



**Two Important Initiatives Are Observed This Month**

**Did you know the Healthy Start Initiative turns 30 in 2021? Watch this newsletter throughout the year as we recognize this important milestone!**

**IN THIS ISSUE**

Observances Months, continued	2
NHSA's December Summit – Report	3
Research News	4
Where Dads Matter	5
Resources	6
Cookie Recipe Exchange Flyer	7
Projects' Activities	8
Employee Spotlight	12
NHSA Information	13

Hey, there!

Do you like cookies?

We're looking for your cookie recipes for our

**Cookie Recipe Exchange Book!**

See page 7 and then send your recipe(s) today!

**National Birth Defects Prevention Month**

The National Birth Defects Prevention Network's theme for 2021 is **Best for You. Best for Baby.** The goal is to raise awareness on how a woman can increase her chances of having a healthy baby "by doing what you can to be your healthiest self both before and during pregnancy. What is best for you is also best for your baby."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), birth defects affect about one in every 33 babies born in the U.S. annually. Most defects develop in the first three months of pregnancy, often before a woman even knows she is pregnant.

Birth defect rates vary across racial and ethnic groups. Black babies have higher rates of defects of the skull and brain (encephalocele) and chromosome abnormalities (Trisomy 18) than White babies. American Indian/Alaskan Native babies have higher occurrences of ear defects, cleft lip and limb deficiency, as well as encephalocele and Trisomy 18. Hispanic babies have higher rates of anencephaly, also a defect of the skull and brain, encephalocele and anotia/microtia, a defect of the ear.

The March of Dimes' Chief Medical and Health Officer, Dr. Rahul Gupta, says, "While current research does not show a direct link from COVID-19 to birth defects, we know that fevers in early pregnancy may be linked to birth defects and pregnant



**National Mentoring Month**

In an email sent on January 12<sup>th</sup> to NHSA's large distribution list, we talked about National Mentoring Month (NMM) and its goals of raising awareness of mentoring in its various forms, recruiting individuals to mentor and promoting the rapid growth of mentoring. The email talked about how NMM works (be a mentor, find a mentor and thank your mentors) and why it's critical to recognize this important month (mentoring creates unity, seeking a mentor builds courage and mentoring others helps one's community). We concluded by saying NHSA has a mentoring program that you can learn about in NHSA's newsletter.

In October 2020, the National Healthy Start Association, in partnership with the Healthy Start Technical Assistance & Support Center at the National Institute for Children's Health Quality, launched the 2020-2021 Healthy Start mentoring program. The goal of the program is to optimize the strengths, experiences, skills and competencies of experienced Healthy Start grantees and pair them with other Healthy Start programs to foster a meaningful learning exchange that will result in increased competencies for the mentee.

Early examination of the first Healthy Start programs illustrated that the most successful Healthy Start programs had a common characteristic of strong, continuous leadership. Additional studies found that new employees paired with a mentor are twice as likely to remain in the workforce than those who do not receive the support of a mentor. For these reasons, the Mentoring Program may be an invaluable resource for Healthy Start projects.

## Getting off to a Healthy Start

### National Birth Defects Prevention Month, from page 1

women may have a higher risk of severe illness due to COVID-19. We still have a lot to learn about the virus and now is the time for women to take extra care of themselves as they plan for pregnancy.”

#### Best for You. Best for Baby’s Five Tips for Preventing Birth Defects

1. Before you get pregnant, try to reach a healthy weight. Obesity increases the risk for some of the birth defects and other complications of pregnancy. If you are underweight, overweight or obese, talk with your healthcare provider to learn how to reach a healthy weight and maintain it. This will include a healthy diet and being active physically.
2. Take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day. Folic acid helps prevent some major birth defects of the baby’s brain and spine. Take a vitamin that has folic acid in it and eat enriched foods, which is in some breads, cereals and corn masa flour.
3. Check with your healthcare provider before stopping or starting any medicine. Create a treatment plan that is best for you and best for baby.
4. Get up to date with all vaccines, including the flu shot. Vaccines help prevent you and your baby from serious diseases. Get a flu shot every year and Tdap, a whooping cough vaccine, with each pregnancy. Adds the March of Dimes, “Protect yourself from COVID-19. Stay safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by wearing a face mask and practicing social distancing. Remember to check for new guidance from the CDC to keep you and your family safe.” Talk with your healthcare provider about if and when to get the COVID-19 vaccine.
5. Avoid harmful substances during pregnancy. These include alcohol, tobacco and certain drugs. If you plan to get pregnant, you’ll want to cut these things out before trying to conceive.

“In these challenging times,” says Dr. Karen Remley, Director, CDC’s National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, “it is more important than ever to support each other, and empower women and their partners to make the best decisions for themselves and their families.”

#### Resources:

National Birth Defects Prevention Network, [National Birth Defects Prevention Month](#), accessed 12/23/2020. (Check out this site for a toolkit with sample proclamations, news releases, flyers, social media resources and more!)  
 CDC, [National Birth Defects Prevention Month Digital Toolkit](#), accessed 12/23/2020.  
 March of Dimes, [March of Dimes and CDC Share Tips to Help Women Plan for a Healthy Pregnancy and Baby in the New Year](#), 12/15/2020.

### National Mentoring Month, from page 1

Experienced Healthy Start programs have individuals with a range of leadership skills, relevant Healthy Start experience/expertise, the capacity to provide practical support and a strong base of knowledge around the core Healthy Start services and various program areas. Examples of areas of program expertise include data collection and evaluation, CAN or outreach and recruitment to Healthy Start moms or dads. By fostering this knowledge exchange, it is the hope that the mentee will increase their program expertise, and thus, program success.

