



FIRST THINGS FIRST
The right system for bright futures

Statewide Initiatives Update
August 2009

Quality First!

Outreach and enrollment are on target as 199 early childhood centers and 94 family child care homes have been enrolled in Quality First under state funding. Quality First coaches have conducted orientations, and 206 classrooms and home settings have been assessed. Eleven new assessors were hired in July to accommodate new enrollments, and will undergo reliability training on the assessment tools. Necessary database corrections have held up entry of assessments; however, resolution of the database issue is expected very soon, and assessments will be caught up by end of September. Selection for the 340 regionally funded settings occurred throughout July with 285 slots awarded. Continued outreach and enrollment efforts are ongoing.

The Quality First rating scale is undergoing review and revision, both within FTF and with the community stakeholders who developed Quality First, with a deadline of January 2010 for a final scale. A pilot test of the rating system is planned for spring 2010 and roll-out in July 2010.

Child Care Health Consultation

The implementation of services from Child Care Health Consultants will begin in September 2009. This date is a delay from the anticipated start date of July 1, 2009, and is due primarily to the time that was required to complete contracts within multiple county government systems. To date, FTF has five signed intergovernmental agreements with county health departments. These represent 15 FTF regions and 84% of the 43 health consultants expected to be hired throughout the state. They include:

- Pima County Health Department (two contracts – one for training, technical assistance and quality assurance for all CCHCs in state and a second for Pima County and Tribal CCHC)
- Maricopa County Health Department (Maricopa CCHC)
- Yavapai County Health Department (Yavapai County CCHC)
- Coconino County Health Department (Coconino CCHC, including Havasupai, Hualapai & Hope Tribes)
- Apache County Health Department (Apache and Navajo County CCHC, including Whiteriver Apache Tribe)

We are awaiting board of supervisors' signatures in the Yuma (CRIT and Cocopah will be on this contract) and Graham/Greenlee regions.

In the Pinal (GRIC included), Santa Cruz (Tohono O'Odham included) and Cochise regions we are working with the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension to provide the services.

La Paz/Mohave (Hualapai included) is still in budget negotiations.

We have not yet identified interested providers in Gila (White Mountain and San Carlos included), Navajo Nation or Pascua Yaqui. In these regions, FTF policy staff and coordinators will collaborate to consider alternatives.

The CCHC handbook is almost complete, Care Facts data system has been installed and tested, training videos are almost complete, and CCHC orientation has been scheduled for September 23, 2009.

T.E.A.C.H. ARIZONA Professional Development Scholarships

T.E.A.C.H. is on target to award 2,000 scholarships by June 30, 2010. A breakdown of current applicant status follows:

- Quality First approved candidates: **179**
- T.E.A.C.H. follow-up:
 - **41** scholarships awarded to individuals on the QF approved list;
 - The **30** newly identified individuals on the QF approved list are having eligibility verified at the T.E.A.C.H. office;
 - Follow-up with **30** individuals on the QF approved list because applications were incomplete or application information requires further verification.
 - **83** individuals on the QF approved list are pending application submission

Eighteen T.E.A.C.H. information sessions were held for Quality First participants throughout the state during June and July 2009. Three “live meetings” were broadcast during late July and August 2009, with regional coordinators volunteering to host in their offices. The latter were held for Quality First participants and for those interested in the FTF Regional Council funded scholarships. Another live meeting was scheduled for August 19, from 6:30 – 8:30.

FTF and T.E.A.C.H. have created a schedule for accepting applications and awarding scholarships for regionally funded scholarships, beginning in August 2009. Three thousand letters were sent to providers August 13th to provide information about scholarships available through Regional Council funding.

The T.E.A.C.H. Advisory Committee recommended at its last meeting that passing grades be required for continued receipt of scholarships and bonuses, and that planning for addition of a Bachelor’s degree begin prior to June 2010. Both were recommendations made by FTF Regional Partnership Councils.

Fourteen Arizona community colleges which offer early childhood education degrees are participating in the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program. Three colleges (AZ Eastern, Dine, and Tohono O’odham) have not yet signed agreements, but outreach is continuing. At the present, three community colleges (Chandler-Gilbert, Estrella Mountain and Mohave) do not offer degree programs in early childhood education.

FTF Professional REWARD\$ - the Arizona Compensation and Retention Incentives Program

FTF staff convened a logistics team and focus groups, and solicited public comment further develop the brand and administrative structure for the compensation and retention program. The final recommendation from this work is to brand this initiative as FTF Professional REWARD\$ and to link it in a comprehensive way to quality and professional development efforts. A detailed vision and outline of this FTF signature initiative will be presented to the FTF Board at the September Board meeting, with release of the RFGA for the administrative entity released shortly thereafter.

