

## Legislative Delegation

Healthy Start Southwest Florida has been providing home visiting services to high-risk pregnant women and new families with babies since 1992.

We ensure pregnant women and babies have access to medical care and provide support and education on pregnancy, childbirth, parenting, breastfeeding as well as screens for perinatal depression, intimate partner violence and developmental milestones.

In March, 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic caused us to expand our mission in the wake of massive unemployment and financial hardship. In Southwest Florida, food banks, mobile pantries and even school buses were delivering food to newly needy families. Healthy Start quickly realized that we were positioned to provide help for the smallest and most vulnerable of our residents. Thus, we established supply chains that did not compete with local stores. We called upon our local grantors and foundations to support our efforts by releasing all restrictions on existing funds and increasing their gifts when possible. Led by Healthy Start, our community leveraged over \$100,000 to provide diapers, wipes, formula, pack & plays, sleep sacks and car seats to Southwest Florida babies.

Our home visitors transitioned into telehealth-type visits to continue to support pregnant women and new moms who were now isolated. In addition to telehealth, all of our home visitors are doing doorstep deliveries to their clients – providing handouts and educational materials as well as diapers and other necessary supplies. Whenever possible, a doorstep delivery includes mom bringing the baby to a window or screen door. Thus, the home visitor can lay eyes on mom and baby as well as providing necessary supplies.

Healthy Start administrative staff have also made home deliveries of baby supplies to those families who are not clients but who nonetheless have a baby in need. In addition, we collaborate with our community partners to get supplies to families as quickly as possible. In keeping with our vision that “Every Baby Deserves a Healthy Start,” we continue to provide babies of Southwest Florida with essential services and supplies.