

Dyadic Services in Pediatrics are Essential



Dyadic services, also called two-generation approaches, support the child, caregiver(s), and caregiver(s)-child relationship. Multiple generations and multiple caregivers can also be involved, i.e., triadic care and multi-generational care.



Steven brings his 9-month-old son, Ben, to the pediatrician. Ben lives with his mom, who recently started a new job, and Steven is now caring for Ben during the day. Steven is concerned that Ben is not eating and cries often. On a family screening and discussion with the pediatrician, Steven indicates that he is concerned about not having food and supplies, like a crib and stroller, that Ben needs. Overall, Steven feels unsure about his ability to care for Ben.



The pediatrician introduces Steven to the HealthySteps Specialist (HS Specialist), and Steven talks about feeling overwhelmed, uncertain about his new caregiver role, and worried about how to care for Ben.

Child well-being is dependent on caregiver well-being.

HS Specialist: "This is a lot of change all at once. Would you like to talk about ways we can help connect you with food and supplies, like a crib, for Ben?"

HS Specialist: "What is it like being home during the day with Ben? Do you have family or other parents you know who are home caring for their kids like you?"



The HS Specialist and Steven talk about how Ben might be feeling and how they can use structure and routine to help.

HS Specialist: "I wonder if Ben is still getting used to the change of being away from mom who he is most used to...babies grieve and miss people, too."

HS Specialist: "Would it be okay if we talk about how developing a schedule and daily routine may help?.....The predictability will help Ben feel safe, know what to expect, and know that he can trust you as you get to know each other."

Many caregivers benefit from support to enhance their ability to provide nurturing and responsive care, which enables young children to develop healthy attachments with their caregivers, and feel safe to explore, learn and achieve developmental growth.

[HealthySteps](#) is an evidence-based model that delivers dyadic services in the pediatric primary care setting. An HS Specialist uses a two-generation approach to promote well-being and to address concerns about challenging behavior, development delays, caregiver mental health, and family needs such as food/housing instability.



Steven and Ben continue to come to the office – sometimes just to meet with the HS Specialist, and sometimes for a well-child visit. Each time, Steven feels supported and feels part of a team that cares not only about how Ben is doing, but how Steven and their family are doing. Steven now knows he is becoming an expert on Ben. The care team also continues to make sure Steven has social support and that their basic needs are being met.



The HS Specialist and Steven practice observing and responding to Ben's signals and behaviors to continue to strengthen their relationship and promote social-emotional health.

HS Specialist to Ben: "We see that you are arching your back and your face is sad. I wonder if you are tired of sitting in that stroller?"

Young children's brains are not yet fully developed. Young children need consistent interaction with caregivers who notice and respond to their needs. HS Specialists partner with caregivers to practice observing and responding to the cues children give in a responsive and sensitive way, promoting strong early relational and social-emotional health.

HS Specialist to Dad: "I love how you saw he was getting bored and knew exactly how to distract him and get him interested in something else!"

Dad (watching Ben with excitement): "Oh, you put a block on top, and another one – wow that is so tall!"

HS Specialist: "Steven, did you see how Ben's face lit up when you said that? And, now he's going to do it some more to keep that connection going with you!"



The primary care team enjoys ongoing, strong relationships with Ben and Steven. Providing support at the first visit prevented problems from developing and facilitated healthy child, caregiver, and family well-being.

Dyadic services in pediatrics can play a critical role in behavioral health promotion, prevention, and early intervention for young children and their families. Partnering with families in their well-being, rather than waiting for problems to arise or worsen, can change the developmental trajectory for young children.

Read more about dyadic services [here](#) and a two-generation approach [here](#).