

Welcome Baby supports healthy families in Yellowstone County

By Ellie Lanz

Healthy parents and babies are vital to ensuring the long-term success of children and families. The days, weeks and months following a birth can be challenging for any family. While recovering from childbirth, parents face the challenge of caring for a newborn, often with limited physical and emotional resources.

With this in mind, RiverStone Health is launching Welcome Baby, a free home visiting pilot program in partnership with Montana Department of Health and Human Services. Welcome Baby ensures that every Yellowstone County infant has access to personalized peer-to-peer support from day one.

Welcome Baby matches families with a trained Community Health Worker (CHW), who provides tailored resources, parent education and support to address each family's specific needs. The CHWs are based at Billings Clinic, Young Families Early Head Start, and Family Tree Nurturing Center, creating a community-wide approach to bridge the gap between parents or guardians and local resources.

Once a family is connected to a CHW, the visit can take place in the home or in a setting of their choosing like a coffee shop, the library or wherever caregivers feel the most comfortable. Visits can include safe sleep education, mental health support for mom, feeding education, care navigation, support finding quality childcare and access to developmental tools to help baby not just survive, but thrive.

CHWs focus on the parents or caregivers' mental health and emotional wellbeing, and ensure the baby is developing appropriately. This personalized support leads to better long-term health outcomes for the whole family.

The CHW will visit the family up to four times in the first year of baby's life to ensure that they are well connected and have the foundational tools for a healthy future.

All families living in Yellowstone County are eligible for Welcome Baby, regardless of income or other circumstance. Offering this service ensures all parents, whether they are welcoming their first or fifth child, have the tools to succeed.

Prenatal and postpartum visiting programs can increase positive parenting techniques which result in a stronger parent-child relationship. Welcome Baby CHWs are equipped to effectively meet the diverse needs of Yellowstone County families, ensuring inclusive, compassionate care.

Parents can sign up at RiverStoneHealth.org/WelcomeBaby or ask about the program during your hospital stay.

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