

# Healthy Start Border Alliance



## US-Mexico Border: Infants & Children at a Disadvantage

The U.S.-Mexico border region is defined as the area 100 km (62 mi.) north of the international boundary that stretches 2,000 miles from California to Texas.

Nogales, Arizona, U.S. and Nogales, Sonora, Mexico



Border communities face many challenges that contribute to diminished health, well-being, and access to health care:

- High birth rates and high teen birth rates
- More than 50% of pregnancies are unintended
- Less than 2/3 of women receive early prenatal care
- More than a third of children live under the federal poverty level
- Low rates of health insurance
- More than 25% of adults have not completed high school
- Significant shortage of health care providers

If the border became the 51st U.S. State, the region would rank:

- LAST in the percentage of people covered by health insurance
- LAST in per capita income
- FIRST in numbers of school children who are living in poverty and are uninsured

The **Healthy Start Border Alliance (HSBA)** is a collaboration of five Healthy Start projects along the U.S.-Mexico Border working to achieve measurable impact on women's health and family resilience among underserved border communities. In many areas along the border, particularly rural areas and impoverished *colonias*, Healthy Starts are the only program that provide supportive case management and parenting education to pregnant women and families with small children.

Together, HSBA sites directly serve well over 3,000 women and children each year from low income, underserved communities in California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, and they serve many thousands more through community action networks and other services they provide.

Like all Healthy Start programs, our primary goal is to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in perinatal health for underserved communities (see reverse). Beyond this, the HSBA has conducted border-wide research studies and defined collective goals in specific areas of health impact for the border region.

## Our Collective Impact Goals

In the communities we serve, we are working to:

- (1) Reduce unintended pregnancies by 10% in 10 years
- (2) Increase first trimester prenatal care by 10% in 3 years
- (3) Measurably improve mental health and resilience of parents



## HEALTHY START INITIATIVE: ELIMINATING DISPARITIES IN PERINATAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Healthy Start is a federally funded initiative established in 1991 to improve perinatal health outcomes and reduce racial and ethnic disparities for women, infants, and their families. It is funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Healthy Start offers services and support for mothers, children and families before, during and after pregnancy. It is implemented in over 100 communities across the U.S. that have the highest rates of infant mortality and poverty. **Healthy Starts in communities with the nation's highest infant mortality rates have reduced that rate among participants to below the national average (4.67 deaths per live births in 2015).**



*"I am so thankful to the Healthy Start program. I always felt supported and guided by my home visitor and I knew I was not alone, even when I was so afraid. It has not been easy as a single mother, but I know that my daughter and I have a chance for a better future."*  
--Mariana, age 24, San Diego, California

*"Healthy Start helped me to find my voice. Because of the Healthy Start program I know how to speak up if I feel that my or my children's wellbeing could be harmed."*  
--Rosa, age 38, Nogales, Arizona

*"I have been empowered to pursue my dreams and want to empower other women to follow theirs as well. I am forever grateful for the care and support received from the Healthy Start Program."*  
-- Cristina, age 26, Las Cruces, New Mexico

**Healthy Start builds resiliency for families that need it the most.** We build support networks and access to care for families with few resources, and work with them to set and pursue goals. Home visiting programs can be the only chance some families have to build a trajectory out of poverty.

**Healthy Start helps good people be great parents,** learning how they can take the lead in stimulating healthy child development from even before they are born.

**Border Healthy Starts use the proven Community Health Worker/Promotora model** to build trusting relationships with hard to reach families and develop a responsive, home grown and culturally competent health work force.

**Healthy Start Saves Money.** By improving healthy pregnancies, Healthy Start reduces costs associated with expensive medical treatments required by low-birthweight and preterm infants. Moreover, extensive research shows that evidence-based, voluntary home visiting programs improve child and family outcomes, and save money for states and taxpayers through better education, economic, health, and social outcomes.

- The average cost of medical care for a healthy baby is \$4,389, compared to \$54,194 for a preterm baby.
- The long-term medical and social services associated with premature babies cost taxpayers \$26.2 billion per year.
- One dollar spent in the early years is estimated to save between \$3 and \$9 in future spending on health, social, and justice services.

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