HealthySteps Transforms the Lives of Children and Families

HealthySteps, a program of ZERO TO THREE, is an evidence-based, team-based pediatric primary care program that promotes the health, well-being and school readiness of babies and toddlers, with an emphasis on families living in low-income communities.

The HealthySteps National Office at ZERO TO THREE conducts two large data collection efforts each year: the annual update of Site Profile forms, which takes place every May, and Annual Site Reporting (ASR), which occurs every July.

The Site Profile provides administrative data around sites’ location and setting; staffing and partnerships; funding and reimbursement sources; data collection practices; and other descriptive program components. ASR follows the Site Profile updates, and includes key service delivery and child and family data. This requires sites to extract data from the practice’s electronic medical records (EMRs) and other HealthySteps-specific databases.

Because HealthySteps sites are onboarded on a rolling basis and these two data collection efforts request information from specific points in time, the summary of information provided herein reflect data from a subset of current, active HealthySteps sites.
One hundred twenty-seven (127) HealthySteps sites completed the Site Profile in 2019.

HealthySteps’ largest presence is in New York, accounting for almost a third (33%) of the network’s sites, followed by Colorado (10%), Arizona (9%), Florida (8%) and California (7%).

HealthySteps Site Characteristics

Just over two-thirds (67%) of HealthySteps sites are located in urban communities, and a majority (82%) report being part of a larger network (e.g., a health system or medical center).

These are both consistent with the 2018 network data.

The most common settings in which HealthySteps programs are implemented are pediatric practices (36%), community health clinics or centers (23%), and family medicine practices (13%). HealthySteps saw growth in both community health clinics and children’s hospital clinics over the last year.

*Other includes: academic medical center (n=7), medical school or university (n=4), child health and development organization (n=3), and Indian Health Service health care facility (n=1).
HealthySteps practices hold a variety of designations and accreditations; the most common is the Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH) with over two-thirds of sites (69%) reporting that they hold this designation. This is followed by Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC), with close to a third (33%) of HealthySteps sites identifying as such, and National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) Certification rounding out the top three with 26 percent.

HealthySteps practices are also successful at establishing relationships and collaborating with community partners and other evidence-based programs: 66 percent report referring families to one or more Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) programs in their community or enrolling them onsite, and 89 percent offer Reach Out and Read onsite.

HealthySteps practices report partnering with or offering onsite programs that include Medical-Legal Partnership (17%), Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) (11%), and Help Me Grow (7%). The HealthySteps National Office is also currently engaged in a national model-alignment project with Family Connects International, Nurse-Family Partnership, and the aforementioned Help Me Grow.

*Totals will sum to more than 125 and 100% as sites were allowed to choose more than one response to this question.
Over a third (39%) of the sites reported more than one funding stream, with grants being the most common.

HealthySteps sites are working toward increased reimbursement rates for services delivered. In 2019, almost half (46%) of sites reported receiving reimbursement, which is an improvement over 2018 rates, when only 32 percent of sites reported receiving reimbursement.

Of those sites who do bill and get reimbursed for HealthySteps services, almost a third (32%) are reimbursed by Medicaid or CHIP (an increase from 25% in 2018), and over a third (35%) receive reimbursement from commercial or private insurance. A small percentage of sites are also reimbursed by TRICARE, the insurance used by military families. It should be noted that sites were allowed to select more than one option to this question, so percentages will sum to more than 100.

*Other includes: Project LAUNCH, Indian Health Service, other state funding, other federal funding and other non-state/federal funding.
Almost all of California HealthySteps sites and all of Arizona HealthySteps sites receive funding from state tobacco tax initiatives, from First 5 California and First Things First, respectively.

Over half of Colorado HealthySteps sites receive funding from the Colorado State General Fund legislation, enacted in 2017.

All of Texas HealthySteps sites receive funding from the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services Prevention & Early Intervention (PEI).

