



Standards of Practice

Parent Outreach and Awareness

I. Strategy Description

Recognizing that parents and families are their young child's first and most important teacher, family support is a component of Arizona's comprehensive early childhood system. Within family support, a continuum of strategies exists to meet the universal needs of all families to the targeted needs of families who may be at risk, such as English language learners, teen parents, and low income families. Information gaps exist that have implications for how adults interact with and raise young children. Providing specific knowledge and tools about the importance of early interactions in healthy brain development is the first step in assisting parents in making choices that will support and optimize their child's development.

Parent outreach and awareness strategies strive to increase all families' awareness of positive parenting and knowledge of services, supports and information on child development, child health and early learning to support their child's overall development. In other words, the goal of this strategy is to **change parent behavior** through a variety of complementary tactics so that their child is ready for school at kindergarten entry.

It is important to note that increasing general public awareness of the importance of early childhood is not the objective of the parent outreach and awareness strategy. Instead, increasing general public awareness falls under the purview of the FTF statewide *community awareness strategy*, while this parent outreach and awareness strategy is targeted *specifically for and directly to parents*.

Recognizing that children are active participants in the world from day one is critical for supporting a child's healthy brain development and learning. Developmental and neuroscience

research emphasizes the importance of infants engaging in discovery through everyday explorations shared by a sensitive, attentive caregiver (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007; Stamm, 2007). According to the *First Things First Family and Community Survey on Early Childhood, A Baseline Report on Families and Coordination 2008*, when asked at what age babies sense and react to their surroundings, about half of Arizona parents acknowledged that this occurs in the first month of life (51%). Although this represents a larger proportion of parents than in the national survey (35%), nearly half of Arizona parents (48%) still believe that children do not respond to their environment until two months of age or later. This suggests that almost half of Arizona parents do not fully understand the importance of the child's very early interactive experiences with his or her environment for healthy development. Overall, research based knowledge about what to expect from their child at each age helps parents interact positively with their child and set appropriate expectations and boundaries throughout their daily routines. Furthermore, Arizona's parents understand that early childhood development is important, with over 75% of parents acknowledging that they can significantly impact children's brain development at or before birth. While Arizona's parents understand the importance of early brain development, not all are sure what they can do to best support their child's optimal development. Results from the Family and Community Survey also indicate that parents can benefit from clear, research-based information to help them support their child.

FTF parent outreach and awareness strategies provide families of young children with information, materials or connections to resources and activities that increase awareness of early childhood development and health and the resources, supports or programs available for young children and their families. Having identified these gaps, it is important to deliver parent outreach and awareness strategies with consideration for local needs. For example, if a community has data that indicates parents and families are not reading regularly with their young children, a parent outreach and awareness strategy may be an appropriate approach to increase families' awareness about the importance and value of daily reading activities through

messaging, story times at the local library that may also include a book distribution component or book club, and identification of additional community resources.

Outreach and awareness alone, in most cases though, may not be sufficient to change parent behavior. While parents' awareness has increased, as noted in the example above, parents may not have the resources or tools to effectively implement the change. Parents may be aware of the need to read to children, but that does not mean that they can actually read to their child (adult literacy), feel that they know how to read to their young child (e.g., which books are developmentally appropriate;, how to read to a child at different developmental stages) or that they have access to books (e.g., may not be able to afford books; may not live close to a library or have transportation). These are some of the considerations in determining whether to implement an outreach and awareness strategy.

Parent outreach and awareness activities include the following:

- A. **Resource Distribution:** Distribution of children's books, audio discs, community resource guides, child development and child health fact sheets, parenting tip sheets, brochures, pamphlets, and/or newsletters. Resources can be offered and distributed during established community festivals, fairs, or exhibitions at community settings and through community-based partners. For example, parents and children can be provided with developmentally appropriate books to take home that encourage daily family reading activities.

- B. **Parent/ Family Workshop:** One-time informational sessions for parents and families to increase awareness about child development or child health topics. These may include, for example, library story times, an informational session about programs or services available in the community, or a session on brain development, child development or child health. For example, child health workshops may be offered to increase parent's knowledge about topics such as injury prevention, oral health, preventative health care, or nutrition. One or more of these activities can be

implemented in conjunction with other FTF early learning, health and/ or family support strategies as part of regional funding plan implementation.

