

COMMUNITY PARTNER NEWSLETTER

BY THE NUMBERS

Our First Steps centralized intake received 221 family home visiting referrals so far in 2026.

- 37% of our referrals are prenatal
- Check out more referral data on page 5.

We are currently serving 365 families in our family home visiting program regionally and have already had 19 program completions in 2026.

CELEBRATING PUBLIC HEALTH

Our teams have a lot to celebrate this spring, including:

- National Public Health Week, April 6-12, 2026
- National Home Visiting Week, April 20-24, 2026
- National Nurses Week, May 6-12, 2026
- Our collaborative's regional work was featured in a Poster Presentation at this year's MN Public Health Association Conference on April 14.

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EARLY IS BEST



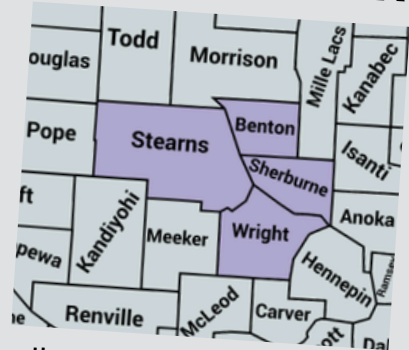
We are committed to increase our prenatal referrals and enrollments. Earlier support to families sets the stage for healthier moms, babies, families, and communities.

Families who participate in family home visiting are shown to have:

- improved pregnancy health, including reduced rates of pregnancy induced hypertension and illegal substance use and/or alcohol use
- better birth outcomes including lower rates of preterm birth, low-birth weight, and infant mortality
- higher breastfeeding initiation & duration
- better child attachment & bonding with parent
- greater parenting confidence
- improved child vocabulary & cognitive functioning, literacy rates, and school readiness

It's not just about the birth—it's about building resilience and support for the entire parenting journey. Please help us get connected to pregnant families you serve.

OUR SERVICE AREA



While all MN counties offer Family Home Visiting (FHV), First Steps Central MN covers FHV in Benton, Sherburne, Stearns & Wright Counties

Visit our First Steps website for the latest resources, programming information, and our monthly family newsletters.



It is also where you find our online referral form to connect families to us!



OUTREACH & EVENTS

MOTHERS & BABIES

Our second cohort of staff completed the Mothers & Babies training. Each of our nurses can now offer this evidence-based intervention that helps families manage stress and prevent postpartum depression.

MB uses elements of:

- cognitive behavior theory
- attachment theory
- mindfulness
- psychoeducation

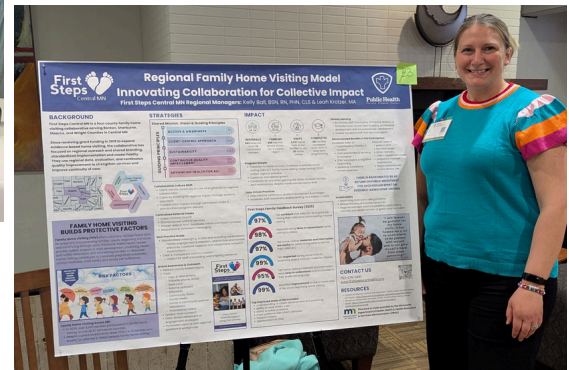


Here are a few ways our teams have built connections with one another, with families, and out in our communities this past quarter:



(Pictured above) First Steps Nurses attended the St. Cloud Baby Expo on March 7 for outreach

(Pictured below) First Steps Managers were chosen for a Poster Presentation at the MN Public Health Association Conference on April 14



Fun with First Steps
Central MN

CRAFTS | ACTIVITIES | CONNECTIONS

Caregivers and little ones are invited to join First Steps for fun mornings of crafts designed to build connection, creativity, and community!

THESE EVENTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO ALL!

Fun with First Steps events are currently held at:

- Mainstreet Family Resource Center (400 Jackson Ave NW, Elk River, MN 55330)
 - Upcoming Date/Time: Monday, May 11, 10a-1p
- 1010 Community Outpost
 - Upcoming Date/Time: Friday, May 15, 10a-12p

Look for additional dates and locations later in 2026!