Parent Kits

As of July 1, 2009, Parent Kit operations inside Maricopa County transitioned from the Virginia G. Piper Trust to FTF, as identified in the MOU. This consolidates the management of marketing and kit distribution to hospitals throughout the state. During this second year of implementation, FTF will begin monitoring to identify the numbers of kits actually distributed to families of newborns, and will provide technical assistance to hospitals to maximize that distribution.

FTF staff and the consultant have begun quality assurance and monitoring activities through visits to a statewide sample of 25% of all birthing hospitals in the state, including those who were the first to implement Parent Kits. Analysis of the collected data will be presented at the August Board meeting.

Health Strategies

Scopes of work for agreements or RFGAs to implement the following approved health strategies are or are nearing completion:

- *Workforce Support and Readiness for Health/Disabilities Professionals* - An intergovernmental agreement has been completed with the Department of Health Services for loan forgiveness and stipends for health and disabilities professionals who agree to work in specified regions of the state, funded by Regional Councils.
- *Early Intervention and Pediatric Feeding Curricula* - An agreement Arizona State University, which will add early intervention and pediatric feeding curricula to the speech-language degree program and increase the number of students enrolled in this program through stipends and scholarships, will be completed by August 30.
- *Physician Education and Outreach* – An RFGA will be released by September 1, with grantee selected by November 1.
- *Mental Health Consultation and Continuing Education* - A FTF Strategy Workgroup is on target to complete the standards of practice and scope of work for the RFGA, which will be released by September 1, with grantee selected by November 1.

First Things First State Competitive Grants

1. Reach Out and Read Arizona (RORAZ) – FTF grant has funded the expansion of the RORAZ infrastructure; staffing of regional coalitions, particularly in underserved areas of the state. Prior to the FTF grant, RORAZ coalitions were established and operating in Maricopa County, Northern Arizona and Southern Arizona. RORAZ will establish new regional coalitions in Yuma and Graham/ Greenlee counties. The primary goal of the RORAZ coalitions is to increase the number of Reach Out and Read programs and increase the number of children served in these programs throughout the state. In addition to supporting existing program sites, the coalition staff conducts outreach to potential sites and provide training on the model for new programs. RORAZ recently hired an executive director and a Yuma Coalition Coordinator. RORAZ is currently recruiting for Northeastern Arizona and Graham/Greenlee Coalition Coordinators.
2. Arizona Kith and Kin Project – provides training and support to family, friend and neighbor care providers. The traditional model used in Maricopa County does this through training-support groups that meet on a weekly basis for a period of 14 weeks. A pilot model is being implemented in Coconino and Yuma counties that will utilize home visits to deliver the training components. A wide variety of topics are addressed The implementation of a Safety Mobile,

addresses topics related to health and safety such as car seat safety and Pediatric CPR and First Aid and the delivery of related safety equipment. The Project has filled four (4) of the five (5) positions funded by the FTF infrastructure grant. The position pending is the Specialist position for Yuma County. Kith and Kin staff have completed the three (3) day training and are now all “reliable” on the use of the Child Care Assessment Tool for Relatives (CCAT-R) that will be used as part of the evaluation component. The Project has identified the Evaluator for the project and has identified components that will be used to gather data and measure performance of the project’s activities.

3. Birth to Five Helpline (SWHD) – FTF grant has funded the Helpline in order to serve families with children birth through age five across the state. Much of the funding is dedicated to outreach in order to bring awareness to the availability of this service. The Helpline Marketing Outreach Specialist met with FTF Regional Staff during their July, 2009, in-service to provide outreach materials, i.e. magnets and postcards, to be distributed in the region. FTF is also distributing Helpline magnets (English and Spanish) in the Arizona Parent Kit statewide. The Helpline is also listed as a resource in the Parent Guide that is included in the Parent Kit.

Federal Grants and Coordination Efforts

First Things First, in collaboration with the AZ Department of Health Services, was awarded the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) grant for FY 10. The grant award is \$105,000 and will support development of the children’s budget and other activities supporting interagency coordination and system building.

Arizona’s Letter of Intent for the ABCD III grant through Commonwealth Fund and the National Academy for State Health Policy was selected as one of 10 states to submit a grant proposal. This round of ABCD funding support is to create a consortium of five states that will demonstrably improve referral, care coordination, case management and linkages across systems that influence child development. AHCCCS is the lead agency and First Things First is a partner.

First Things First is part of a consortium, lead by the Arizona Department of Education, which submitted a statewide proposal in July 2009 for a Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Other partners include the three State Universities, Prescott College, local education agencies (LEAs), the Governor’s Office and philanthropy.

Policy staff are tracking the development of additional federal legislation that aligns with FTF’s mission and strategic direction. These include: State Advisory Council for Early Childhood Education; Early Learning Challenge Fund, Title IV of H.R. 3221, that was marked up on July 21, 2009 and may be considered by the Congress after the August recess; Education Begins At Home, HR 2343, S663, companion bills that would authorize \$50 million to the states to support home visiting programs such as the Nurse Home Visiting and Parents as Teachers Programs.