In this current cycle which runs from October 2020 to March 2021, there are a total of nine mentor/mentee pairs. Pairs were matched based on mentor’s skillset and mentee’s needs, geographical characteristics, organization type and population served. The pairs are responsible for working together to develop a workplan, meeting monthly and submitting monthly reports to NHSA to share their progress.

For more information on the Mentoring Program, please contact Hida Reese [hreese@nationalhealthystart.org](mailto:hreese@nationalhealthystart.org).



Graphic: Mentoring 101 in Personal Development by Wes Saade.

#### Healthy Start Project Directors

##### Send Us Your Healthy Start in the News & Consumer Success Stories!

Participants in Healthy Start projects are called “consumers.” This term was coined in the early 2000’s after surveying all the then-projects and asking them to consult with their participants. Consumer was the choice most preferred. NHSA has long championed the journeys and successes of Healthy Start consumers.

Don’t forget your Consumer Success stories as well as your “In the News” stories! NHSA wants to spotlight consumers in future issues of *Getting off to a Healthy Start*. Click [here](#) for a form with sample questions to help you interview your consumer. If you already have a story, send it in, along with photos of your consumer and family! (Make sure you have a waiver form in your files, of course.) And if you have a nice staff success story to tell, send that along to [Bea Haskins](#), too! We’ll include them when we have space. We have two in this issue!

January 2021

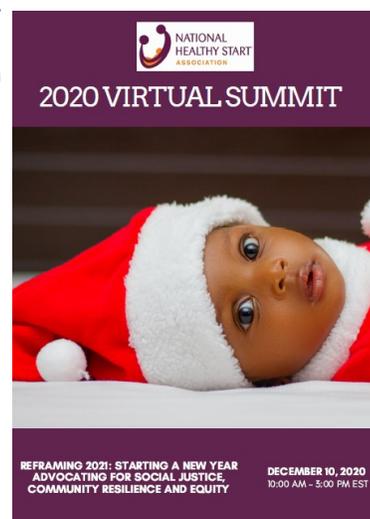
## NHSA's First-ever Virtual Summit Was a Huge Success

On December 10<sup>th</sup>, NHSA held its first-ever Virtual Summit. This event was precipitated by the inability to host the annual conference this year due to COVID-19. The Association felt strongly about providing the Healthy Start projects, as well as the public, the opportunity to learn about important, relevant issues affecting maternal and child health and men's health/fatherhood. The theme for the event was *Reframing 2021: Starting a New Year Advocating for Social Justice, Community Resilience, and Equity*.

The first session was "COVID-19: Challenges, Implications, and Recommendations for Community Health" presented by Dr. Tabia Henry Akintobi of the Morehouse School of Medicine.

Dr. Akintobi presented the factors that contribute to the disproportionate burden of COVID-19 in underserved communities and ways to establish effective, community-engaged research and outreach response. The following session was "Risk-Stratified Care Coordination Reduces Racial Disparities in a High Infant Mortality Community." The presenters were Dr. Cathy Kothari and Terra Bautista of Healthy Babies Healthy Start, a Healthy Start site in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

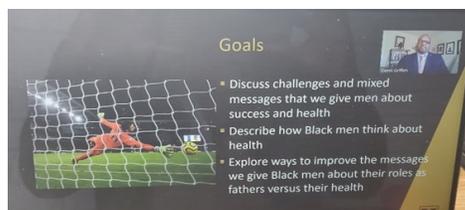
Dr. Kothari and Ms. Bautista presented their experience developing an interdisciplinary collaborative to implement risk-stratified coordination of home visitation and community health worker programs to increase enrollment of priority populations, reduce racial disparities in prenatal care access and infant mortality and reduce poor infant health outcomes. The third presentation of the summit was "John Henry and the Paradox of African American Manhood," presented by Dr. Derek M. Griffith of Vanderbilt University. Dr. Griffith used the fable of John Henry to illustrate how men, women and children often expect and respect men who value their roles as fathers and financial contributors to their households, but gender roles do not support men in trying to achieve their optimal health. Our final speaker of the summit was Deidre McDaniel, a Doctoral Fellow at Morgan State University, whose presentation was "The Impact of Gynecological Experimentation on Black Maternal Health Outcomes." Ms. McDaniel presented on the origins and history of gynecological medical experimentation on Black women, the effect it has on Black maternal health outcomes today and offered ways to address this issue in a variety of settings.



Lee Wilson, Director, Division of Healthy Start and Perinatal Services, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, gave opening remarks.

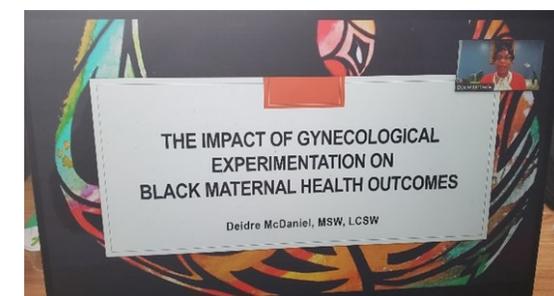
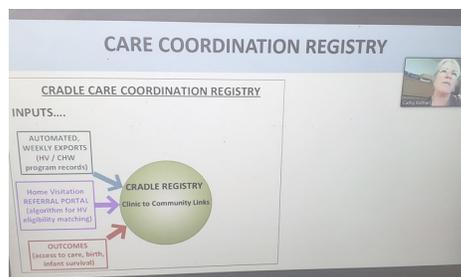
The Summit was well-attended, with an average of 209 participants in each session. Participants had positive reviews of the event, praising the topics and presenters, and noting the importance of having these conversations about social determinants of health to be able to identify and address the root causes of health inequities. Many participants shared their hopes that NHSA continues to have these types of events.

### Screen Captures from the Summit



← Derek M. Griffith in the upper corner of the screen with one of his slides on men and health.

↓ Cathy Kothari from Healthy Babies Healthy Start in Kalamazoo, MI, gestures as she discusses one of the slides in her presentation.