Weekly Drop-In Infant Feeding Support

Tuesdays

- 9:30a-11:30a, Monticello Community Center
- 9:30a-11:30a, St. Cloud YMCA

Wednesdays

- 9:30a-11:30a, Wright County Historical Society, Buffalo
- 1:30p-3p, Maple Grove Hospital

Thursdays

- 11a-12:30p, Cambridge-Isanti Adult Enrichment Center

Fridays

- 10a-12p, Options for Women -Cornerstone, St. Michael

= First Steps staff present



HOW HOME VISITING BUILDS PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Adverse childhood and community experiences (ACEs) are events that can occur in a household, within the community, and the environment. Types of ACEs may include:

ABUSE | NEGLECT | DIVORCE | MENTAL ILLNESS
INCARCERATION | SUBSTANCE MISUSE | BULLYING | COMMUNITY VIOLENCE
EXPERIENCING OR WITNESSING TERRORISM, WAR, OR NATURAL DISASTERS

The original ACE study from 1995 had 17,000 participants.

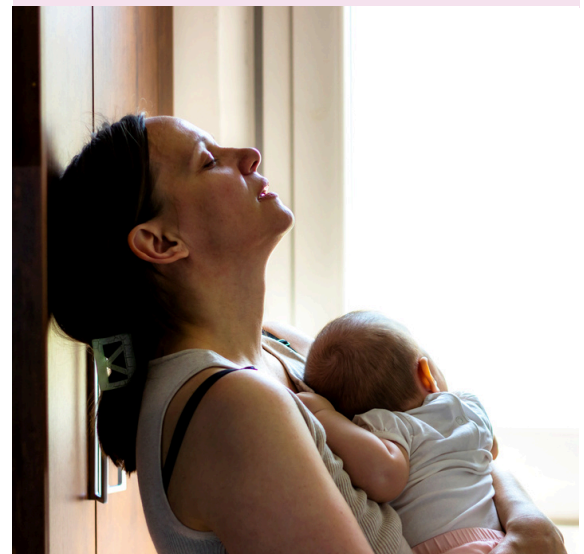
- Each participant was given an ACE score of 0 to 10 based on the type of trauma they experienced in their childhood.
- Each type of trauma counts as one experience, no matter how many times it occurs.

When those experiences are left unaddressed, the toxic stress from ACEs harms children and families, as well as organizations, systems and communities. That toxic stress can reduce the ability of individuals to respond to stressful events with resiliency and can impact our lifelong experiences and health.

The ACE study found that:

- ACEs are common--nearly two-thirds (64%) of adults from the study had at least one ACE.
- ACEs cause adult onset of chronic disease--such as cancer, heart disease, mental illness & violence.
 - As the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk for negative health outcomes. For example, people with an ACE score of 4 are two-times as likely to be smokers, seven times more likely to be an alcoholic, and it can increase the risk of attempted suicide by 1200 percent.
- Childhood adversity contributes to most of our major chronic health, mental health, economic health and social health issues. ACEs can be linked back to the majority of workplace absenteeism, and for costs in health care, emergency response, mental health and criminal justice.
- it doesn't matter which ACEs a person has; the harmful consequences are the same. The brain cannot distinguish one type of toxic stress from another and each can have the same lifelong impact.

ACEs don't occur alone. if you have one ACE, there's an 87% chance that you have two or more

