

Birth Spacing Change Package

Rationale: Optimal birth spacing promotes healthy mothers and healthy babies. Short birth spacing (i.e., 18 months or less between the time of pregnancy and the time of the last live birth) increases the likelihood of pregnancy complications and poor health outcomes, such as placenta abruption, preeclampsia, preterm birth, low birth weight, and small for gestational age (birthweight that is small for a given gestational age).^{1, 2}



About one-third of pregnancies in the United States occur within 18 months of a previous birth. Short birth spacing occurs more often when pregnancies are unintended and among youth 15 to 19 years of age at the time of conception.³

Helping women plan and space their pregnancies is an important strategy to support healthy mothers and healthy babies. This includes providing information on the potential negative consequences of short birth spacing, counseling on reproductive life planning, and improving women's access to and use of contraception to reduce rates of unintended pregnancy. Addressing optimal birth spacing and reproductive life planning during the preconception/inter-conception, prenatal and postpartum periods offers an opportunity for Healthy Start grantees to provide education, support and resources to help the women and families they serve achieve optimal birth spacing.

Purpose/Objective: This change package provides recommended strategies and a selection of resources and evidence-based practices to aid Healthy Start grantee organizations, partners and their staff in supporting the women and families they serve in achieving optimal birth spacing and family size.

Healthy Start Screening Tools, available on the Healthy Start Epic Center website and referenced in the change package strategies, can be used to assist in comprehensive and consistent assessment of Healthy Start participant needs and standardized data collection to support monitoring and reporting on Healthy Start benchmarks.

¹ Copen C., Thoma M., Kirmeyer S., Division of Vital Statistics. Interpregnancy Intervals in the United States: Data From the Birth Certificate and the National Survey of Family Growth. National Vital Statistics Reports. 64(3): April 2015.

² Child Health Status 2013. Perinatal Risk Factors and Behaviors. MCHB.

<http://mchb.hrsa.gov/chusa13/perinatal-risk-factors-behaviors/pdf/ps.pdf> Accessed November 17, 2015.

³ Gemmill A, Lindberg LD. Short interpregnancy intervals in the United States. *Obstet Gynecol.* 2013 Jul;122(1):64-71.

Healthy Start Change Package Strategies for Birth Spacing

Healthy Start Program Goal: Reduce the proportion of Healthy Start pregnancies conceived within 18 months of a previous birth to 30%.

Level of Strategy	Strategy	Select Resources & Evidence-Based Practices
Program Level	Build Capacity to Promote Birth Spacing	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Educate all providers and staff on the importance of optimal birth spacing and reproductive life planning to promote healthy pregnancy and birth outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family Planning: Get the Facts about Pregnancy Spacing ● Before, Between, and Beyond Pregnancy : The National Preconception Curriculum and Resources Guide for Clinicians
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Integrate reproductive life planning into your program (e.g., medical visits or family planning sessions with Healthy Start participants). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ KEY MESSAGING: Women can become pregnant soon after giving birth. Help Healthy Start participants plan if and when they want to become pregnant again. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Putting the QFP into Practice Series: Integrating Reproductive Life Planning (RLP) into Your Family Planning Session ● My Reproductive Life Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Train providers and direct service staff in the skills necessary to screen, counsel, and refer Healthy Start participants for contraceptive use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CDC Contraceptive Method Guidance: Slide Sets and Continuing Education Opportunities for Health Care Providers ● Family Planning Counseling ● One Key Question Patient Provider Materials
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Train providers and direct service staff on how to support Healthy Start participants in making informed choices on contraceptive use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family Planning Basics ● Effectiveness of Family Planning Methods
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establish referral systems with local health provider organizations that provide a broad range of contraceptive methods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Providing Quality Family Planning Guidelines
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establish a process in your program or workflow to assess birth spacing and pregnancy intention at every encounter with Healthy Start participants. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ KEY QUESTIONS: Would you like to become pregnant in the next year? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Providing Quality Family Planning Guidelines ● One Key Question Initiative (OKQ)

Level of Strategy	Strategy	Select Resources & Evidence-Based Practices
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Educate Healthy Start grantee staff on ACA requirement for health insurers to offer certain preventive health services free of co-pays or coinsurance, including contraceptive methods and counseling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Getting the Coverage You Deserve: What to Do If You Are Charged a Co-Payment, Deductible, or Co-Insurance for a Preventive Service
Individual & Family Level	Assess Birth Spacing and Pregnancy Intention at Every Encounter	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Assess birth spacing and pregnancy intention at every encounter with Healthy Start participants. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ KEY QUESTIONS: Would you like to become pregnant in the next year? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refer to the <i>Healthy Start Screening Tools</i> for additional key questions <p>If yes, discuss patients' readiness for pregnancy, overall health and opportunities for improving health, potential risk factors for adverse pregnancy outcomes.</p> <p>If no, discuss contraceptive use and options.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One Key Question Initiative (OKQ) ● Healthy Start Screening Tools
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide Healthy Start participants and their partners with information and education resources on optimal birth spacing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family Planning: Get the Facts about Pregnancy Spacing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Assist Healthy Start participants in developing a reproductive life plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● My Reproductive Life Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide evidence-informed counseling to Healthy Start participants about the full range of contraceptive methods for postpartum use. ➤ Provide Healthy Start participants and their partners with information and education resources on contraceptive method options. ➤ Refer Healthy Start participants to a local health care provider to obtain their contraceptive method of choice as warranted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Providing Quality Family Planning Guidelines ● Birth Control Methods: Frequently Asked Questions ● Method Match ● Birth Control for Men ● Your Birth Control Choices Fact Sheet 	

Level of Strategy	Strategy	Select Resources & Evidence-Based Practices
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Refer Healthy Start participants to community-based programs (e.g., home visiting) that provide support and resources during the pregnancy and postpartum periods, including reproductive life planning and contraceptive counseling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nurse Family Partnership ● Early Intervention Program (EIP) for Adolescent Mothers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Assist Healthy Start participants in enrolling in and obtaining health insurance to support access to contraceptive services and other preventive health care services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● From Coverage to Care ● Getting the Coverage You Deserve: What to Do If You Are Charged a Co-Payment, Deductible, or Co-Insurance for a Preventive Service ● Health Insurance Marketplace
Community Level	Promote Awareness on Optimal Birth Spacing Among Community Groups and Partners	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Distribute education materials on optimal birth spacing and reproductive life planning to community partners and programs that serve women, children, and families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family Planning: Get the Facts about Pregnancy Spacing ● My Reproductive Life Plan ● Putting the QFP into Practice Series: Integrating Reproductive Life Planning (RLP) into Your Family Planning Session
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Promote awareness on optimal birth spacing and reproductive life planning among community partners, other programs serving women, children, and families, and the public through social marketing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Show your Love Campaign 	

*This change package was last updated on July 7, 2016 and is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), under grant number UF5MC268450 for \$2,077,544. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

*This change package can be accessed electronically: <http://healthystartepic.org/healthy-start-approaches/promote-quality/>