



The HealthySteps approach is supported by a multi-site randomized controlled trial and subsequent site-level evaluations

Demonstrated positive outcomes for:



Children



Families



Practices and Providers

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HealthySteps Improves the Lives of Young Children and Families

Based on the most recent scientific understandings of how early childhood development works

The early years are important to all of us – the capacities and skills developed during this critical period become the basis of a prosperous society. ZERO TO THREE’s HealthySteps program promotes nurturing caregiving, which supports families and improves healthy development and well-being of babies and toddlers, preparing them for school and life.

The innovative HealthySteps approach is based on the most recent scientific understandings of how early childhood development works, and how it can best be supported to ensure individual, family, community, and societal well-being.

We aim to achieve this goal by weaving together the expertise of a child development expert, the HealthySteps Specialist, and the pediatric primary care provider. Together, just at the time when the brain is developing most rapidly, these experts bring focus to the important skills needed for families to foster healthy child development and life-long well-being: social emotional development; language and literacy skills; cognition skills; and perceptual, motor and physical development.



This icon signifies emerging evidence, which includes research that has not yet been published in a peer reviewed journal or presented at an academic/scientific conference

Child Impacts



HealthySteps identifies whether children are reaching developmental milestones and addresses any challenges early by successfully connecting families and their children to the services they need.

Screening and Connection to Services


- Children were **8x more likely to receive a developmental assessment** and had significantly **higher rates of developmental and other nonmedical referrals**^{1,2,3}
- One HealthySteps site with a dedicated family services coordinator **quadrupled its Early Intervention successful referral rate** after implementing HealthySteps⁴
- A network of three HealthySteps sites (two with dedicated community health workers) found nearly **90% of families were successfully connected with needed community services**⁵



HealthySteps improves child health and well-being by supporting perceptual, motor and physical development, strengthening early social development, and promoting timely and continued care.

Breastfeeding and Age-Appropriate Early Nutrition

- Mothers felt significantly **more supported to breastfeed** and had **higher rates of continued breastfeeding** (longer than 6 months)^{6,7}
- One HealthySteps site with integrated maternal mental health treatment demonstrated **a reversal of concerning infant weight loss**⁸
- Mothers were significantly **less likely to prematurely give newborns water or introduce cereal**¹
- HealthySteps children “at risk” of social-emotional challenges had significantly **lower rates of obesity at age 5** than comparable children not participating in HealthySteps⁹

-  Two HealthySteps sites serving high proportions of children with Medicaid found **a lower prevalence of childhood obesity at age 3 compared to state-level rates**¹⁰




Child Impacts




Social-Emotional Development

- Children whose mothers reported childhood trauma **scored better on a social-emotional screening** after receiving HealthySteps than comparable children¹¹

 One HealthySteps site **increased social-emotional screening from 17% to 51%** during a one-year period^{i,10}

Timely and Continued Care and Vaccinations

- Children were more likely to **attend all of the first 10 recommended well-child visits** and were twice as likely to **attend specific visits** and for **visits to be on time**^{1,7,12,13,14}
- **Continuity of care was significantly better** for both total and well-child visits and families were **nearly twice as likely to remain with the practice** through 20 months^{15,16}
- Children were up to 1.6x more likely to receive **timely vaccinations** and 1.4x more likely to be **up to date on vaccinations by age 2**^{1,7,12}

 Three HealthySteps sites found a **reduced disparity between well-child visit attendance and insurance coverage**; attendance rates for sites serving high proportions of children with Medicaid were on par with rates for children with commercial insurance¹⁰





ⁱ National rates of social-emotional screening are not available and rates of developmental screening – completed more often than social-emotional screening – remain low at 37%.

Family Impacts



HealthySteps identifies family needs early and successfully connects families with services.

Screening and Connection to Services

- Mothers were significantly **more likely to discuss their depressive symptoms** and pediatric providers were significantly more likely to discuss postpartum depression with mothers^{1,7,12}
 - Mothers had significantly **higher rates of maternal depression referrals** and were **4x more likely to receive information on community resources**¹
 - **96% of HealthySteps mothers** in one site **were screened at least three times for maternal depression by six months postpartum** compared to 73% of comparable mothers not participating in HealthySteps³
-  Two HealthySteps sites used quality improvement methodology and **increased maternal depression screening from 41% to 92% in just 19 weeks at one site** and **from 31% to 60% in just 11 weeks at the other**^{17, 18}
-  One HealthySteps site used quality improvement methodology and **increased maternal depression referral follow up from 49% to 67%**; another site reported a **70% follow up visit rate** for mothers with maternal depression^{19,20}



HealthySteps improves family health and supports a child's early learning and overall well-being.

Maternal Depression

- Mothers with depressive symptoms **reported significantly fewer symptoms** after receiving HealthySteps and that symptoms **decreased at a faster rate** than comparable mothers^{6,21}



Family Impacts

Knowledge of Infant Development

- Families received significantly **more anticipatory guidance** on child development topics and reported that the guidance matched their needs^{12,16,22}
- Families demonstrated a significantly **better understanding of infant development**⁶
- Families were significantly **more likely to notice behavioral cues and provide age-appropriate nurturing**^{1,23}

Early Relational Health

- Families were significantly **less likely to report harsh punishment** (yelling, spanking with hand) and **severe discipline** (face slap, spanking with objects)^{1,7}
- Two HealthySteps sites found HealthySteps participation was significantly associated with **greater security of attachment and fewer child behavior problems**²⁰

Early Literacy and School Readiness

- Families were significantly more likely to **share picture books to and play with their infants daily**¹
- Families were significantly more likely to report their **child looked at or read books weekly**¹⁶
- Families were significantly more successful in **establishing routines and limiting television time**²⁴



Child Safety Practices

- Families were **24% less likely to place newborns on their stomachs to sleep**, reducing SIDS risk¹
- Families **scored higher on an injury control index** and were significantly more likely to use stair gates and have access to a number for poison control^{6,7}
- Children were **23% less likely to visit the emergency room** for injuries in a 1-year period¹

Practice and Provider Impacts



HealthySteps supports pediatric primary care practices to improve their patient's experience and provider satisfaction, while lowering health care costs.

- Families were significantly more likely to report **practice staff went out of the way for them**, that they **relied on practice staff for advice** (rather than a friend or relative) and that they **received needed emotional support**.^{1,22}
- Families **rated their provider as more competent and caring** and were significantly more likely to believe that the **health plan cared** about them and to **recommend their clinic** to a friend or family member.^{6,22}
- Physicians reported significantly **higher satisfaction** with HealthySteps and that they **felt emotionally supported** by the HealthySteps Specialist.^{1,25}
- Physicians were over **5x more likely to be very satisfied with the ability of clinical staff to meet children's developmental and behavioral needs**¹
- One HealthySteps site used quality improvement methodology and saw **improved use of tools to address childhood obesity** and significantly **increased follow-up visit attendance**.²⁶
- One HealthySteps site with integrated behavioral care found that **families received equitable advice regardless of race, ethnicity or language**, suggesting that HealthySteps can help mitigate existing disparities in the quality of pediatric primary care.²⁷
- One HealthySteps site serving a diverse pediatric population found that **estimated costs averted exceeded program operating costs** (\$641–\$959 compared to \$575 per child)²⁸



Evidence Summary

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Evidence Summary

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