Population health opportunities in pediatrics to support IECMH prevention: Crosswalk between HealthySteps Specialist and IECMH Consultant Competencies

Shay-Lee Perez, PsyD, Stacey Carpenter, PsyD, IMH-E®,
Amy Huffer, PhD, IMH-E®, and Rahil Briggs, PsyD

HealthySteps
PEDIATRIC CARE • SUPPORTING • PARENTING
A Program of ZERO TO THREE

Challenge & Opportunity

Infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH) services are not population-based. Pediatrics, a population-based system, is often isolated from IECMH, except for referrals. And even when there are referrals, it can be challenging for a family to access IECMH care for their child due to workforce shortages.[1]

Demand for IECMH services
due to awareness and acceptance

Limited access to care due to workforce shortages fueled by:
- lack of specialized knowledge
- job security (funding not sustainable)
- provider burnout
- lower reimbursement rates

90%
Most U.S. families take their babies to see a pediatric primary care provider[2]

93%
Most U.S. caregivers show a high degree of trust in the information shared by pediatricians[3]

U.S. parents/caregivers want more behavioral & developmental services as part of well-child care[4]

The HealthySteps Model

HealthySteps is an evidence-based, interdisciplinary program that promotes nurturing parenting and healthy development for babies and toddlers, particularly in areas where there have been persistent inequities for families of color or with low incomes.

A **HealthySteps Specialist** (HS Specialist) joins the pediatric team to provide risk-stratified and population-based services.

TIER 3
Comprehensive Services
FAMILIES MOST AT RISK

Services Include:
- Ongoing preventive team-based well-child visits

TIER 2
Short-Term Support
MILD CONCERNS

- Child development & behavior consults
- Care coordination & systems navigation
- Positive parenting guidance & information
- Early learning resources

TIER 1
Universal Services

- Child developmental, social-emotional & behavioral screenings
- Screening for family needs (maternal depression, other risk factors, social determinants of health)
- Family support line (phone, text, email, online portal)

HealthySteps Outcomes

HealthySteps reached more than 360,000 children in 2022. Research shows:

- Children were 8x more likely to receive a developmental assessment and had significantly higher rates of developmental referrals[5,6,7]
- One HealthySteps site quadrupled its Early Intervention successful referral rate after implementing HealthySteps[8]
- Children whose mothers reported childhood trauma scored better on a social-emotional screening after receiving HealthySteps than comparable children[9]
- One HealthySteps site increased social-emotional screening from 17% to 51% during a one-year period (*emerging evidence*)[10]

View more outcomes →

HealthySteps & the IECMH Continuum

Promotion
- HS Specialists actively support families from infancy to promote secure attachment and reduce toxic stress for both the infant and the caregiver
- HealthySteps changes how pediatric primary care views and treats the patient: not as an individual but as a family unit

Prevention
- HealthySteps increased the likelihood of noticing early attachment concerns and other pink flags
- HS Specialists are especially trained to see, support and refer when concerns are outside their scope

Treatment
- HS Specialists provide care coordination to help ensure families access and receive treatment services

The HealthySteps Specialist Competencies

The Competencies acknowledge the breadth and depth of expertise of this professional role and provide a framework for knowledge and skill development.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the Competencies →

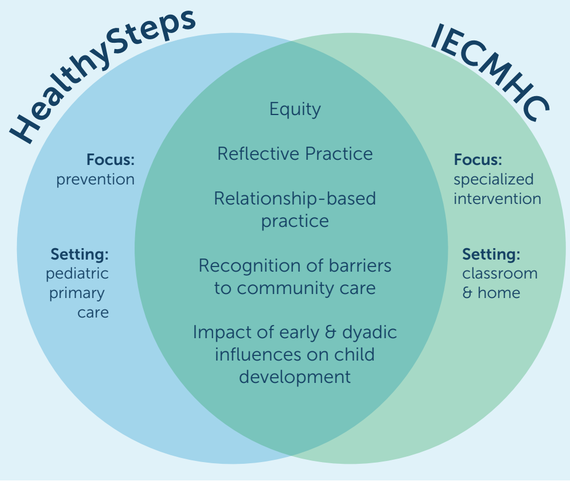
- HealthySteps National Network
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Access, & Belonging
- Child Development & Well-Being
- Caregiving Relationships
- Community & Early Childhood Systems of Care
- Health Care Systems
- Caregiver & Family Well-Being
- Supervision for HealthySteps Specialists

Crosswalk with IECMH Consultation (IECMHC) Competencies[11]

HS Specialist Competencies	IECMHC Competencies
Dispositions	Role of the IECMHC Reflective Practice
Diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility & belonging (DEIAB)	Equity & cultural sensitivity
Child development & well-being	Foundational knowledge Child & family consultation
The caregiving relationship	Child & family consultation Classroom/home consultation
Caregiver & family well-being	Teacher and child well-being
Health care systems	Classroom/home consultation Programmatic consultation Systems-wide orientation
Community & early childhood systems of care	Child & family consultation Systems-wide orientation

In Summary

The HS Specialist Competencies expand the IECMH field to include pediatric care and reach vastly more children and families.



[1]Gleason, M. M. (2018). Infant mental health in primary care. In C. H. Zeanah (Ed.), *Handbook of Infant Mental Health, 4th ed.* (pp. 585-598). The Guilford Press. [2]Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau. (2019). National Survey of Children's Health data query. [3]Barreto, M., et al. (2018). *National Parenting Survey*. ZERO TO THREE. [4]Coker, T. R., et al. (2009). Low-income parents' views on the redesign of well-child care. *Pediatrics*, 124(1),194–204. doi: 10.1542/peds.2008-2608 [5]Guyer, B., et al. (2003). *Healthy Steps: The first three years: The Healthy Steps for Young Children Program National Evaluation*. [6]Hughes, S., et al. (2014). Impact of Healthy Steps on developmental referral rates. *Family Medicine*, 46(10), 788-791. [7]Chooey, J.W., et al. (2022). Military HealthySteps Pilot Program Outcome Study. *Military Medicine*. Advance online publication. [8]Rhodes, H., et al. (2019, April 24-26). *HealthySteps Program – Taking Steps to Improve Successful Referral to Early Intervention Services in the Primary Care Medical Home* [Poster Session]. Pediatric Academic Societies Meeting, Baltimore, MD. Updated results reported in: The HealthySteps National Office. (2020). Embracing Growth: 2019 Annual Report. [9]Briggs, R. D., et al. (2014). Healthy Steps as a moderator: The impact of maternal trauma on child social-emotional development. *Clinical Practice in Pediatric Psychology*, 2(2), 166–175. [10]Preliminary data from HealthySteps Outcome Pilot Study. [11]Briggs, R. D., et al. (in press). Population health opportunities in pediatrics to support infant and early childhood mental health promotion and prevention: The HealthySteps model. In J.D. Osofsky, H.E. Fitzgerald, M. Keren, and K. Puura (Eds.), *WAIMH Handbook of Infant and Early Childhood Mental health – Biopsychosocial Factors, Volume One.*