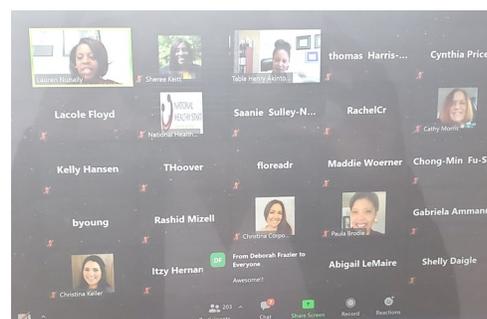


↓ Deidre McDaniel can be seen in the corner of the screen with the title slide from her presentation.



NHSA's CEO, Deborah Frazier, presented on the History, Growth and Influence of the Healthy Start Program.

→ Some of the Summit participants, including presenter Tabia Henry Akintobi in the top row, center.



## Getting off to a Healthy Start

### Research News: **Hot** Stats and **Fast** Facts

#### Transmission of COVID-19 to Baby is Unlikely in Late Pregnancy

A new National Institutes of Health-funded study finds that pregnant women in their third trimester who are infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, are unlikely to pass the infection to their newborns. The study followed 127 pregnant women at three care centers in Boston, MA. “Among the 64 pregnant women who tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, no newborns tested positive for the virus,” according to an NIH news release.<sup>1</sup> The study was published in *JAMA Network Open* and widely reported. An accompanying editorial said “...the findings may bring us closer to understanding the characteristics of SARS-CoV-2 as well as other viruses in pregnancy.”<sup>2</sup>

Sources:

<sup>1</sup> [Pregnant women in third trimester unlikely to pass SARS-CoV-2 infection to newborns](#), News Release, 12/22/2020, National Institutes of Health.

<sup>2</sup> Amanda D’Ambrosio, [Vertical Transmission of COVID-19 Unlikely in Late Pregnancy](#), 12/22/2020, MedPage Today. Murez, Cara, [COVID Doesn’t Pass to Baby During Pregnancy](#), 12/22/2020, HealthDay.



Graphic: World Health Organization

#### Impact of COVID-19 on Latino and Black Families

[New research](#) found that 29% of Latino and 31% of Black families with children are facing three or more economic and health-related hardships during the pandemic. These rates are nearly twice that of White and Asian counterparts (13% and 16%, respectively). “The analysis also finds that 7 percent of Latino and 7 percent of Black households with children experienced five or more of these hardships, compared to 2 percent of Asian and 3 percent of White child households. Without resources and government support, the accumulation of hardship-related stressors threatens to overwhelm many families’ psychological and economic resources. These findings reinforce evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has been especially harmful to Latino and Black families’ financial, physical, and mental well-being. The crisis exacerbates the harm already wrought on Latino and Black families by the system of structural racism and violence that permeates our nation.”

Source: [Latino and Black families are twice as likely to face three or more hardships during COVID-19](#), 1/13/2021, Child Trends.

#### Rural Hospitals Without OBs Need More Training in Emergency Pregnancy Care

“For women in rural areas, having a baby comes with greater risk. But training in emergency obstetrics at rural hospitals could improve the odds, according to a new policy brief from the University of Minnesota’s Rural Health Research Center,” reported the *Daily Yonder*. Maternal mortality across the country has been rising over the past 30 years. [According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), maternal mortality rates increased 143% between 1987 and 2017. In the late 1980s, the maternal mortality rate stood at a little over 7 maternal deaths per every 100,000 live births. In 2017, the maternal mortality rate was 17.3 deaths per every live birth. Around the world, however, maternal mortality rates are steadily dropping. In the United Kingdom, maternal mortality rates have fallen to 9 deaths per every 100,000 live births, while in Italy, Denmark, and Finland, maternal mortality is 4.2 or lower.

#### Trends in pregnancy-related mortality in the United States: 1987-2017



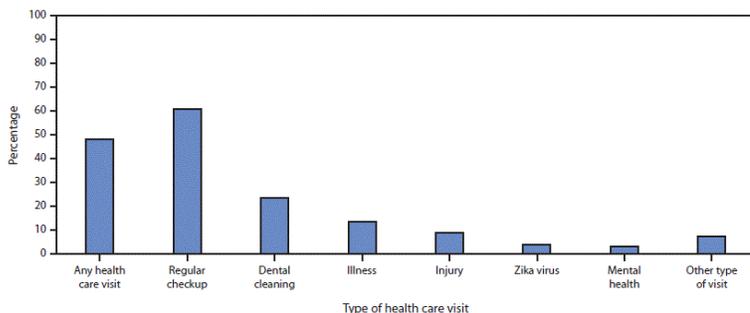
Chart: Daily Yonder Source: [CDC](#) Get the data Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Source: Carey, Liz, [Study: Rural Hospitals Without OBs Need More Training in Emergency Pregnancy Care](#), 12/30/2020, The Daily Yonder.

“In America’s rural states, the rates are much worse. In 2018, Georgia’s maternal mortality rate was 46.2 deaths per 100,00 live births. In Louisiana, it was 44.8, and in Arkansas – 34.8. In those areas, non-Hispanic Black women, American Indians and Alaska natives face higher maternal mortality, as do low-income women. And according to the CDC, more than 60% of those deaths are preventable. In a report from nine states’ maternal mortality committees, researchers found that while some deaths could be attributed to patient or family factors, such as lacking the knowledge of when to seek help, others could be linked specifically to healthcare providers giving misdiagnosis or ineffective treatments.”