- C. **Earned Media and Paid Advertising:** Earned media is defined as stories strategically placed in major broadcast print or emerging media as well as information placed in smaller community newspapers, newsletters, and public service announcements. Paid advertising is defined as advertising through billboards, print ads, multimedia campaigns (TV), radio and online ads. Paid advertising requires a substantial financial investment and must be accompanied by other strategies in order to be effective in changing behavior. The advertising itself must be research-based and the information provided should be about a specific early childhood development or child health topic related to critical time periods to address trends in child rearing and parenting practices that target parents and families. For example, print ads displayed on buses with the message “read with your child every day”, includes a phone number and web address for a community resource that provides additional information and support on reading with young children. This may bring parents’ attention to the issue and further create interest in seeking out the listed resources.

II. Standards of Practice

A. Implementation Standards

Utilize a family centered and strengths-based approach.

1. Provide parents and families with readily accessible information about child development and child health, including one or more of the following topics:
 - The domains of child development (social emotional, language and communication – including emergent literacy, cognitive, physical and motor development), including understanding when to have concerns related to children’s development;

- The parents' role as the child's primary teachers and partners in the education of their children;
 - Appropriate child-adult interactions and development of positive and supportive parenting skills;
 - Early language and emergent literacy including typical early language and emergent literacy development for infants, toddlers and preschoolers and the importance of reading daily with their young child including maintaining a literacy-rich home environment;
 - The impact of media and the importance of limited screen time (TV, computers, smart phones, pads and tablets, video games) for young children;
 - Child health information and/or community resources for child health including topics such as preventative health care and wellness, developmental and sensory screening, immunizations, oral health, injury prevention, and nutrition;
 - Available community resources such as the Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC), food banks, employment services or adult education, early intervention services, school programs, child care resource and referral, libraries, parent education classes, home visitation programs, and health care including oral health;
 - Parent tips and resources on how to use toys and other educational items to enrich interactions with their child, but not substitute interactions between adult and child.
2. All information provided through media, resource distribution and/or workshops must be evidence based, developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive and strengths based. Activities implemented must take into account local families and children's needs, desires, histories, lifestyles, concerns, strengths, resources, culture, ethnicity, and priorities. In addition, appropriate developmental guidance is to be provided to parents and families on behalf of their very young children when providing workshops or distributing information. Information provided to families is

to be offered to parents and families in a manner that strengthens early relationships with infants/toddlers and young children. Print materials must be provided at a 5th grade reading level using common language and resources and information provided must be accurate and regularly updated to ensure information is current. **Permission for the use of copyright materials must be documented and cited.**

Workshops are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.

1. Structured workshop activities must be accessible for families by being provided at times and locations that are convenient for families including weekend and evening hours.
2. Workshops should be manageable in size and have appropriate staffing patterns.

For adult-only sessions, there shall be a maximum of 50 participants with a ratio of 1 staff per 25 adult participants (2 staff: 50 adult participants). Room size and space must be adequate to support the number of adults participating.

3. Open and honest communication is supported and opportunities for formal and informal feedback are integrated into the structure of the workshop.
4. Confidentiality is maintained with workshops being respectful of family members and protective of their legal rights.
5. Families are engaged as partners to ensure that the program is beneficial by providing families the opportunity to provide regular input and feedback in programmatic planning to better meet their needs.
6. Staff Standards
 - Staff developing materials or providing workshops demonstrate extensive

knowledge of the community, the culture, and the community's resources.

- The length of employment and experience/education are reflective of high quality staff. Supervisory staff are required to have a minimum of a Bachelor's degree in early childhood development, education, family studies, social work, nursing or a closely related field.
- The grantee must establish an effective, consistent supervisory system that provides support for all staff members and ensures accountability to participants, funders, and the community.
- All staff work as a team, modeling respectful relationships consistent with program goals and whose top priority is the well-being of families and children.
- Staff skills and abilities are regularly assessed to ensure they are able to engage families while maintaining a professional rapport.
- Ongoing staff development/training on the FTF Parent Outreach and Awareness Standards of Practice principles is provided.
- Ongoing staff development/training to ensure program quality and give staff an opportunity to develop professionally is provided.
- Supervisors work with staff to prepare professional development plans.

Evaluation and monitoring is a collaborative, ongoing process that includes input from staff, families, program administrators, and community members.

1. Mechanisms to assess program effectiveness and ability to implement quality improvements must be demonstrated.
2. Participation in data collection and reporting of performance measures to First Things First is required.

