

**Healthy Start**[Home](#)[Grant Program](#)[Program Data](#)

Healthy Start

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Healthy Start works to prevent infant mortality in 87 communities with infant mortality rates at least 1.5 times the national average and high rates of low birthweight, preterm birth, maternal mortality and maternal morbidity (serious medical conditions resulting from or aggravated by pregnancy and delivery).

Healthy Start communities are some of the nation's poorest and Healthy Start families frequently struggle to meet their most basic needs.

Healthy Start reaches out to pregnant women and new mothers and connects them with the health care and other resources they need to nurture their children.

HRSA funds community-based organizations, universities and local health departments to develop Healthy Start programs that

- Improve women's health before, during and after pregnancy and
- Help families care for their infants through their first 2 years so they are healthy and ready to learn.

Why Healthy Start?

Although the U.S. infant mortality rate has declined in recent years, major disparities persist. More than twice as many African American babies do not live to see their first birthdays as their white counterparts. African American women are more likely than white or Hispanic women to deliver their babies before 37 weeks gestation, putting them at risk for infant death.

Healthy Start programs use proven strategies to reduce preterm birth, low birthweight, birth defects, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), maternal complications and unintentional injuries, which account for more than half of U.S. infant deaths.

Healthy Start programs also address social and economic factors that have been shown to have a negative impact on child health and development, including having a mother who is younger than 18 or older than 35, has less than a high school education, is low income, has a disability and/or lives under stressful conditions.

What Works

Since Healthy Start awarded its first 15 grants in 1991, the program has learned that successful programs

- Improve women's health – before, during, after and between pregnancy
- Discourage alcohol use during pregnancy
- Promote breastfeeding
- Include fathers
- Develop interventions that culturally sensitive, community specific and family-oriented
- Foster partnerships with other programs and organizations

Healthy Start Services

Health Care Services

prenatal, postpartum, well-baby, adolescent care, family planning and women's health

Enabling Services

case management, outreach, home visiting, adolescent pregnancy prevention, childbirth education, parenting skill-building, youth self-esteem building, transportation, translation, child care, breastfeeding and nutrition education, father support, housing assistance, job training, prison/jail services

Public Health Services

immunization and health education

Training

for providers