

## II. Program Description

Healthy Start is a statewide home visiting program designed to preventing child maltreatment using the research-based Healthy Families America (HFA) program model. Healthy Start is a key component of Oregon's system of supports and services for families with young children. Healthy Start promotes wellness for Oregon families with first-born newborns by offering universal, accessible, and non-stigmatizing services tailored to the family's unique situation. The primary goals of Healthy Start are to: (1) prevent child maltreatment and to (2) support school readiness. Healthy Start attempts to reach all consenting first-birth parents to offer screening, referral, and information. Families may also receive a Welcome Baby gift packet filled with information about parenting and child development. Families that are identified through Healthy Start's screening process as being at higher risk for adverse childhood outcomes are offered ongoing home visiting service. Services are offered to new families either during the prenatal period or at the time of birth (or soon after).

### *Screening and Referral Services*

*Screening.* Healthy Start attempts to reach all first-born children by identifying parents parentally or at the time of the child's birth. Screening systems vary across programs, and are designed to be cost-effective, locally-organized systems that build on existing community resources and networks. Using a research-based screening tool, the New Baby Questionnaire, Healthy Start workers or volunteers screen new parents for characteristics associated with poor child and family outcomes, such as social isolation, lack of prenatal care, depression, substance abuse, and financial stress. Families who have few, or no, characteristics that place them at risk for poor outcomes, receive short-term information and referral services. For example, families may receive a packet of child development and parenting information, or a telephone call with information about community resources such as parenting support groups or breast-feeding assistance. For more information about screening processes, see the Healthy Start Policy and Procedure Manual and the Healthy Start Training Manual for Home Visitors.

***Healthy Start  
is voluntary***

Families are free to decline screening, assessment, and/or service at any time.

### *Intensive Services*

Families who have positive risk screens are offered Intensive Home Visiting Services (if caseloads allow). Using the research-based HFA model, Healthy Start offers up to 5 years of home visiting services for Oregon's highest risk families. Newly enrolled families receive weekly home visits from a qualified and trained Healthy Start Family Support Worker. Visits decrease in frequency as the family's needs decrease. Programs use the HFA system of well-defined levels of service to determine the frequency of home visits based on a family's current issues and resources. FSWs have limited caseloads in order to support their intensive work with families (see Healthy Start Policy and Procedure Manual for more information).

Home visits focus on supporting parents in their role as the child's first teacher, providing evidence-based parenting and child development information, coaching, and support. FSWs also help parents to access needed community resources, including basic tangible supports such as food, clothing, baby supplies and housing, as well as more specialized assistance such as mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, or health services. FSWs also work

with parents to make sure children are developing positively, providing regular developmental assessments and monitoring of children's immunization status and access to preventive health care. Some programs also provide parent support groups, parent-child play groups, and other activities to support parents and their children.