

HEALTHY START WORKS...

Serving Urban, Rural and Border Communities

Healthy Start works to improve maternal and perinatal health in communities with the greatest need. Healthy Start communities have infant mortality rates at least 1.5 times the national average, and high rates of low birthweight, preterm birth, and maternal mortality. Healthy Start communities are among the nation's poorest with many young families struggling to meet basic needs.



Healthy Start funds nearly 100 organizations around the country, including health departments, community-based organizations and universities. While the majority of these local Healthy Start projects are based in urban areas, more than a quarter serve rural communities, including communities on the US-Mexico border, and regions with a predominately Native American population.

To see where Healthy Start is making a difference, visit healthystartepic.org



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Healthy Start

Building Program Capacity
Strengthening Local Health Systems
Mobilizing Communities



To improve maternal and child health outcomes in communities nationwide

Healthy Start is an initiative of the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

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Dedicated to Eliminating Disparities

Each year in the United States approximately four million women give birth. While most women have a safe pregnancy and deliver a healthy infant this is not the case for all. Major and persistent racial and ethnic disparities exist for pregnancy-related maternal illness and mortality, infant mortality and other adverse outcomes such as preterm birth and low birthweight. While the US infant mortality rate has declined overall in recent years, the infant mortality rate for non-Hispanic Blacks continues to be more than twice that of non-Hispanic Whites.



The root causes of these disparities are complex and include socioeconomic and environmental factors, as well as differences in access to health care. There is great potential for reducing these root causes, particularly among low-income families and communities by strengthening community-based systems of care and implementing evidence-based interventions to promote women's and infants' health.

Serving Women, Infants and Families

Healthy Start is an initiative targeted to the needs of vulnerable mothers and infants living in communities with exceptionally high rates of infant mortality. Local Healthy Start programs work with women and their families before, during and after pregnancy, engaging pregnant women and continuing to serve the family through the baby's second birthday. Healthy Start programs involve fathers, offer parenting support, and work to strengthen family resilience, creating the foundation for optimal infant and young child health and development.



Providing Comprehensive, Coordinated Health and Social Services

The Healthy Start initiative strives to ensure access to community-based, culturally sensitive, family-centered and comprehensive health and social services to women, infants and their families. Local Healthy Start programs provide:

- Referral and ongoing health care coordination for well-woman, prenatal, postpartum and well-child care
- Case management and linkage to social services
- Smoking cessation counseling and drug and alcohol services
- Nutritional counseling and breastfeeding support
- Perinatal depression screening and linkage to behavioral health services
- Home visiting
- Interconception education and reproductive life planning
- Child development education and parenting support

Using State-of-the-Art Approaches

The Healthy Start initiative uses a community-driven, systems development approach to improve the health and well-being of women, infants, and their families. Local Healthy Start programs actively solicit input from the women and families they serve, and use community health data to identify service needs and gaps.



Healthy Start programs implement evidence-based health and community-strengthening interventions across the perinatal period, including preconception, prenatal, postpartum and parenting phases to help women have healthy pregnancies and raise healthy children.

Healthy Start programs participate in community consortia that mobilize community residents, healthcare and social service providers, as well as other local organizations to coordinate and integrate services, and steer local action to address social determinants of health related to poor birth outcomes.

Healthy Start programs continually monitor and evaluate interventions for effectiveness, and undertake quality adjustments to improve program performance.