## MMWR Report: Opportunities to Address Men's Health During the Perinatal Period

A recent report from the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report says that we already know that, "Men are less likely than women to seek health care and more likely to engage in higher risk behaviors." What is added to the body of knowledge is a report of a study of dads in Puerto Rico, which says that, "Fewer than one half (48%) of surveyed recent fathers in Puerto Rico had a health care visit for themselves in the 12 months before their newborn's birth; however, most attended prenatal care visits with their partner (87%), were present at the birth (83%) and purchased infant supplies (94%)." Thus, the perinatal period is a great time to give messages to dads encouraging them to pay more attention to their own health and how important it is for them to be healthy for their families' overall health and well-being.



← Percentage of health care visits (among all respondents) attended in the last 12 months before the newborn's birth among recent fathers reporting any type of health care visit, by type of visit (among respondents who reported having a health care visit) – Pregnancy Risks Assessment Monitoring System – Zika Monitoring System-Zika Postpartum Emergency Response Study, Puerto Rico, 2017.

Source: [Opportunities to Address Men's Health During the Perinatal Period](#), 01/01/2021.

## NHSA Offered the 24/7 Dad® Master Training to Healthy Start Projects

On December 16<sup>th</sup>, NHSA offered previously trained fatherhood practitioners of federally-funded Healthy Start projects the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) 24/7 Dad® Master Training. Over 55 practitioners and related staff participated in the five-hour training by NFI. The Master Training equips participants to deliver the 24/7 Dad® training using the same PowerPoint, videos, handouts and facilitator notes as NFI staff. Becoming a Master Trainer greatly reduces future training costs associated with paying NFI staff to deliver trainings and provides a comparable quality training. Moreover, the participants will be able to deliver trainings for as long as the trainee is employed by the project or organization, improving return-on-investment over time.

Immediately after the training, an exam is sent to the participants to complete. If successful, a certificate of completion and all the tools and resources for carrying out future training are sent to the participant. NHSA was happy to provide the training to help fatherhood practitioners and projects to increase their capacity and offerings to the fathers and families being served. Thank you to all those who participated.



Photo Credit: National Fatherhood Initiative.

## It's Not Too Late to Give Another Gift—The Gift of Yourself



Click [here](#) for this certificate you can download and print out yourself.

An article from the National Center for Fathering reminds that while Christmas has come and gone, a truly lasting gift a dad can give his kids is the gift of himself. "It's all about time together – being available to them, tuning into what's on their minds and making memories together." A dad named Richard gives each of his kids a gift certificate for a Day with Dad. Each child gets to choose what they want to do, where to go, what to eat. "Richard says that if you asked his kids later in the year what toys or gadgets they got under the tree, they probably couldn't tell you. But they could absolutely tell you every place they visited during their Day with Dad. That's the kind of gift that money can't buy."

Source: [The Gift of an Involved Dad](#), 12/23/2020. Here's another similar article from the National Center for Fathering: [4 Meaningful Gifts for Your Kids](#), accessed 01/13/2021.

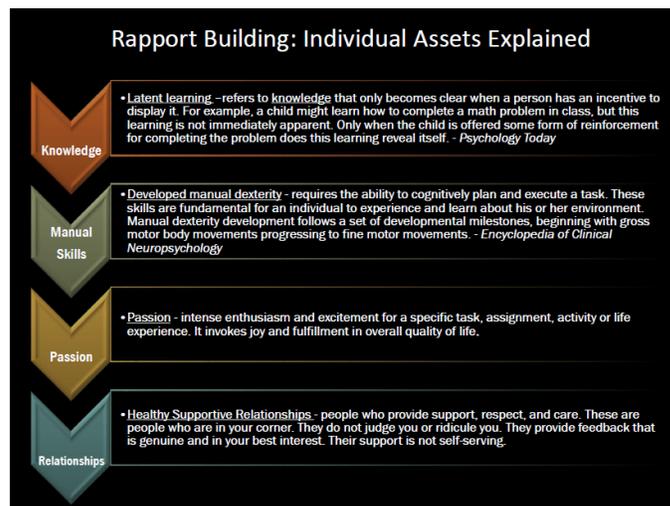
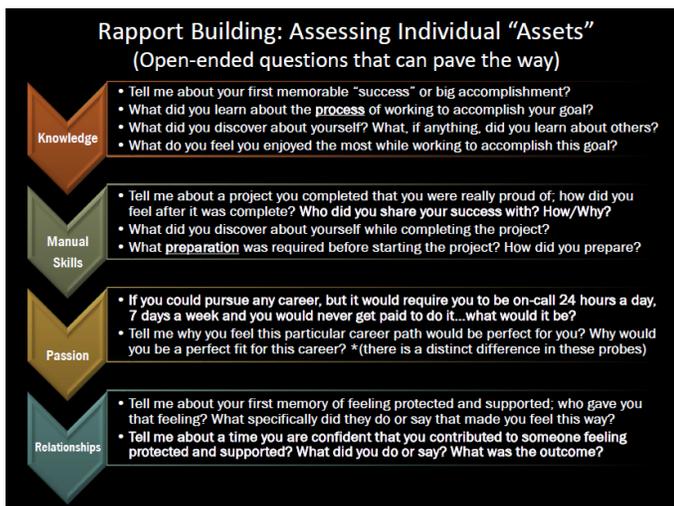
### MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Third Thursday of every month at 1:00 p.m. ET: NHSA Fatherhood Practitioners Webinars.

## Getting off to a Healthy Start

### Resources You Can Use!

#### Tool to Gather Information



Credit: Ra'Shawd E. Davis, MSEd, LPC, CDCA, EAP Counselor, City of Columbus, OH. Click [here](#) to access the tool, which could be printed double-sided on card stock.

#### How to Keep Those New Year's Resolutions Take the Healthy Habits Quiz

WebMD offers an online quiz called "How to Make Changes that Stick." Here's one question: True or False – If you haven't formed a new habit in three weeks, you should give up. There are nine questions in all and as you answer each one, you get information on why you chose the correct answer or not. One we found surprising was how many people kept their New Year's resolutions by June. We won't tell you the answer to that one, either. Click the link below to take the quiz.

