



HAVING A CHILD AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

Piloting a Benefits Bundle approach for families navigating supports

Collaborating agencies:
HHS (HRSA, CMS, ACF), USDA (WIC, SNAP), HUD, ED, DOL

Foundation:
Discovery Research & Life Experience Charter

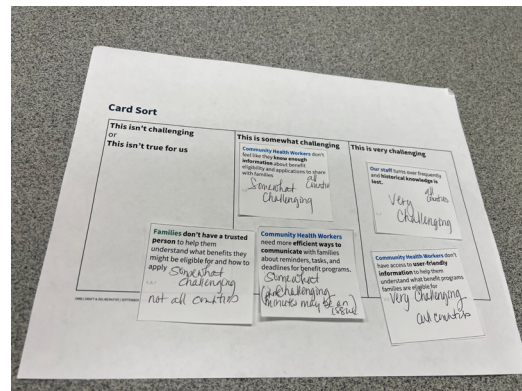
Connecting hundreds of families to someone who has already been there and succeeded.

The *Benefits Bundle* pilot assists grantees of the Health Resources and Services Administration’s (HRSA) *Healthy Start* program, a longstanding Federal program to reduce infant mortality rates and address social determinants of health. The *Benefits Bundle* team developed a new peer-based model to help *Healthy Start* families navigate the transition to parenthood. For this peer-based model, the team created the role of “Alumni Navigator,” a mother who recently completed the *Healthy Start* program at the pilot location, and has experience navigating benefits enrollment (e.g., Medicaid and WIC) and accessing key community resources and supports. Alumni Navigators are therefore uniquely qualified to provide new families with social, informational, and emotional support and deliver a “bundled” set of critical resources. The six pilot partner grantees have collectively hired 16 Alumni Navigators who have served more than 170 families across grantee sites (Atlanta, Baton Rouge, New York City, Los Angeles, the PeeDee Region, and Turtle Mountain Reservation). The interagency *Benefits Bundle* team included perspectives from HHS (both ACF and CMS), DOL, HUD, and USDA in developing the “Benefits Bundle” set of resources for *Healthy Start* families. Among the set of Federal benefits, the Alumni Navigators are focusing on WIC and Medicaid.

The team expects to summarize insights from the six pilots in a *Benefits Bundle Playbook* to inform other Federal programs and State Medicaid programs; the team will iterate and fine tune the guide in FY24 Q2.

“Whoever chose us as navigators hit the nail on the head. Who better to walk with a mom through it than someone who has been through it?”





-ALUMNI NAVIGATOR



(Top photo) Documentation of a meeting with *Healthy Start* Alumni Navigators. (Bottom photo) An example of an activity completed by an Alumni Navigator.

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DESIGN PHASE MILESTONES

Milestone	Status	Notes
Co-designed and piloted a Benefits Bundle intervention in communities through six pilots with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Healthy Start grantees.		<p>Completed. The project team has launched pilots in six cities or regions across the country. HRSA/Healthy Start grantees conducting pilots are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Atlanta, GA: Center for Black Women’s Wellness, Atlanta Healthy Start Initiative . 2. Turtle Mountain Reservation: Great Plains Tribal Leaders’ Health Board Healthy Start 3. Baton Rouge, LA: Family Road Healthy Start 4. Pee Dee Region: Pee Dee Healthy Start, Inc. 5. New York, NY: Greater Harlem Healthy Start at Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership 6. Los Angeles, CA: SHIELDS for Families Healthy Start
Demonstrate the Benefits Bundle proof of concept and build the foundation for impact evaluations.		<p>In progress. The timing changed from FY 2023 Q4 to FY 2024 Q2. Evaluation surveys for Alumni Navigators and participants have been developed and are being deployed by pilot sites. The team is also conducting on-the-ground design sessions to collect qualitative feedback from pilot sites, Alumni Navigators, and families.</p>
Disseminate best practices and lessons learned among Healthy Start grantees or others interested in creating a Benefits Bundle in their communities, which will include a Benefits Bundle Playbook and training module.		<p>In progress. The timing changed from FY 2023 Q4 to FY 2024 Q2. The project team, in collaboration with agency partners, developed a Benefits Bundle set of resources for pilot sites, which will eventually be made available to all Healthy Start grantees. This includes Medicaid and WIC refresher courses as part of training and onboarding materials for navigators, delivered in July.</p> <p>These resources help Alumni Navigators understand what WIC and Medicaid are; understand the value each offers in meeting their family’s needs; know what to expect when applying; know what documents to gather; and know where to apply for each program.</p> <p>The team also worked with agency partners to develop Medicaid and WIC Pre-Enrollment FAQs, based on CMS and FNS input, to address top questions and challenges heard during the learning visits. In October 2023, the team delivered the first version of these resources to sites for their feedback and iteration.</p>
Build a model for future Federal approaches to Benefits Bundle supports.		<p>In progress. The timing changed from FY 2023 Q4 to FY 2024 Q2. The project team expects to receive design feedback on the first version of the Benefits Bundle Playbook by December, and iterate on it in Q2 2024.</p>

