

HealthySteps Strengthens Responsive Caregiving and Promotes Early Relational Health

SEE HOW HEALTHYSTEPS SUPPORTS LINDA AND BELLA

At 6 months old, Bella cries often and is difficult to console. Her mom, Linda, worries that she doesn't know what Bella needs, and that she won't be a good parent.



Without HealthySteps, Linda feels alone, overwhelmed by stress, and struggles to create a safe, stable, and nurturing relationship with Bella

During a 15 minute well-child visit, the pediatrician says Bella's height/weight look good, and she is physically healthy, so Linda doesn't say anything about her concerns and they leave the appointment.



Linda grows more nervous about caring for Bella. She often thinks about her own childhood spent in foster care. She wonders if she cried a lot too and if anyone cared for her when she did. If they did care for her, what did they do? She wishes she had someone to call to help her with Bella.



They do not attend the 24-month visit. Bella is having more difficulty with behavior, following directions, and getting along with peers. Bella is expelled from daycare, causing Linda to miss work and lose her job. When Bella begins preschool she is quickly identified with behavior problems



and begins a long trajectory of special education and behavioral health involvement.

At the 18-month Well-Child visit, Linda tells the pediatrician that Bella is having terrible tantrums and hits and bites her when she is upset. The pediatrician shares that it is normal to have some tantrums at this age and does his best to share ideas and provide a few handouts before having to move on to the next appointment.



Bella does not sleep well. She and Linda are both tired and irritable. They watch a lot of TV and don't interact with others much. Linda doesn't feel connected to Bella and doesn't feel she knows what Bella needs or wants. Linda and Bella do not attend the next few scheduled Well-Child visits.



HealthySteps Promotes Early Relational Health Through Responsive Caregiving

HealthySteps (HS) promotes nurturing, responsive caregiving and positive relationships between caregivers and their young children. These relationships serve as a critical protective factor for children and are an important determinant in child health. Young children who consistently receive comfort, protection and connection from their caregivers can develop secure attachments, experience healthy development and thrive.

Explore HealthySteps outcomes at healthysteps.org/the-evidence.

With HealthySteps,
Linda feels cared for by
the primary care team so
that she can care for Bella

The pediatrician and HS Specialist thank Linda for sharing her concerns that Bella cries often and is difficult to comfort. They show understanding “we hear how much you love Bella AND how difficult things are right now. Can we work together to make things better?” Linda agrees and the HS Specialist makes an appointment later in the week to follow up.



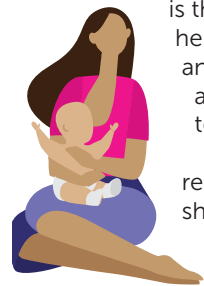
When Linda returns to see the HS Specialist just a few days later she shares some of her experiences growing up in foster care. The HS Specialist and Linda decide to find Linda her own behavioral health provider given all that she has been through, and also decide to work together to establish a strong, stable parent-child relationship with Bella that Linda didn't experience in foster care.



Linda and Bella attend team-based well-child visits and follow-up visits with just the HS Specialist where they practice observing and responding to what Bella is “saying” with her behaviors and vocalizations. Linda and Bella also practice engaging in back-and-forth games, like peek-a-boo, and develop a schedule and routines that helps to ensure Bella feels safe and secure.



Linda knows that her HS team is there to support her, Bella, and the relationships between them. She also knows that she has the skills to be the caregiver she wants to be and the team to help her do it. Bella's pediatric team



is thrilled to monitor her healthy growth and development, and even happier to observe the strong parent-child relationship between she and Linda.

Linda, through meeting with her own behavioral provider and her HS Specialist, begins to understand that she doesn't have to be the “perfect” parent – instead, she learns to be a responsive, consistent, loving parent who enjoys playing and interacting with Bella and knows to also prioritize her own well-being. Linda has built a strong network of other parents and supports.



Linda always leaves appointments with information about Bella's development, and ideas about playing together. Perhaps more importantly, she leaves with a growing sense of confidence that she can be the kind of parent that she wants to be and that Bella deserves.

