
Policy Number: 205.123
Title: Healthy Start Placement for Pregnant and Post-Partum Persons
Effective Date: 10/10/25

PURPOSE: To advance both the public interest and community safety, the commissioner of corrections may conditionally release pregnant or post-partum incarcerated persons to community-based programming for the purpose of participation in prenatal or postnatal care programming and to promote mother-child bonding.

APPLICABILITY: Incarcerated persons who are pregnant or have given birth within eight months of the date of commitment, for the duration of the pregnancy and up to one-year post-partum.

DEFINITIONS:

Healthy Start review team – a multi-disciplinary team of Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) staff who review candidates for healthy start placement. The team includes staff from the following business units or with roles in release planning, field services supervision, work release, parenting coordinator, assigned caseworker, and victim services.

Healthy Start release team – a multi-disciplinary team that provides pre- and post-release planning and community reviews. This team includes the participant and designated staff from the following DOC business units or with roles in release planning, reentry services, parenting coordinator, assigned caseworker, victim services, and the community stability team for housing supports, if needed. This team also includes the presumed supervision agent of record and various community-service providers, including a doula, and support persons.

Required programming – includes such examples as evidence-based parenting skills programming, working at paid employment, seeking employment or making employment plans, taking part in vocational training or educational programs, engaging in substance use disorder and/or mental health treatment services, and other medical or community supportive needs for participants and their infants.

PROCEDURES:

- A. Healthy Start conditional release placement decisions are guided by principles of child development, attachment theory, equity, risk reduction, and public safety and must prioritize the health of the baby and mother.
- B. Eligibility screening
 1. Upon intake, health services staff must determine pregnancy status and ask all individuals if they have given birth within twelve months prior to commitment. Health services staff notify the facility parenting coordinator or designee of pregnancy or post-partum status.
 2. The parenting coordinator verifies birth and parenting plans for potential inclusion into Healthy Start. There is a presumption of eligibility if the individual meets the following criteria:
 - a) The candidate is:

- (1) pregnant; or
 - (2) up to eight months post-partum;
 - b) The candidate will reach their supervised release date:
 - (1) While pregnant;
 - (2) Up to one-year post-partum; or
 - (3) In conjunction with participation in other early or conditional release programs for which the candidate is eligible;
 - c) Termination of parental rights has not occurred, or is not imminent, for the child in question; and
 - d) The candidate does not have a current sentence or detainer from a federal jurisdiction or from a state other than Minnesota.
3. People returned to prison following revocation from supervised release are eligible if they meet the above criteria.
4. For individuals who do not meet the above criteria, the parenting coordinator must review situations where placement on Healthy Start is vital for the infant's health and development (such as infant needs in a neonatal intensive care unit) and make recommendations for exceptions to the Healthy Start review team. These exceptions must be based primarily on what is in the best interest of the infant given their health and prioritize physiological benefits for the infant over attachment concerns, so long as public safety is appropriately managed.
5. If the candidate meets the above criteria, is serving a sentence controlled by Minn. Stat. § [169A.276](#), subd. 1(c), and has not yet successfully completed treatment recommendations as determined by a comprehensive substance use disorder assessment while incarcerated, department staff must work to create treatment opportunities to meet the statutory requirements to permit an otherwise-eligible candidate to move forward with Healthy Start.
6. The parenting coordinator notifies candidates of eligibility.
 - a) The parenting coordinator documents if someone is ineligible and screened out.
 - b) The parenting coordinator meets with candidates screened in as eligible.
 - c) If a candidate declines Healthy Start, the parenting coordinator makes a case note, and completes the Healthy Start Declination form (attached).
 - d) Candidates must complete a Healthy Start Information Packet (attached). This packet is provided to the Healthy Start review team for review. This includes:
 - (1) A release of information to share pregnancy and childbirth information with the Healthy Start review team and release teams.
 - (2) A self-assessment of strengths and barriers to provide information about their needs and a listing of any potential release residential address options and opportunities.

C. Candidate Public Safety Review and Decision

1. The parenting coordinator provides the information packet to the Healthy Start review team.
2. Expedited screening and planning services may be necessary for persons in the latter part of their pregnancy and for post-partum candidates.
3. Within two weeks of receiving the eligibility screening, each team member reviews candidates and their information packets to provide individual recommendations delineating public safety or victim concerns and any program or intervention recommendations for release planning purposes.
4. The director of reentry services is the commissioner of corrections' designee for Healthy Start and reviews these recommendations for healthy start placement decisions. In deciding whether to place someone on Healthy Start, the department must consider whether a placement meets public interest and community safety. The director of reentry services must consult with the commissioner of corrections prior to making any placement decisions.
5. After receiving the recommendation, the commissioner or designee should approve eligible Healthy Start placement requests unless it is decided, based on the factors listed below, that placement poses a public safety risk. The commissioner must consider:
 - a) History of criminal activity demonstrating safety concerns for the specific child in question;
 - b) Programming and treatment needs that are severe enough to require completion prior to release and that the programming or treatment must be provided in a Minnesota correctional facility; and
 - c) Any other individualized factors considered relevant by the commissioner.
6. The director of reentry services must share their determination with the review team, documented in a letter, and include a statement of reasons if denied. This letter is sent to the applicant and retained in ODocS.
7. For persons who refuse placement or those denied participation:
 - a) Supplemental reviews must occur when there is a material change in the health of the individual, in the health of the fetus or baby, or in other caregiving circumstances supporting the need for Healthy Start placement.
 - b) The parenting coordinator must share the need for supplemental review and related new information with the Healthy Start review team for consideration.

