Healthy Steps for Young Children (Healthy Steps)

TARGET AUDIENCE

This program is delivered to parents of children who are birth to 3 years old and is intended to impact parents and children.

SUMMARY

Healthy Steps for Young Children℠ (Healthy Steps), a family focused program, is designed to help parents of young children access information and support by facilitating a relationship between new parents and healthcare professionals. The program encourages parents to acquire knowledge and skills through this relationship and to promote physical, emotional, and intellectual growth in their children.

EVIDENCE

Evaluations of Healthy Steps have provided mixed evidence related to program effectiveness. Some studies suggest positive child outcomes, such as receiving regular health care, being current on immunizations, and using positive parenting behaviors, including effective discipline strategies and increased initiation and duration of breastfeeding. However, not all studies have replicated such findings, and there is some evidence that mothers in the program experience more depressive symptoms and less satisfaction with the parenting role than mothers in a comparison group.

COMPONENTS

Healthy Steps is administered in pediatric and family practices by professionals, called Healthy Steps Specialists, who have advanced training in child development. These Specialists provide a range of services designed to support parents of infants and young children. Specific services that are offered at individual Healthy Steps sites vary widely and can be tailored to complement existing community services. Common Healthy Steps practices include the following elements.

- Conduct home visits to discuss developmental and behavioral concerns;
- Participate in well-child pediatric visits to promote parent learning;
- Operate telephone information lines for parents;
- Encourage child development check-ups to detect any risks or problems;
- Provide written materials on parenting topics, such as discipline and nutrition;
- Suggest developmentally suitable books for children;
- Offer parent support groups; and
- Submit referrals for children and parents who need specialized medical care or other services.

PREVIOUS USE

Healthy Steps has been implemented throughout the United States since 1994.
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TRAINING
Healthy Steps provides extensive support to new sites. Three days of on-site training plus 6 months of technical assistance cost $19,500. Additional costs include trainer expenses; food for participants; administrative costs, such as photocopying; and training supplies, like markers and name tags. An Interactive Multimedia Training and Resource Kit is available for $99. Please email lgillespie@zerotothree.org for more information.

CONSIDERATIONS
Considerations for implementing this program include securing buy-in from and developing partnerships with local health clinics, understanding trainings and staff salaries could need to be funded, and acquiring qualified professionals to run the program.

The Clearinghouse can help address these considerations. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

IMPLEMENTATION
If you are interested in implementing Healthy Steps, the Clearinghouse is interested in helping you! Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

TIME
Healthy Steps is administered as an ongoing service that complements an existing health care clinic. Services for individual families vary in length depending on level of need.

COST
The majority of the cost for program implementation is the cost of hiring Healthy Steps Specialists. A social worker who serves 250 families per year would earn an annual salary of approximately $50,000. An additional $10,000 could cover travel and additional materials for a total yearly program implementation cost of $60,000. Costs will vary across sites.

EVALUATION PLAN
To move Healthy Steps to the Promising category on the Clearinghouse Continuum of Evidence, at least one evaluation should be performed demonstrating consistent positive effects lasting at least one year from the beginning of the program or at least six months from program completion.

The Clearinghouse can help you develop an evaluation plan to ensure the program components are meeting your goals. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

CONTACT
Contact the Clearinghouse with any questions regarding this program.
Phone: 1-877-382-9185 Email: Clearinghouse@psu.edu
You may also contact the Healthy Steps National Office by phone 1-844-464-9811, email healthysteps@zerotothree.org, or visit http://healthysteps.org/

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