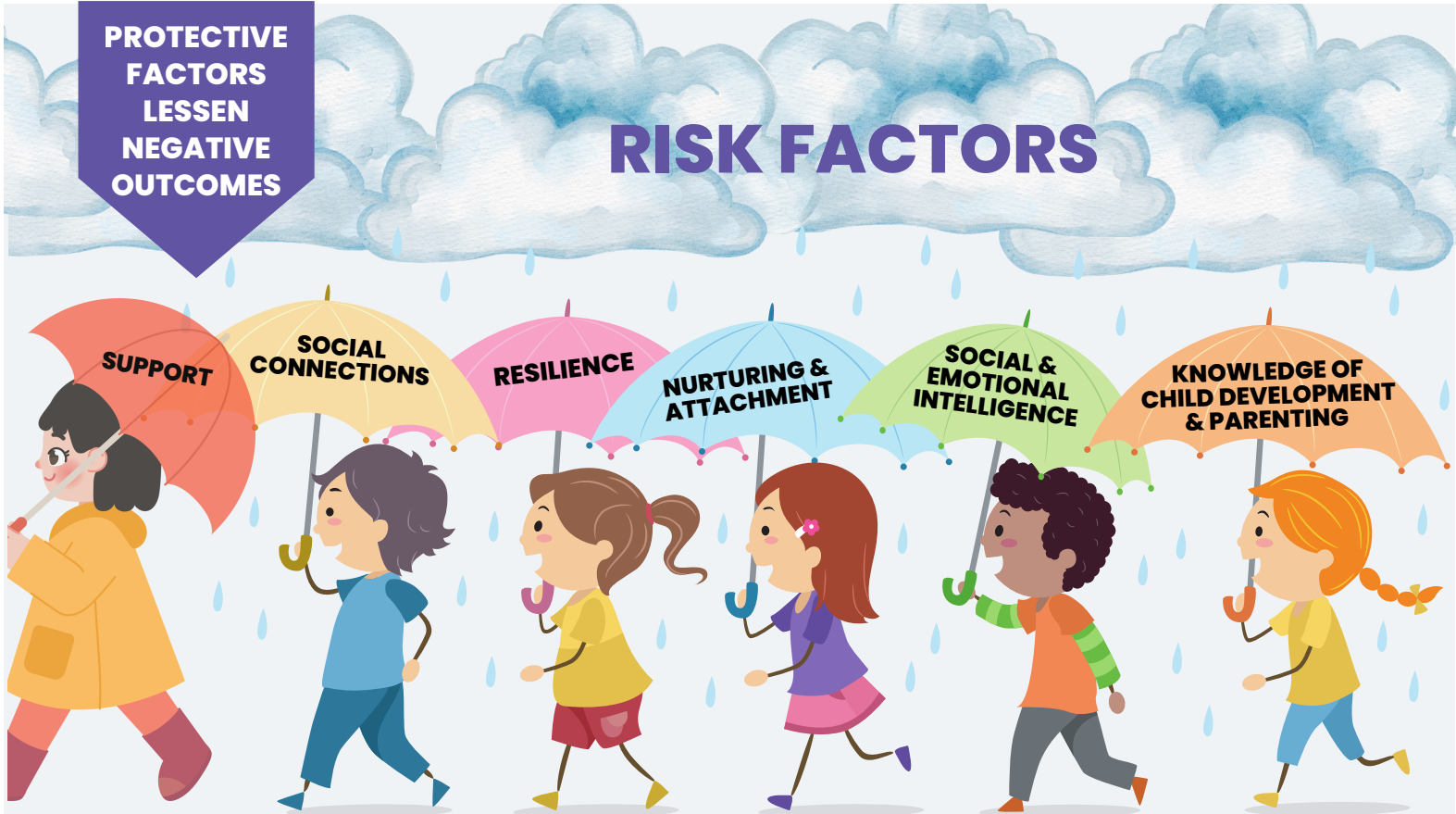


People with an ACE score of 6 or higher are at risk of their lifespan being shortened by 20 years.



HOW HOME VISITING BUILDS PROTECTIVE FACTORS (continued)

All hope is not lost! Thankfully, research has shown that there are many ways to reduce and heal from ACE toxic stress, build health, and grow caring communities. This is where protective factors come in.



In this visual (above), the rain represents risk factors/ACES while the umbrellas represent protective factors. While the children still may have wet feet, they are mostly shielded from the rain thanks to those umbrellas. Similarly, those who have experienced ACEs, but who also have protective factors and have learned to manage and adapt to life challenges, are buffered from some of the negative effects of the ACEs. This can have a positive impact to their lifelong health.

Protective factors are characteristics at the biological, psychological, family, community or cultural level that are associated with a lower likelihood of negative outcomes shared above.

Our goal in home visiting is to build those protective factors early in life because we know 90% of brain development happens before age 5. Parents are a child's first teacher and support to parents can have a big impact and set the stage for a child's entire life. We move upstream to prevent ACEs. This is Public Health!

Sources:

- <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/about/protective-factors-aces/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/aces/communication-resources/index.html>



FIRST STEPS DATA DIVE

If you would like more information about your agency's referral data to us, please contact us at 763-276-0441 or email referrals@firststepscentralmn.org



