

# NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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The birth of a new baby can be both a joyful and a stressful time for a family. When this stress is added to the already hectic lives many young parents lead, it can create barriers to the bonding so vital in raising a healthy, happy baby. Healthy Families America assists parents in managing the stress of pregnancy, birth, and infant care and establishing the strong parent-child bonds and solid family foundations so critical to the growth and development of their child.

Betsy Walton is the HFA Clinical Program Manager for the Nebraska Panhandle Region. She leads a staff of five parent coaches who provide free services to expectant parents and those with infants up to three months old.

“Our Parent Coaches meet with families to provide support during pregnancy, prepare parents for the birth of their baby and connect them with resources in the community to help build strong family foundations,” Walton said. “There is no age, income or racial requirement—the program is voluntary; our admission criteria are based on the presence and type of stressors affecting the lives of our clients.”

Walton said each family’s unique needs are first identified, then families set goals which enable their Parent Coach to customize the program to meet unique needs. “Coaches work one-on-one with families to build on their strengths, enabling them to independently manage and eliminate life stress and bond with their children,” Walton said. “It is proven in research that this methodology will improve the child’s health and set the stage for a happy life.”

“Hands on activities during each meeting stimulate baby’s brain development which helps them grow to their fullest potential,” Walton continued. “Coaches also provide physical and social development screenings on children in the home on a regular basis which gives valuable, timely feedback to parents.”

An added bonus Walton describes is monthly group activities for parents and friends where they can socialize and network in a relaxed, fun environment. The HFA program is available in either English or Spanish. Transportation is available for medical and health-related appointments for the mom and baby.

Families may enroll in Healthy Families America at any time during pregnancy and up until the baby is three months old. Once enrolled, families may stay in the program for three years. Meetings with parent coaches begin weekly and progress to monthly and quarterly meetings, Walton concluded.

Healthy Families America is a program of Panhandle Public Health District and the Scotts Bluff County Health Department. For additional information, visit [pphd.org](http://pphd.org) or call Walton at 308-633-2866 or toll free at 877-218-2490. The purpose of the Panhandle Public Health District is to educate the region it serves about the prevention of epidemics, spread of contagious diseases, injury, illness and disability. The district is charged with promoting and encouraging healthy behaviors. They promote the quality and accessibility of health services and protection against environmental hazards. Through education, protection and promotion of these issues, the Panhandle Public Health District believes the quality of life of the residents they serve can be greatly improved.