

**Healthy Families America (HFA)****Program Description**

Healthy Families is a voluntary home visitation program designed to promote positive parenting, enhance child health and development, and prevent child abuse and neglect. Services include parent education and support, linkages to community resources, child development assessments and screenings, and strength-based goal setting. The program is geared towards expectant and new parents who are overburdened.

**HFA Critical Elements:**

HFA is based upon a set of critical program elements, defined by more than 20 years of research. All affiliated and credentialed HFA programs adhere to these critical elements which provide the framework for program development and implementation. Staff is trained on the critical elements and programs are credentialed based on adherence to these critical elements. The HFA critical elements are listed below:

Service Initiation:

- Initiate services prenatally or at birth.
- Use a standardized assessment tool to systematically identify families who are most in need of services.
- Offer services voluntarily, and use positive outreach efforts to build family trust.

Service Content:

- Offer services to participating families over the long term (i.e., three to five years) using well-defined criteria for increasing or decreasing frequency of services.
- Services should be culturally competent; materials used should reflect the diversity of the population served.
- Services are comprehensive, focusing on supporting the parent as well as supporting parent child interaction and child-development.
- All families should be linked to a medical provider; they may also be linked to additional services.
- Staff should have limited caseloads.

Staff Characteristics:

- Service providers selected based on their ability to establish a trusting relationship.
- All service providers should receive basic training in key content areas.
- Service providers should receive thorough training specific to their role to understand the essential components of family assessment and home visitation.

**Evaluation and Outcomes**

Numerous evaluations have occurred at both the site and state levels. Results from these evaluations demonstrate that HFA:

- promotes positive parenting practices,
- improves family health, including improved birth outcomes,
- enhances school readiness with improved child development,
- increases family self-sufficiency,
- reduces child maltreatment.

**Cost:**

The average annual cost to provide services to families is \$3,500 to \$4,000 and varies depending on the age of the child, as more intensive services are provided during the child's first 6 to 9 months.

Website: <http://www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org>