Source: [Healthy Habits Quiz: How to Make Changes that Stick](#), accessed 01/02/2021.



#### The Impact of COVID-19 on Mothers and Babies

Veerle Bergink, MD, PhD, is the Director of Mount Sinai's Women's Mental Health Program and an internationally renowned expert in the treatment of psychiatric disorders during pregnancy and the postpartum period. In this virtual lecture, she discusses how the immune response to COVID-19 in pregnant mothers can impact maternal and neonatal outcomes and potentially result in long-term effects on the child's brain. She also states that anxiety surrounding the pandemic during pregnancy is normal and can be treated by behavioral interventions. She shows that the risk/benefit discussion on psychotropic medication use during pregnancy is not altered despite the outbreak and provides an overview of all recent treatment recommendations and guidelines. Click the link below to access the video.

Source: [The Impact of COVID-19 on Mothers and Babies](#), Mount Sinai New York, accessed 01/13/2021.

#### Pregnancy Depression Risk

An article featuring Dr. Bergink (see above) notes that depression screening really isn't a routine thing in prenatal care. She says, "...it would actually be more logical to start screening when women first come into the office during pregnancy." She adds that it's helpful for a woman to be open and honest about her feelings. "Depression isn't something you choose to have, and you can't blame yourself for having it. The more women share their struggles, the less hidden prenatal depression will be." Four questions to ask yourself or someone who is pregnant:

- Do you enjoy the things you normally enjoy?** If you're not finding [happiness](#) in your usual pleasures, that's a clue something's off.
- How's your mood most days?** It's called depression for a reason -- feeling low or "flat" is typical of depression.
- What kinds of symptoms have you been dealing with lately?** [Insomnia](#), [fatigue](#), loss of appetite, trouble concentrating, aches, and even crying spells can crop up in both pregnancy and depression.
- Do you feel depressed?** Often, the simplest question is the most accurate.

Source: Rachel Reiff Ellis, [Your Pregnancy Depression Risk](#), Grow by WebMD, accessed 01/13/2021.

January 2021



# Cookie Recipe Exchange

Do you love cookies? Do you taste a good cookie and ask for the recipe?

Same here!

Cookie Exchange Parties are fun. You bake a favorite cookie and go home with a whole bunch of different kinds of cookies and the recipes to go with them!

We can't exactly hold an exchange - even virtually! - with 101 Healthy Start Projects and a readership of over 2,500 people.

But we can do a

## DIGITAL RECIPE EXCHANGE!

Here's how it works:

1. Exchange is open to anyone, not just Healthy Start Projects!
2. Healthy Start Consumers are eligible to enter, too! Please identify them as consumers of your project.
3. Send the recipe for your favorite cookie\*, along with a picture of the cookie – and maybe a picture of you, too – to [bhaskins@nationalhealthystart.org](mailto:bhaskins@nationalhealthystart.org).
4. Include your name, title, name of your organization and city and state.
5. Send by ~~January 15, 2021~~. **Extended to January 31<sup>st</sup>!**
6. Recipes should be in a form that Bea can copy and paste so she doesn't have to type them. (But if you have a handwritten version from your great grandmother, send along a scan or photo of that, too, and we'll try to include it.)
7. NHTSA will prepare a recipe book with your submissions.
8. We'll send the link for the book to everyone who participates.
9. And you can print out the book and get some new recipes to try out yourself!



\*Brownies, fudge, fruit roll-ups and similar treats are included in this recipe exchange. Think of it this way: if you make it at holiday time, send it!

## Getting off to a Healthy Start

### What's Going on at the Healthy Start Projects? Let's Take a Look!

Visit our Facebook page for extra photos that we didn't have room for in this issue; click [here](#) to see the January album. You'll know if a project has photos in the album when you see the Facebook icon by its name. Check them out! Please keep sending stories and photos to our newsletter editor at [bhaskins@nationalhealthystart.org](mailto:bhaskins@nationalhealthystart.org)!

#### Mary's Center's Healthy Start (Washington, DC)

Mary's Center's Healthy Start, funded by DCHealth, has published a paper in the *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing Journal*: "Home visiting: A lifeline for families during the COVID-19 pandemic." The paper describes how Mary's Center's home visiting programs have fostered resilience among those most affected by the pandemic. Healthy Start is one of four Mary's Center programs supporting families with health education, care coordination and social support now all provided virtually. Healthy Families of America, Parents and Teachers and a Fatherhood Program are also featured in this work. The authors include Katie Williams, Healthy Start Program Manager; Fernanda Ruiz, Healthy Start Director; Felix Hernandez, Advocacy and Fatherhood Supervisor; and Marian Hancock, Senior HFA Program Supervisor. Click [here](#) for the article. **Congratulations, Mary's Center team!**



Article authors, celebrating the publication!



↑ Family making cookies on Cookie Day.

↗ Looks like someone is proud of her cookies!

Click [here](#) for more photos on our Facebook page!



#### Welcome Baby Healthy Start Program (Las Cruces, NM)

Once a week, Welcome Baby Healthy Start Father Involvement Coordinator, Anthony P. Carrillo, hosts a virtual event on the local dads' Facebook group page, "Las Cruces Dads." The events range from obtainable, fun and educational demonstrations for dads and their children to enjoy together to men's groups where dads can "talk it out." Through collaboration with Las Cruces Dads, the goal is to make a positive impact on local families and reduce stress by providing fathers access to coping strategies, community resources and ideas/activities to help create new "good memories" with their children during this tough time.

