



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

"If you think in terms of a year, plant a seed; if in terms of ten years, plant trees; if in terms of 100 years, teach the people." – Confucius

Seasons of Healthy Start



- ★ Served pregnant women and their families in West and Southwest Philadelphia communities.
- ★ Employed strategies to ensure a culturally competent staff and service contracts with community-based organizations. Hired community residents to staff lay home visiting teams.
- ★ Established the Healthy Start Consortium as a community-based advisor to the project.
- ★ Established "Teen Peer Power" (pregnancy prevention programs) throughout the community.
- ★ Created multi-media/outreach campaigns: "You Go Girl!" to empower young women, and "Being a Father, Being There" to encourage male involvement in pregnancy and parenting.

- ★ Expanded target population to include women and infants through two years postpartum.
- ★ Started new Healthy Start project in Lower North Central Philadelphia.
- ★ Co-sponsored "Every Woman – Every Day," a culturally sensitive folic acid awareness campaign.
- ★ Established perinatal depression screening and referral as a standard of case management practice for all women served by Healthy Start.
- ★ Created new public awareness campaigns about smoking cessation and sexually transmitted diseases (STD) prevention.
- ★ Motivated block captains and town watch representatives to promote Healthy Start in their neighborhoods.

- ★ Expanded to South Philadelphia and then citywide.
- ★ Established a nurse home visiting team for medically at-risk pregnant and interconceptional women.
- ★ Developed a system of care to address family violence during the perinatal period.
- ★ Co-sponsored an eight-week educational series on depression and mental health issues.
- ★ Developed a coordinated system of protocols to establish linkages between maternal, child and family health providers, consumers and the Behavioral Health System.

- ★ Trained and certified all case managers as breastfeeding educators.
- ★ Initiated male involvement services to enable men to play a positive role in the lives of their children.
- ★ Established the Healthy Start Ambassadors Program, which trains Healthy Start clients to serve as role models in their community.

Planting the Seeds

PHASE I:
1992 - 1997



- ★ Improved the economic and social well being of communities in the Healthy Start target areas. Interventions worked to improve job skills, stabilize community and family, and promote independent living.
- ★ Introduced innovative service delivery models, including neighborhood "health corners."

Growth Spurt

PHASE II:
1998 - 2001



- ★ Developed a multidisciplinary approach to case management to ensure that people with a variety of skills and experience are involved in care coordination to meet the needs of families.
- ★ Focused on interconceptional health, promoting positive prenatal health behaviors and family planning.
- ★ Conducted health education training for consortium members and health care providers.

Branching Out

PHASE III:
2002 - 2007



- ★ Assisted clinical sites in reducing barriers to care. Stationed outreach workers at walk-in pregnancy and family planning clinics.
- ★ Based on new federal guidelines, redefined three core program goals for Healthy Start: reduce racial and ethnic disparities in access to and utilization of health services; improve the local health care system; increase consumer/community voice and participation in health care decisions.



- ★ Sponsored a citywide multi-media/ outreach campaign to promote early entry into prenatal care, with transit ads and TV and radio commercials.
- ★ Published a Healthy Start newsletter – STARNews.
- ★ Established an obesity reduction program, including nutrition and cooking classes for pregnant and parenting women.

Future Growth

2008
AND BEYOND



- ★ Hired and trained postpartum doulas as an adjunct to perinatal depression services, as well as a behavioral health clinician to provide perinatal depression assessments.
- ★ Hosted HIV testing event and tested over 100 women and men from Healthy Start communities.

A New Philadelphia, A New Healthy Start

Today, Philadelphia Healthy Start remains dedicated to its core mission to reduce infant mortality, eliminate racial and ethnic 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 South 215-334-4387

Healthy Start Southwest 215-365-6217

Healthy Start West 215-386-3390



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