

# WHAT IS DYADIC CARE?

Factors relating to the environment and relationships surrounding infants and toddlers impact their mental and physical health development. Professional guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics emphasize the importance of preventive, family-centered care in the pediatric care setting beginning in early childhood.[i] Public health approaches that promote safe, stable, and nurturing relationships beginning in infancy, may build resilience and buffer the effects of adverse childhood experiences.



Dyadic approaches to health and wellness integrate what we know about relationships into pediatric health care by centering infant-caregiver relationships into assessment, intervention, and referrals as part of the pediatric patient's care plan.

Dyadic care is of primary importance during the first three years of life when a child's brain and biological systems undergo the most rapid growth and development than any other time in life.

Typically, dyadic care is provided by a multidisciplinary health care team, including a licensed behavioral health provider. This licensed behavioral health provider addresses developmental and behavioral health concerns, as soon as they are identified.

Through the dyadic care model, care for the child is delivered in the context of the infant, caregiver, and family (i.e., "dyadic health care services") so that families are screened for behavioral health, interpersonal safety, social determinants of health such as food and housing insecurity, and additional family needs. Families then receive wrap-around services such as short-term counseling, connections to referrals, and close follow-up to ensure continuity of care.



Through CalAIM, Medi-Cal now covers expanded dyadic services for behavioral health wellness visits that focus on the individual child, caregiver wellness and family needs within the context of the child’s medical appointment. These preventive services are available to all families as part of Well Child Visits in accordance with AAP Bright Futures Guidelines, and can be offered on the same day as the medical Well Child Visit. The California Department of Health Care Services has provided guidance on billing for a variety of dyadic services eligible for dyadic billing and has identified HealthySteps as one of the evidence-based models supported by this benefit.[ii]

Developed by ZERO TO THREE, the HealthySteps model integrates behavioral health into primary care visits during the first three years of life. HealthySteps has shown to decrease health inequities by increasing the rates of timely Well Child Visits, vaccinations, and developmental and behavioral screenings. Greater satisfaction rates among physicians and parents have also been associated with this model.[iii]

First 5 Orange County and CalOptima Health are committed to supporting pediatric practices in Orange County to provide dyadic services, increasing Well-Child Visits, comprehensive screenings and support during early childhood by expanding implementation of the HealthySteps model in up to 10 clinics through the CalOptima Health Dyadic Services Program Grant.

[Please see the Notice of Funding Opportunity for more information.](#)

[i] InCK Marks Child Health Care Transformation Series (2020). Young Child Health Transformation: What Practice Tells Us. Evidenced-Based and Promising Programs; Child Medical System Change Initiatives; and Principles, Qualities, and Attributes of Effective Practice Upon Which to Build.

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[ii] California Department of Health Care Services (2023). Dyadic Services and Family Therapy Benefit. All Plan Letter 22-029

[iii] Valado, T, Tracey, J, Goldfinger, J, and Briggs, R. HealthySteps: Transforming the Promise of Pediatric Care. The Future of Children. 2019; 29,(1) Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1220075.pdf>.