"On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, we held a virtual cookie day event on the Las Cruces Dads Facebook page. For the event, we shared a simple air-fryer cookie recipe, then demonstrated cooking it for dads of the page to try with their children. Our cookie day event promoted motor skills through handling the ingredients, literacy skills through reading the recipe, mathematics and science skills, spending quality family time and building memories at which to look back. Nine dads attended the demonstration live and 131 group members viewed the content in total."

#### Strong Beginnings – Healthy Start (Grand Rapids, MI)

Celeste Lloyd (right), Community Program Manager for Strong Beginnings, has been appointed by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to the Hispanic/Latino Commission of Michigan. The Commission advocates for the well-being of the Hispanic/Latino population with the vision of achieving an environment of social justice and economic parity for this population. Commissioners are appointed for a three-year term.

Among the things Celeste and her fellow commissioners will work on are increasing the economic growth and stability to Hispanics, promoting better education and academic achievement and securing appropriate recognition of Hispanic/Latino accomplishments and contributions to the state. **Congratulations, Celeste!**

**And check out Strong Beginnings' Fatherhood newsletter:** compact, attractive and informative. Click [here](#) to view the December and January issues.



January 2021

## Projects' Activities, continued

### My Baby & Me (Columbus, OH)

"As a public health agency, our team has taken on additional job duties and responsibilities in our local fight against COVID-19," reports Lindsay Ciavarelli, Project Director. "Our team has worked tirelessly to address this public health issue while simultaneously trying to meet the growing needs of a community disproportionately affected by job loss, homelessness, food insecurity and unavailable or inaccessible health care, coupled with freezing Ohio winter temperatures. Face-to-face home visits were suspended in mid-March and team members have been helping with contact tracing, taking temperatures, answering phones, working flu clinics and COVID testing pods, as well as serving those HS families on their caseload. Once our county went 'purple' early in December, any last community involvement or outreach was suspended, and our team pulled together two drive-through events for families to pick up diapers, safety items, books and other necessities. Community partners donated knit blankets, hats and booties, along with homemade quilts and layettes to keep our littlest community members warm. The certified car seat technician on our team educated families and safely installed 23 car seats over the span of four hours, and we were able to give out eight pack 'n plays to allow for safe sleep spaces. We are thankful for our public health heroes!"



↑ Organizing bags for the drive-through event.

← And giving away the bags!

Click [here](#) for more photos on our Facebook page.

### Family Tree Healthy Start (Lafayette, LA)



"This Christmas, with the help of some of our great community partners, we were able to provide gifts to several Healthy Start families. Thank you to all of Santa's Helpers who adopted families, donated gifts, wrapped presents and made home deliveries to help spread holiday cheer in this trying year."

Family Tree also nominated their participant CAN work group - Mommies on the Move – as the "Mom of the Month" for the great work they did in 2020. In 2021, M.O.M. will introduce a peer support program called Sisters Helping Sisters. This program will be led by graduate participants and active work group members and serve as a big sister program for first-time moms and moms who need extra support.



### Family Road Healthy Start (Baton Rouge, LA)

**Family Road Healthy Start**  
Community Action Network

**Strong Parents Stable Children**  
Protective Factors that Strengthen Families

**FACILITATORS**  
Jenny Leigh, Prevention Education Specialist  
Kallio Harris, Family Advocate and Forensic Interviewer  
Baton Rouge Children's Advocacy Center

**Virtual Session:**  
Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.  
<https://global.zoommeeting.com/jen/762679721>

You can also dial in using your phone.  
United States (Toll Free): 1.866.899.4679  
United States: +1 (571) 317-3116

Access Code: 762 679 221

**Tuesday, December 15th**  
11:00AM

This presentation is provided by the Community Action Network, Child Abuse and Neglect Committee. For more CAN members go to [www.batonrouge.org](http://www.batonrouge.org)

Tel: +225 201-8888

The Family Road Healthy Start CAN's Child Abuse and Neglect Sub-Committee, through a partnership with Baton Rouge Children's Advocacy Center (BRCAC), hosted a community virtual prevention education session, "Strong Parents, Stable Children: Protective Factors That Strengthen Families" on December 15<sup>th</sup>. "Through this collaborative effort we will be



Family Road Healthy Start celebrated 20 graduates on December 11<sup>th</sup>. These Healthy Start mothers and babies committed to 18 months of pre natal, health and child education. Each

mother received a certificate and a gift for participation in the program. The speakers for the evening were Dr. Dana Hunter, Executive Director of the Governor's Office Children's Cabinet, and Ms. Kenya Harris, Poet/Spoken Word Artist and Owner of Writing in Faith. *Editor's Note: There were so many wonderful photos of the graduates that we put them all in the January Facebook album. Click [here](#) to see them!*

able to provide free ongoing child abuse and neglect awareness prevention education and professional training opportunities," reported Levyette Matthews, Community Developer. The virtual session format was a great success and the first of several community education offerings to come. Seventy people attended, including parents, social service professionals and community members.

Getting off to a Healthy Start

More Happenings at the Healthy Start Projects!

Missouri Bootheel Regional Consortium (Sikeston, MO)



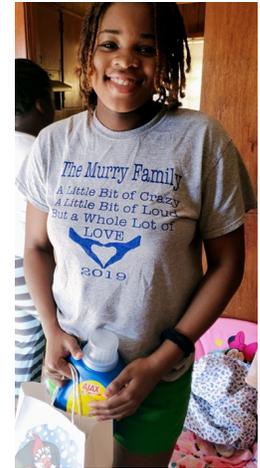
MBRC's CAN shares their most recent quarterly newsletter (←picture of front page). Click [here](#) to check it out!



↗&→Delta Healthy Start Collaborative participants with their Christmas bags. More photos of the happy recipients in our January Facebook album. Check it out [here!](#)

Delta Healthy Start Collaborative (Stoneville, MS)

Delta Healthy Start Collaborative gave its participants a Christmas bag that included an adult mask, children's masks, hand soap, tissue and laundry detergent. There was also information on Let's Talk Baby Café, Delta Dad and the Delta Opioid Initiative. "We know that at this time, there is a great need for those items. We wanted to provide just a little token to say thanks for being a part of the Delta Home Visitation Initiative," said Vanessa Wilson, CAN Coordinator.



