

HealthySteps

HealthySteps integrates an early childhood specialist into every child's primary care team.

How it works

Because most young children visit the pediatrician, well-child visits present an important opportunity to ensure that families are equipped to address children's needs. The presence of a specialist in pediatric primary care connects families during and between well-child care to provide support for common and complex concerns that physicians often lack time to address, such as feeding, behavior, sleep, attachment, and social determinants of health. At the same time, mothers experiencing postpartum anxiety or depression can also receive support.

Why it matters

Parents often have questions and concerns about breastfeeding and nutrition, behavior and discipline, and developmental milestones that aren't always addressed at pediatric well visits. Without prior knowledge of early childhood development, parents may not even know what to ask or that they can ask for help with issues that aren't strictly medical. They may worry that additional help may be unaffordable. Guidance and support from an early childhood specialist can improve children's health, safety, and socioemotional development, as well as provide early intervention that can be life-changing and cost-saving for families.

Children whose mothers reported childhood trauma scored better on social-emotional screening after receiving HealthySteps than comparable children who did not receive the program. For more information on key outcomes visit healthysteps.org/the-evidence.

Studies show that HealthySteps may yield positive outcomes in:

- Child social-emotional development
- Duration of breastfeeding
- Maternal depression
- Key social determinants of health (food insecurity, housing instability or homelessness, utility needs, transportation needs, interpersonal safety, substance misuse, tobacco use)
- Parent-child relationships
- Greater adherence to well-child visits and continuity of preventive care
- Vaccination rates
- Use of positive parenting approaches
- Child safety practices
- Decreased use of harsh and severe discipline
- Parental satisfaction with care



Key facts

The program supports families at pediatric well visits by funding early childhood specialists.

They work in pediatric primary care practices that serve babies to provide screenings, resources, and coaching.

The specialist also helps parents deal with children's behavioral and developmental challenges and coordinate and manage specialty care when needed.

2,000

One full-time early childhood specialist can provide screenings for to up 2,000 children annually



HealthySteps (cont'd)

Learn more

Let's make sure DC is a city where equity starts at birth for every family. There are lots of great ways you can take action for DC's littlest residents.

Under3DC.org

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  Under3DC

Who it helps

DC is home to 28,203 infants and toddlers, one-third of whom live in extremely low-income households. HealthySteps works with pediatric primary care practices that serve babies and toddlers on Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Plan (CHIP), or without insurance.

Funding one full-time early childhood specialist enables a pediatric practice to provide the universal screening components of the model to up to 2,000 children annually. From that population of 2,000 families screened, HealthySteps specialists can provide short-term child development and behavior consults to up to 300 children annually and comprehensive services (i.e., ongoing, preventive team-based well child visits) to an additional 300 children annually.

What's next

The Birth-to-Three Act recognizes that providing this kind of critical support to parents and young children requires funding for specialists' training and salary, including benefits. The HealthySteps Training Institute is a two-day training, with two expert presenters from the National Office, and the cost is normally \$25,000 per site, although a lower cost may be possible if multiple sites are trained at the same time.

Because of the efficiencies of providing one specially trained early childhood specialist to an entire pediatric practice, the annual cost per child, for the most comprehensive services, is only \$450 or less.

Fully funding HealthySteps would save families and the health care system tens of thousands of dollars per year. More importantly, this kind of accessible, expert, and comprehensive care will dramatically improve the health and well-being of DC children and families, preventing significant academic, social, health, and behavioral problems down the road and promoting a brighter future for DC's kids.

About Under 3 DC

Under 3 DC, a broad based coalition in the District of Columbia, harnesses the voices and power of parents with young children, early educators, advocates, and health professionals to create transformative social change. The Coalition's efforts center on the people experiencing racial and economic injustice every day. It shines a spotlight on the need for more public investments to support families with infants and toddlers. Together, we can set the city on a path to creating and sustaining a high quality, equitable early childhood system.