



Oregon's Healthy Start

Oregon's Healthy Start offers services to first time parents. Healthy Start offers families, especially Oregon's most overburdened new parents, education and support through home visits by highly trained staff. Because of Healthy Start, parents are more skilled and their children are healthier and safer, better prepared for school, and less likely to be abused and neglected.

Healthy Start Works

Independent evaluations over the past 14 years show that Healthy Start:

- Decreases child abuse and neglect. Children NOT in Healthy Start were 2 1/2 times more likely to be abused or neglected.
- Increases immunizations
- Decreases emergency room use
- Builds early literacy skills, leading to greater success in school
- Improves children's healthcare and prenatal care for their mothers' later pregnancies
- Identifies children with developmental delays and links them with services early
- Improves parents' ability to nurture their children



2006-08 Results

Over the past two years, Healthy Start has:

- Become one of only six states fully accredited by Healthy Families America, an evidence-based program model
- Provided high-quality home visiting services to almost 3,300 families across the state
- Increased partnerships and collaboration with other organizations, including the Department of Human Services' Self Sufficiency/TANF and Relief Nurseries for shared training and referrals
- Maintained program excellence through a statewide quality assurance system
- Continued to streamline program implementation to assure cost-effective use of state funding
- Leveraged more funds and matching local resources

The success of Oregon's Healthy Start program has been widely recognized. Delegations from Japan have visited Oregon to study Healthy Start. As a result, Japan is rolling out a nationwide home-visiting program based on Oregon's Healthy Start and Healthy Families America.

For more detailed information about Healthy Start outcomes, see the 2007-08 Healthy Start Status Report by NPC Research, Inc., at <http://www.oregon.gov/OCCF/About/apub.shtml>.

A Healthy Start Success Story

“Allen,” a Healthy Start father, is spending the day at home with his 3-year-old son, Aaron, who has strep throat. But Allen is happy to be able to take care of his son. There was a time when it would have been out of the question. These days, being a father is the most important thing to him.

Allen spent his earliest years in a home filled with violence, culminating in the murder of his mother by his father. After that, he was raised by grandparents. Although they gave him loving attention, he grew into an angry young man, with a violent temper that often exploded. Then he discovered methamphetamine and found that, “Meth was the only thing that made me feel better.”

Allen and his fiancée, “Joanne,” are now the parents of two young sons. They found Healthy Start when Joanne was pregnant. Healthy Start helped Allen to connect with drug treatment and anger management programs.

In-home parent coaching by the Family Support Worker has taught Allen and Joanne about appropriate and effective discipline, how to react to kids’ emotions in a calm way, and how to develop patience. Parenting classes referred by Healthy Start have helped, too.

After developmental screening provided by Healthy Start, Allen’s son was referred to Early Intervention Services and received the help he needed to get back on track by the time he entered Head Start at age 3.

“I feel like I am learning to be a good dad,” Allen says. “Whatever happened to you as a child, you don’t have to do the same thing. Everyone has the power to change.”

Contact:

Karen Van Tassell • 503-378-5120 • karen.vantassell@state.or.us
Oregon Commission on Children & Families • 530 Center Street NE, Suite 405 • Salem, OR 97301
FAX: 503-378-8395 • Web: www.oregon.gov/occf