

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Phoenix South Region

2022 Impact Report



From birth to age 5,
a child's brain develops more than
any other time in life.

90%

of a child's brain grows before kindergarten.

Early childhood matters.

First Things First (FTF) partners with families and communities to help our state's youngest children prepare for kindergarten and beyond.

Many young children in Arizona face challenges that threaten their healthy development and learning. In the FTF Phoenix South Region, there are **65,037 children** (under age 6) with **42% living in poverty**.

Here is how FTF is working to support young children and their families in this region.



There is an inherent symbiotic relationship between a child's health and learning. Thus, the significance of addressing early learning and early health care simultaneously in the birth to age 5 space is critical."



Dr. Patricia Neff

Chair of FTF Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council

FTF Phoenix South Regional Key Impact Highlights [State Fiscal Year 2022]



Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

7,070

Families of newborns received the Arizona Parent Kit, filled with tips and tools to help support their child's healthy development.

3,437

Families or caregivers served by receiving referrals or by participating in activities at family resource centers.



Quality Preschool and Child Care

6,168

Children attended preschools and child care programs participating in Quality First.

930

Children birth to age 5 received a Quality First scholarship to attend high-quality preschools and child care programs.



Preventive Health

1,484

Children received fluoride varnishes applied to protect against childhood tooth decay.

2,379

Children monitored to receive appropriate screenings to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues to prevent learning challenges later on.

Additional Strategies

2,235

Children received a screening to detect tooth decay, which left undetected and untreated could cause damage to permanent teeth, impair speech development and failure to thrive.

372

Families with young children participated in voluntary home visiting programs proven to reduce parental stress levels, increase connections to community supports, and improve children's cognitive, motor, behavioral and social-emotional development.



Phoenix library program helps parents make the most of talking with their baby

For Lily Gonzalez, going to her Phoenix Public Library branch with her children was a ritual.

When the COVID-19 pandemic kept her family at home, library visits turned virtual. It was there she learned that a new children's program would be starting soon. This immediately peaked her interest.

"I got really excited about it because I'm always looking for activities that my kids can do," Gonzalez said.

The First Things First Phoenix South Regional Council funds the library's LENA Start program to provide parents and caregivers with ways to learn about positive parenting practices to enhance child development, including language development

The LENA Start program turned out to be a blessing for the young mother of an infant and two boys. who along with her husband, Ruben, had spent the long months of the pandemic juggling child care and work from home.

She had enrolled her children in some virtual programs, but it was challenging to find enrichment activities that kept them busy and interested.

"It was a crazy time, especially with the little ones," said Gonzalez, whose oldest son is 11.

Gonzalez enrolled her 4-month-old baby, Mia, in the LENA Start program known as 1,2,3 Talk with Me, which encourages parents to routinely hold conversations with their children during the early years, when brain development occurs rapidly. The program uses technology to measure the language environment of children.

Gonzalez was able to use a device that recorded her talks with Mia, and the mother later received reports showing captured data, like baby babbles and words. The results were eye-opening for the mom.

"I learned a lot about how helpful it is to have a routine in place," Gonzalez said. "I noticed that when I had a routine, I could be focused on talking to my baby and have her interact."

She also realized that when a television blared in the background, the talk interactions diminished. She also learned other ways parents and caregivers can enrich children's language environment.

At the grocery store, for example, "instead of giving them your phone, we can talk about what we need to get next, or what color the apples are, or how many things we are getting," Gonzalez said.

She posted the program's 14 talking tips around her home to remind herself to make the most of opportunities to talk more with Mia as she goes about her day. Gonzalez already was familiar with other language programs because her middle child's speech was delayed, but she calls her experience with the LENA program unique.

"With the baby, with this program, I was really able to learn what I could do now and really focus on those four months or five months, and really just start early," she said.

The 10-week program changed Gonzalez's perspective about communicating with Mia in public.

"I used to be embarrassed to talk to my baby, I don't know why," she said. "And now I just talk to her, and I tell her what we're looking at, what we're feeling, and just it's more normal now."

And Mia babbles right back.

"She will look at me, then copy what I'm doing. She's very receptive to what's going on around her," Gonzalez said.

 Read more FTF stories at [FirstThingsFirst.org/Region-Stories](https://www.FirstThingsFirst.org/Region-Stories)

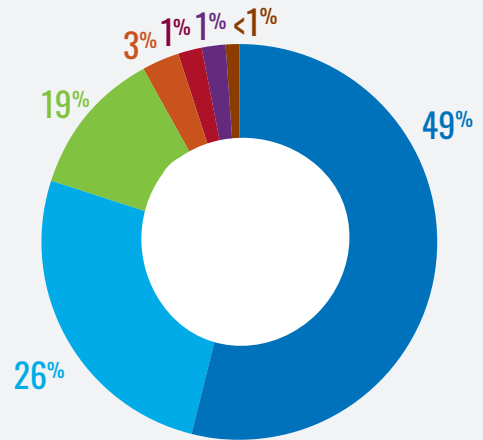
FTF Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council

FTF regional partnership councils are made up of volunteers who study the unique needs of the local community and inform how funds should be used to best support the healthy development and early learning of young

children birth to age 5. FTF invests in proven programs and innovative strategies through grants to community organizations that provide services to children and families.

FTF Phoenix South SFY22 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool	\$7,667,860
Strengthening Families	\$3,993,776
Preventive Health	\$2,964,394
Research and Evaluation	\$521,092
Parent and Community Awareness	\$193,277
Coordination	\$150,526
Workforce Development and Training	\$50,000
Total	\$15,540,926



FTF Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council and Staff

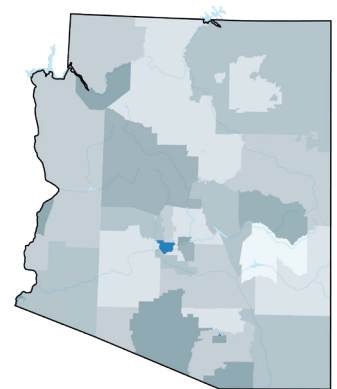
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The **FTF Phoenix South Region** is primarily the southern part of the city of Phoenix. Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council provides services in the city of Phoenix, south of Thomas Road, but also including the communities of Maryvale, north of Thomas (full ZIP code areas of 85031 and 85033 and the city of Phoenix portion of 85037). The region does not include Ahwatukee.

Learn more at
[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Phoenix-South](https://www.FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Phoenix-South)