D. Release Planning

1. Once the Healthy Start review team approves participation, the team expands to include community-based service providers and other support persons, becoming the Healthy

Start release team. Individuals must complete additional releases of information to inform the added team members, as needed.

2. The Healthy Start release team meets as soon as possible to create a Healthy Start plan, identify Healthy Start Participant Agreement (“program agreement”) requirements, and address release needs. This includes topics such as:
 - a) Initial case review recommendations;
 - b) Residence options;
 - c) Supervision requirements and conditions of release;
 - d) Required programming;
 - e) Birthing or childcare plans and arrangements;
 - f) Planning and support to clear any outstanding detainers or warrants prior to participation;
 - g) Health insurance and public assistance benefits applications;
 - h) Personal identification needs; and
 - i) A completed program agreement outlining agreed-upon requirements signed by the participant.
3. The caseworker then creates the release plans per standard DOC policies.

E. Community Release and Participation Requirements

1. Participants must follow all conditions of release and program agreement requirements.
2. The Healthy Start release team meets at least quarterly with participants to review and amend program agreement requirements and goal completions. The community navigator or parenting coordinator schedules these meetings in coordination with the supervision agent. A DOC Healthy Start release team member enters brief records of these release team meetings into COMS.

F. Completion and Termination

1. When participants reach their confinement release date, or transition to other release programs while in the community, they have completed the Healthy Start program.
 - a) The parenting coordinator enters the program completion into COMS.
 - b) The agent of record provides the hearing and release unit with a non-violation restructure to supervised release or to another conditional release program.
 - c) Healthy Start resources and services are available to the participant for up to six months after program completion.

2. The commissioner or designee may rescind a participant’s conditional release status at any time if they discover new information that makes the participant ineligible. Such information includes early pregnancy loss. The DOC will rescind Healthy Start conditional release status when the statutorily authorized conditional release period ends.
3. Participants who violate any of the rules of their supervision, including lack of participation in the required programming as outlined in the program agreement, are subject to:
 - a) Having the rules of their supervision restructured and additional rules imposed; and
 - b) Revocation of their Healthy Start status and return to institution confinement status.

STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY SECURITY AUDIT STANDARDS: None

INTERNAL CONTROLS:

- A. Healthy Start information packet, declination form, signed Healthy Start approval or denial letter, program agreement, conditions of release, and termination reports are kept in the participant’s electronic file.
- B. The parenting coordinator retains the Healthy Start review team individual member recommendations in their office.
- C. ODocS and COMS serve as the repository to record and retain case notes, Healthy Start review/release team reports, case review reports, custody status, and sentence administration documentation.
- D. COMS case notes capture Healthy Start completions.

REFERENCES: Minn. Stat. §§ [244.065](#) and [169A.276, Subd. 1 \(c\)](#)
[Policy 203.010, “Case Management Process”](#)
[Policy 203.018, “Agent Assignment and Release Planning”](#)

REPLACES: Policy 205.123, “Healthy Start Placement for Pregnant and Post-Partum Persons,” 12/28/22
 All facility policies, memos, or other communications whether verbal, written, or transmitted by electronic means regarding this topic.

ATTACHMENTS: [Healthy Start Declination Form-English](#) (205.123A-English) ([public pdf of 205.123A-English](#))
[Healthy Start Declination Form-Hmong](#) (205.123A-Hmong) ([public pdf of 205.123A-Hmong](#))
[Healthy Start Declination Form-Somali](#) (205.123A-Somali) ([public pdf of 205.123A-Somali](#))
[Healthy Start Declination Form-Spanish](#) (205.123A-Spanish) ([public pdf of 205.123A-Spanish](#))

[Healthy Start Information Packet-English](#) (205.123B-English) ([public pdf of 205.123B-English](#))

[Healthy Start Information Packet-Hmong](#) (205.123B-Hmong) ([public pdf of 205.123B-Hmong](#))

[Healthy Start Information Packet-Somali](#) (205.123B-Somali) ([public pdf of 205.123B-Somali](#))

[Healthy Start Information Packet-Spanish](#) (205.123B-Spanish) ([public pdf of 205.123B-Spanish](#))

[Healthy Start Participant Agreement Form-English](#) (205.123C-English) ([public pdf of 205.123C-English](#))

[Healthy Start Participant Agreement Form-Hmong](#) (205.123C-Hmong) ([public pdf of 205.123C-Hmong](#))

[Healthy Start Participant Agreement Form-Somali](#) (205.123C-Somali) ([public pdf of 205.123C-Somali](#))

[Healthy Start Participant Agreement Form-Spanish](#) (205.123C-Spanish) ([public pdf of 205.123C-Spanish](#))

APPROVALS:

Commissioner of Corrections