REFERRALS

221 Referrals YTD to First Steps Central MN family home visiting

- up 1.4% from last quarter



FAMILIES

Currently serving **365** families monthly across our 4-county region

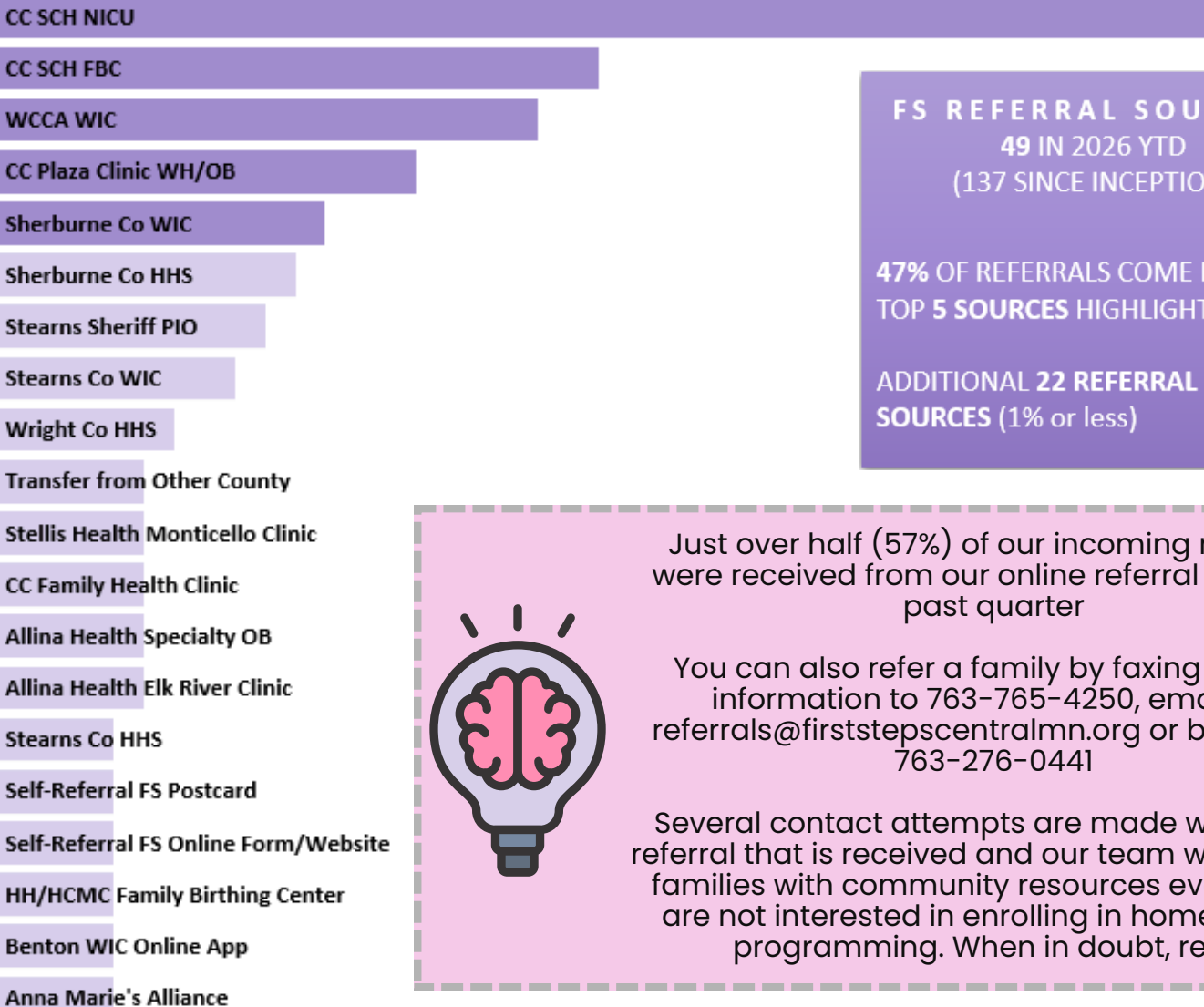


COMPLETED

19 Families YTD completed or graduated from our Family Home Visiting Program

FS FHV CENTRALIZED INTAKE REFERRAL SOURCES

2026 Community Partner Referrals



FS REFERRAL SOURCES
49 IN 2026 YTD
(137 SINCE INCEPTION)

47% OF REFERRALS COME FROM TOP 5 SOURCES HIGHLIGHTED

ADDITIONAL 22 REFERRAL SOURCES (1% or less)



Just over half (57%) of our incoming referrals were received from our online referral form this past quarter

You can also refer a family by faxing referral information to 763-765-4250, emailing referrals@firststepscentralmn.org or by calling 763-276-0441

Several contact attempts are made with every referral that is received and our team will connect families with community resources even if they are not interested in enrolling in home visiting programming. When in doubt, refer!