DESIGN PHASE PROJECT MEASURES

Design Phase Measure	Assessment Approach & Data	December 2023 Status
Deploy the Benefits Bundle via Alumni Navigators in a small number of Healthy Start sites in States, Tribes, and/or territories.	Number of sites and Alumni Navigators.	Selected Health Start pilot sites have hired 14 Alumni Navigators serving over 170 families across six pilot sites.
Increase enrollment of eligible families in birth to early childhood programs.	The team is conducting an outcome evaluation using administrative data from Healthy Start staff and sites. Additionally, the team is conducting design sessions onsite with families and Alumni Navigators to understand families’ ease of getting access to services and time saved.	Evaluation of the Benefits Bundle pilot will conclude at the end of February 2024. The team plans to publish an implementation report using that analysis.
Improve experience measures such as trust and satisfaction compared to the baseline.	Interviews and surveys from Healthy Start participants and Alumni Navigators, concerning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service quality • Satisfaction • Trust in government 	Too early to assess.



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Project Summary

The Benefits Bundle aims to connect families welcoming a new baby to a bundle of supportive services through personal case management that is convenient, customized for language, and appropriately tailored to specific communities.

Customer pain point:

Families need help obtaining the correct information at the right time regarding eligibility, applications, and enrollment for existing services that can support them. Many families need help applying to programs due to burdensome processes, limited support on how to access information, disconnected systems, lack of coordinated and timely follow-through, or distrust in the government.

Project Objectives

The Benefits Bundle will strengthen relationships across support systems to deepen health equity efforts in communities and ensure families are aware of and able to use services available at the Federal, State, local, Tribal, or territorial levels.

Target milestones in 2023 include:

- *Readiness:* Co-design and pilot the Benefits Bundle intervention in communities through approximately five pilots with HHS Healthy Start grantees to learn how to implement the intervention in a scalable manner.
- *Momentum:* Demonstrate the Benefits Bundle proof of concept and build the foundation for impact evaluations to be conducted.
- *Capacity-Building:* Disseminate best practices and lessons learned among Healthy Start grantees or others interested in creating a Benefits Bundle in their communities.

- *Support:* Build a model for future Federal approaches to Benefits Bundle supports.

Primary deliverables in 2023 include:

- Benefits Bundle Playbook that outlines successful case studies for implementation of the pilot and describes how a community can launch its own Benefits Bundle
- Technical assistance and training for Healthy Start grantees

Measures of Success

Key outcomes:

By connecting families via personal case management with a Benefits Bundle of core public benefits programs and reducing barriers to accessing those programs and benefits:

- Families will have greater awareness of and easier access to public benefits (increase multi-program enrollment of those that are eligible)
- Enrollment gaps in core birth to early childhood programs will shrink
- Maternal and caregiver stress will measurably reduce

Design phase project measures:

- Deploy the Benefits Bundles in a small number of Healthy Start sites in States, Tribes, and/or territories
- Increase enrollment of eligible families in birth to early childhood programs
- Improve experience measures such as trust and satisfaction compared to the baseline