B. Branding and Earned and Paid Media Standards

1. All parent outreach and awareness activities will adhere to the FTF communications guidelines including branding protocols which can be found in the [First Things First Communications Toolkit](#). The toolkit is a “living document” and is not meant to be downloaded. Appendix One to this document outlines the Table of Contents of the Communications Toolkit and provides readers a comprehensive view of the tools available.
2. Earned media activities are to center around various topics that raise parent awareness, including: identification of an awareness gap as a community issue to be addressed; announcement of a new program or service to help change a parent’s behavior; new or updated research about the behavior identified for change; milestones achieved in changing behaviors; and/or a success story about a specific child or family benefitting from a service. All earned media must include: early childhood information that illustrates how the behavior change benefits the education/health of young children and information on how to access additional information or support in changing the behavior. See the FTF branding protocols for additional requirements.
3. Paid advertising must be research-based, outcome focused and professionally developed. Development of such a campaign can cost upwards of \$200,000, in addition to the cost of placing the advertising (actually paying for the billboard, cinema or newspaper ad, television or radio spot, etc.). Advertising that seeks to change behavior requires significant repetition in order to achieve market saturation (ensuring that people see or hear the message enough times to change behavior). In addition, strategies and tactics must be in place to support those who are willing to move from awareness to action (change behavior). Before a paid advertising campaign is utilized as an approach for parent awareness and outreach the following information is necessary:

- Information about the root cause of the issue to be addressed (is it really a need for awareness, or something else);
- Is the source of the information credible (specific issue or anecdotal information);
- Evidence that the paid advertising will change this behavior;
- Sufficient resources are available to achieve the saturation required to effect change; and
- Strategies/tactics that will be implemented in addition to the paid advertising that will support behavior change (moving from awareness to action).

When an existing paid advertising effort is being utilized, information on the following is required:

- Length of time the current creative has been used;
- The financial investment in the current campaign and where has it been used (specific markets) to determine effectiveness for the target population and geographic region proposed under this strategy;
- Evidence that the campaign has had an impact on behavior AND in the markets where the campaign was used (for example, for a campaign that sought to increase immunization rates, did immunization rates go up in that area when the campaign was in use?);
- Identification of other activities that were in place to support the paid advertising campaign and their effect on the impact achieved; and
- Knowledge of and understanding of the ability for co-branding or adding additional calls to action; restrictions on paid media time vs. gratis media time; and, restrictions on copyright use.

C. Cultural Competence

Affirm, strengthen and promote families' cultural, racial and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society.

- Create opportunities for families of different backgrounds to identify areas of common ground and to accept and value differences between them.
- Hire staff who reflect the cultural and ethnic experiences and language of the families with whom they work and integrate their expertise into the entire program.
- Early childhood practitioners /early childhood service providers shall ensure that children and families receive from all staff members effective, understandable, and respectful care that is provided in a culturally competent manner- a manner compatible with their cultural beliefs and practices, and in their preferred language. Early childhood practitioners /early childhood service providers should ensure that staff at all levels and across all disciplines receive ongoing education and training in culturally and linguistically appropriate service delivery. Early childhood practitioners/early childhood service providers should develop participatory, collaborative partnerships with communities and utilize a variety of formal and informal mechanisms to facilitate community and family-centered involvement to ensure that services are delivered in a manner that is consistent with the National Standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services and/or the National Recommendations on Cultural and Linguistic Competence for the National Association for the Education of Young Children.”
<http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=15> ;
<http://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/linguistic>
- Service providers should understand that individual Tribes/Nations are distinct and separate communities from other Tribes/Nations and their governmental systems and structures are not reflective of each other. Services to Tribal communities and on reservations must be provided in a manner compatible with the Tribe’s/Nation’s cultural beliefs and practices, to include the preferred language of the community. Services must also be provided in accordance with the Tribe’s/Nation’s laws, policies and procedures. The effectiveness of services is directly related to the provider’s consideration of the beliefs, customs and laws of the Tribe/Nation.

- Service providers can obtain information about providing services on tribal lands from a variety of sources. These include the FTF Regional Director, Regional Council members, tribal websites and publications, as well as official representatives of the Tribe/Nation such as the governing body, standing committees and authorized departments. It is highly recommended that service providers seek guidance from one or more of these sources before initiating services on reservations. Failure to do so could result in contraventions of cultural beliefs, Tribal laws or sovereignty.
- Programs will demonstrate their ability to operate within these parameters through prior experience working with Tribes/Nations, demonstrating that staff is culturally competent, partnerships with agencies serving Native American families, knowledge of cultural beliefs, customs and laws of the Tribe/Nation or a combination of these elements.
- In the United States, Native American Tribes are considered autonomous nations with all of the rights and responsibilities of a nation. Understanding this, Native American Tribes are charged with protecting the health and safety of their people. To this end, Tribes have full ownership over any data collected within their reservation boundaries. This means that Tribes can allow or not allow any program to collect data from or related to any early childhood development and health program or activities on the reservation.

Any grantee implementing programs in tribal communities must have official tribal permission to collect and utilize sensitive data from or related to any early childhood development and health program or activities.