Rooted in the Community and Growing Strong

In 1991, Philadelphia was selected by the Department of Health and Human Services as one of 15 sites to pilot Healthy Start, an innovative, community-based program to reduce infant mortality. Healthy Start began providing services in 1992 in West and Southwest Philadelphia, two communities hardest hit by poor birth outcomes. Over the next 16 years, Healthy Start expanded its reach to North Philadelphia, then to South Philadelphia, and finally to communities all across the City.

From the beginning, Healthy Start has been dedicated to nurturing partnerships with community-based agencies, health clinics, hospitals, health care providers, businesses, public officials, advocates and neighborhood residents. Together, these partners have worked to raise public awareness about infant mortality and design an array of health and support services to address the problem.

In the words of an African proverb, “it takes a whole village to raise a child,” so every villager must work together for the health of their family and that of their neighbors. Healthy Start has provided both the leadership and the funds to support such a community-wide commitment to maternal and child health.

Healthy Start has empowered the community to take responsibility for its own health and well being, while helping to redefine the approach to maternal and child health in Philadelphia. Because of Healthy Start, the safety net for families has been strengthened. Individual agencies now provide better services through enhanced collaboration.

“He who plants a tree, plants a hope.”
– Unknown
Seasons of Healthy Start

**Phases**

**Phase I:** 1992 - 1997
- Improved economic and social well-being of communities in the Healthy Start target areas.
- Implemented strategies to ensure that people with a variety of skills and experience are involved in care coordination to meet the needs of families.
- Developed a multidisciplinary approach to care management in neighborhoods where people with a variety of skills and experience are involved in care coordination to meet the needs of families.
- Created multi-ethnic outreach campaigns: "You Go Girl!" to empower young women, and "Being a Father, Being There" to encourage male involvement in pregnancy and parenting.
- Established "Teen Peer Power" (pregnancy prevention program) throughout the Healthy Start communities.

**Phase II:** 1998 - 2001
- Developed a system of care to ensure family linkage during the perinatal period.
- Established a nurse home visiting team for medically at-risk program and interconceptional clients.
- Developed a coordinated system of protocols for consortium members and health care providers.
- Assisted clinical care managers in introducing barriers to care.
- Trained outreach workers in health in pregnancy and family planning clinics.
- Based on new federal guidelines, launched three care program goals for Healthy Start: reduce racial and ethnic disparities in access to and utilization of perinatal health services; improve the local health care system; increase community/citizen voice and participation in health care decisions.

**Phase III:** 2002 - 2007
- Expanded and trained postpartum doula as an adjunct to perinatal depression services, as well as a behavioral health clinician.
- Developed a coordinated system of outreach and prevention services to enable men to play a positive role in the lives of their children.
- Established the Healthy Start Action Program, which trains Healthy Start clients to serve as role models in their community.

**Future Growth:**
- A New Philadelphia, A New Healthy Start

Today, Philadelphia Healthy Start continues its work to end race and class disparities in perinatal health, and improve the health of pregnant and parenting families.
Philadelphia Healthy Start is a broad-based cooperative effort of community groups, health care providers, local government and other concerned groups and individuals working to reduce infant mortality.

Philadelphia Healthy Start Consortium is a dedicated team of culturally diverse clients, residents, community leaders and Healthy Start providers that serves as an essential link between the community and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health.

Healthy Start Services currently include: preventive healthcare for moms and babies, parenting classes and support groups, case management and home visits, doula support (extra help for new moms), targeted outreach, preventive health education, interconceptional care (education on pregnancy spacing), perinatal depression and bereavement services, and clinical services at City health care centers. All non-clinical services are provided by community organizations that share a long history with Healthy Start and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health:

- Intercultural Family Services
- Health Federation of Philadelphia
- Maternity Care Coalition

Resource Centers Healthy Start services are free, caring and close by:

- Healthy Start North 214-685-2457
- Healthy Start Southwest 215-365-6217
- Healthy Start South 215-334-4387
- Healthy Start West 215-386-3390

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Philadelphia Healthy Start is a program of the Division of Maternal, Child and Family Health, Philadelphia Department of Public Health, and is funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).