All of Palm Beach County HealthySteps sites receive funding from the Children’s Services Council, an investment of property tax dollars.
HealthySteps Specialists are Highly Educated

HealthySteps practices often employ more than one HealthySteps Specialist, and HealthySteps Specialists’ allocation vary from less than 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) to a full-time (1.0 FTE) employee.

Close to half (45%) of the HealthySteps Specialists included in the Site Profile reported a master’s degree as the highest level of education achieved, making it the most common education level among HealthySteps Specialists. An additional 26 percent of HealthySteps Specialists hold doctoral degrees (e.g., PhD, EdD) and just over a quarter (29%) have bachelor’s degrees.

In addition to being highly educated, HealthySteps Specialists hold a variety of credentials and licenses. Some of the most common include certified lactation counselors, licensed clinical psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, and licensed medical social workers.
HealthySteps Served Approximately 200,000* Children in 2019

In 2019, there were 104 sites that responded to the National Office’s ASR, representing approximately two-thirds (63%) of the currently active HealthySteps sites. The reporting is organized around the HealthySteps’ Core Components and broken out by each Tier of Service.

**TIER 1 UNIVERSAL SERVICES: 142,969**

**TIER 2 SHORT-TERM SUPPORTS: 8,289**

**TIER 3 COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES: 13,507**

Universal Screening is a Core Component of HealthySteps

Universal and consistent screening for children and their caregivers is a key component of the American Academy of Pediatrics’ (AAP) *Bright Futures Recommendations for Preventive Pediatric Health Care*. And as noted in the figure above, the greatest reach of HealthySteps occurs at the Tier 1 level, where the focus is on universal screening for all children ages 0-3 and their families. As such, HealthySteps sites are uniquely positioned to more efficiently and effectively improve universal screening rates compared to non-HealthySteps sites.

*The HealthySteps National Office estimates 200,000 children served based on responses to ASR and an estimate of the sites that did not complete ASR last year.*
Universal Screening is a Core Component of HealthySteps

Without HealthySteps, many health care organizations are challenged with implementing and documenting these screenings. In fact, in 2016, the National Survey of Children’s Health found that just 27 percent of children under age 5 had received a developmental screening, well below HealthySteps’ optimal fidelity benchmark of 90 percent that ensures sites establish and maintain universal screening practices. HealthySteps enhances and extends the AAP’s *Bright Futures* recommendations due to the integration of a HealthySteps Specialist into the pediatric primary care team. The HealthySteps Specialist supports practice-wide universal screening for all children ages 0-3.

Data Collection at Sites

Almost three-quarters of sites (72%) report using their EMR to document and report on HealthySteps services and patient demographics. The most common EMR platform used across HealthySteps sites is EPIC, with over half (52%) of sites reporting that EPIC is their primary EMR. Sites also reported supplementing their EMR documentation with Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Access, and various funders’ customized databases.
We’re well on our way to reaching more than 1 million children and families.

HealthySteps has grown tremendously – an average of 23 percent year-over-year since 2017. Our 2019 data show the incredible work done each day across the country and our steady progress to serve more than 1 million children and families annually by 2032. The HealthySteps National Office at ZERO TO THREE is committed to ensuring the program model is implemented with fidelity as the national network grows to meet the increased demand in communities.
HealthySteps is an evidence-based program of ZERO TO THREE, the nation’s leading nonprofit working to ensure all babies and toddlers have a strong start in life. HealthySteps transforms the promise of pediatric primary care through a unique team-based approach that integrates a HealthySteps Specialist, a child development expert, into the health care team. All children ages 0-3 and their families receive a tiered model of services, from universal screening to risk-stratified supports, including care coordination and onsite intervention, as needed. HealthySteps practices serve as trusted and valuable partners as families foster their children’s healthy development. Together, the national network of HealthySteps sites aims to reach more than 1 million young children and families annually by 2032. To learn more about the HealthySteps model, reporting requirements or to bring HealthySteps to your community, visit healthysteps.org.

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