Midlands Healthy Start (Columbia, SC)

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, Midlands Healthy Start's Nurse Practitioner conducted a virtual 1<sup>st</sup> **Time Pregnancy** class that addressed a series of informational content about what to expect during pregnancy and the first few weeks after delivery. The goal of this class is to equip pregnant women with knowledge to manage their pregnancy and reduce risk of maternal mortality and morbidity. Some of the topics covered included information on preterm labor, when to call the doctor, safe medicines, benefits of breastfeeding, kick counts, post-birth warning signs and STIs.

On December 8<sup>th</sup>, MHS held their year-end **Community Action Network Appreciation** for both Richland and Sumter counties. This was a virtual event to celebrate the accomplishments of the CAN in 2020. This event included fun, games, inspiration and prizes.

December 16<sup>th</sup> was the date of Midlands Healthy Start's **Participants Appreciation**. This was a virtual event to honor and celebrate the participants of Midlands Healthy Start. Participants were encouraged to participate in interactive games, including Holiday Song Emojis and a Holiday Kahoot. The children who were in attendance were given the treat of a virtual Holiday Storytime. At this event, each staff member nominated two participants to honor for the year and spoke about their accomplishments. Participants of the program were also given a chance to speak and talk about their appreciation for not only the staff, but also the Midlands Healthy Start program.

During the entire month of December, staff delivered holiday bags filled with an assortment of items for each participant's child or children. These goods were delivered inside a tote bag with the Midlands Healthy Start logo for a keepsake.



← MHS participant Catherine Rosario-Rentas and her baby Catalina Molina-Rosario with their holiday gift bag.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

NHSA's Calendar of Events

January 29, 2021 @ 11:30-5:30 EST.

"Building a Successful Fatherhood Program Workshop" - first in a two-part series. To register for Part 1, click [here](#). For more information, contact [Ken Scarborough](#).

**Women's Health and Equity Webinar Series:** Women's Health, Chronic Disease and Implications for Pregnancy and Postpartum Outcomes (details will follow).

**Webinar #2: February 4, 2021.** Breastfeeding and the Short- and Long-term Effects on Maternal and Child Health.

**Webinar #3: March 4, 2021.** Cardiovascular Disease and Pre-Post Pregnancy Complications.

Send Us Your Stuff!

Send us your stories and photos by the 6<sup>th</sup> of each month for inclusion in *Getting off to a Healthy Start*. Send to [Bea Haskins](#).

January 2021

## More Healthy Start Projects and Their Activities!

### Gift of Life Healthy Start (Montgomery, AL)



↑ Shoppers at the Pop-up Shoppe.

The Gift of Life Healthy Start didn't let chilly temperatures (50 degrees!) dampen their warm holiday spirit at their Christmas Pop-up Shoppe, held December 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. Gift of Life moms and dads had a chance to shop hundreds of new and gently used infant and children's clothing, shoes, coats, toys, baby accessories and adult clothing at no cost to them. Staff dressed in festive holiday sweaters and hats and provided shoppers with sanitizer and gloves and helped shoppers socially distance at the outdoor event. The two-day event gave participants a safe, enjoyable experience and an opportunity to receive needed items. There were about 40 people who showed up the first day and about 30 the next day.

NHSA asked Mona Davis, Director of Marketing & Community Outreach, to share additional information on the Pop-up Shoppe. Mona wrote, "Throughout the year, Gift of Life received donations of new and gently used items from moms who have graduated from our program, non-profit groups who partner with us from time to time and share a portion of large

donations that they receive with us and current HS families whose children have outgrown items that they want to share with other GOL moms. Our storeroom was becoming full of these donated items and we originally thought about starting a clothing closet for our families, but our building is so small and our new COVID safety protocols made that idea impractical.

"We know that 2020 was an unusually difficult year for many of our families. Many experienced lay-offs, had their work hours reduced or had to lose time from work to stay at home with young children or when daycare centers closed due to COVID. Lost wages meant money was tight for many families, so we thought of hosting an outdoor pop-up shoppe that would give those families an opportunity to shop for nice items at no cost. We had well over 500 items at our shoppe from newborn to 5T."

### Community Service Council Healthy Start (Tulsa, OK)



↑ Happy consumer with her bag of gifts.

Thanks to the donation of the Community Action Network's partner, FedEx Group, CSC Healthy Start was able to fill in the economic gap for many families struggling in the Healthy Start program. Several Healthy Start families have been affected by COVID-19 both financially and physically. As a result, these families found it very difficult to provide gifts for their children and loved ones. On Christmas Eve, the Community Service Council delivered nonperishable groceries and toys to Healthy Start clients. Items included in the grocery bags included, but were not limited to, toilet tissue, facial tissues, lotion, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, canned goods, oatmeal, macaroni and cheese, spaghetti, spaghetti sauce, peanut butter and jelly and Top Ramen noodles. Healthy Start participants were both surprised and ecstatic to receive groceries and Christmas toys.



Remember to submit your favorite cookie recipe for the "NHSA Cookie Recipe Exchange Book!" Send to [Bea Haskins](#) by January 31<sup>st</sup>. Bea already has the cover designed and now just needs the recipes to add to it! (See page 7 for more detail.)



← All set to assist Healthy Start clients at Christmas time with FedEx's help.

Click [here](#) for more photos on our Facebook page.

## Getting off to a Healthy Start

# More Healthy Start Projects' Activities and an Employee Spotlight!

### Indianapolis Healthy Start (IN)

Indianapolis Healthy Start (IHS) partnered with [The Links, Incorporated](#), Indianapolis Chapter, which is a social service organization to ensure that families being served in the Healthy Start program were provided with bags of groceries for the Thanksgiving holiday. IHS Staff and Dr. Monet Bowling, Chapter Vice President, greeted families at the Healthy Start office on November 25<sup>th</sup>. The partnership helped 15 families to have a meal for Thanksgiving. Healthy Start and The Links, Incorporated, Indianapolis Chapter, also developed the Women Empowering Women Partnership to increase awareness around infant mortality and morbidity, while providing resources for maintenance of healthy households and support from pregnancy to birth.



← Thanksgiving give-away with The Links, Incorporated.

Click [here](#) for more photos on our Facebook page.

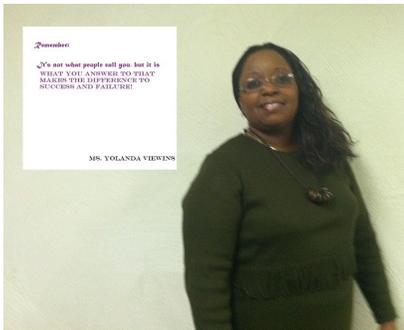


↙ Members of the Fetal Infant Mortality Review Community Action Team (FIMR/CAT) Maisha Wade (Healthy Start) and Jamichael Fann (WIC) stuff back packs with essential male items for upcoming Father Engagement events in the community. The programs have partnered to ensure that fathers are involved with maternal and child health issues and are a significant factor within the family structure.



### Employee Spotlight: Yolanda Viewins, Central Oklahoma Healthy Start (OK)

Yolanda Viewins began employment with the Community Health Center of Oklahoma's Mary Mahoney Health Center in 1995 in the Dental Department, where she was the Head Dental Assistant. In 2001, she transferred to the Community Health's Central Oklahoma Healthy Start Initiative. Healthy Start was a new program for the agency and it sounded like something she wanted to do, "working with babies." Offered the position as an Outreach Worker, Yolanda thought, "What a new opportunity to do what I love – helping people!"



While in that role, Yolanda enrolled in the Law Enforcement Citizen Academy, from which she graduated in 2003. She had a goal of becoming a police officer or private detective. Instead, she made the decision to gain custody of her three grandchildren (newborn, one-year old and three years old) to ensure they had a healthy life. During this time, Yolanda was also working on her associate degree. In 2013, she was promoted to Case Manager and received her Behavioral Health Case Management Certificate in 2016.

When she began her journey at Community Health 25 years ago, Yolanda was recently divorced and had three young children. Shortly after transferring to Healthy Start, she became a grandmother. She watched as her daughter fought for baby Ahmaud Jaris Earl Viewins' life, as he spent his first four weeks in ICU. Sadly, Yolanda's first grandson died at the age of two months. "My daughter has never been the same since," said Yolanda.

During her 12 years as an Outreach Worker, Yolanda was at homeless shelters and prisons, teaching parenting skills, the importance of keeping doctor appointments for children and parents themselves and equipping parents for success in the employment field or helping them to see education as a way to succeed. As a Case Manager, "Yolanda is exceptional," stated Tahirah Watley, Healthy Start Program Director. "Her clients have raved about her over the years. Her passion exudes as she speaks about the Healthy Start program and tells those in the community about our mission: 'Saving Babies' Lives.'"

Yolanda can recall several clients over the years who were positively impacted, seeing their self-esteem and self-worth increase. Some clients who seemed challenging – and whom some might think would not be successful in the program – turned out to be some of her most appreciative clients in the end. She says the conferences over the years also helped her to create ideas for success, from the information learned from other cities, and provided the ability to create lifetime partners in the work the agency does. Yolanda said, "Overall, I have gained from Healthy Start and Community Health Centers, Inc., as a person, mother, grandmother. This program has given me the ability to continue to reach unimaginable heights to pursue dreams that will promote others to soar to destinations and places they deserve."

**Thank you, Yolanda, for your dedication and a job well done for these many years!**

January 2021

### Attention Healthy Start Project Directors and Program Staff!

#### Newsletters

- Be sure to include NHTSA in your newsletter distribution list so we can include your news in *Getting off to a Healthy Start!* Please add Bea Haskins, Communications Coordinator and our newsletter editor, [bhaskins@nationalhealthystart.org](mailto:bhaskins@nationalhealthystart.org).
- Do you have project staff you'd like to be on *our* distribution list? Send their name, title and email address to Bea so she can add them!
- Make sure we have your Fatherhood Coordinator's name and email address, too!
- Not a Healthy Start Project? That's OK! Let us know if you want to add someone to our distribution list.

#### Photos, Stories and More

- Send us photos and news stories from your events for inclusion in the next issue of *Getting off to a Healthy Start!*
- Examples of events: baby showers, educational forums or CAN meetings.
- And remember to invite your elected officials – federal, state and local – to your events and be sure to take pictures of them!
- Don't forget your consumer success stories!
- The deadline is the 6<sup>th</sup> of each month.
- Send everything to **Bea Haskins**.



National Healthy Start Association | Raynard Washington, President | Deborah L. Frazier, CEO | 1325 G Street, NW, Suite 500 | Washington, DC 20005 | 202-295-2195 | [www.nationalhealthystart.org](http://www.nationalhealthystart.org)

The National Healthy Start Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The mission of the NHTSA is to be our nation's voice in providing leadership and advocacy for health equity services and interventions that improve birth outcomes and family well-being.

**Newsletter Editor:** Bea Haskins, Communications Coordinator | **Contributing Writers:** Caroline Valencia, Kenneth Scarborough and Healthy Start Projects' Staff; **Photo Credits:** Thank you to the Healthy Start projects that sent in photos used in this issue! Shutterstock photos are used under agreement.

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