

First Things First Needs and Assets Report 2012

Central Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

Prepared by the
Norton School of Family and Consumer Sciences
College of Agricultural and Life Sciences
The University of Arizona

Funded by
First Things First Central Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

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October 10, 2012

Message from the Chair:

Throughout the past two years the First Things First Central Maricopa Regional Partnership Council has delivered on our mission to build brighter futures for young children and their families. During the past year, we have touched many lives of young children and their families by implementing a continuum of strategies that have provided resources and support for thousands of families in the region.

The First Things First Central Maricopa Regional Partnership Council will continue to advocate and provide opportunities for children and families through Family Resource Centers, a voluntary home visitation program for parents, Quality Childcare enhancements, scholarships for childcare, parenting education, and oral health screenings and varnishes.

Our strategic direction has been guided by the Needs and Assets reports, specifically created for the Central Maricopa Region in 2008, 2010, and the new 2012 report. The Needs and Assets reports are vital to our continued work in building a true integrated early childhood system for our young children and our overall future. The Central Maricopa Regional Council would like to thank our Needs and Assets Vendor the Norton School, Family and Consumer Sciences, University of Arizona for their knowledge, expertise and analysis of the region. The new report will help guide our decisions as well as inform the communities we serve about how we move forward for young children and their families within the Central Maricopa region.

Going forward, the First Things First Central Maricopa Regional Partnership Council is committed to meeting the needs of young children by providing essential services and advocating for social change.

Thanks to our dedicated staff, volunteers and community partners, First Things First is making a real difference in the lives of our youngest citizens and throughout the entire State.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Maureen Duane, Chair
Central Maricopa Regional Partnership Council



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Introductory Summary and Acknowledgments

First Things First Central Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

The way in which children develop from infancy to well-functioning members of society will always be a critical subject matter. Understanding the processes of early childhood development is crucial to our ability to foster each child's optimal development and, in turn, is fundamental to all aspects of wellbeing of our communities, society, and the State of Arizona.

This Needs and Assets Report for the Central Maricopa Geographic Region provides a clear statistical analysis and helps us in understanding the needs, gaps and assets for young children and points to ways in which children and families can be supported. The needs young children and families face are outlined in the executive summary and documented in further detail in the full report.

The Central Maricopa Regional Partnership Council recognizes the importance of investing in young children and empowering parents, grandparents, and caregivers to advocate for services and programs within the region. This report provides basic data points that will aid the Council's decisions and funding allocations, while building a true comprehensive statewide early childhood system.

Acknowledgments:

The First Things First Central Maricopa Regional Partnership Council owes special gratitude to the agencies and key stakeholders who participated in numerous work sessions and community forums throughout the past two years. Special thanks goes to the communities of Tempe, Chandler, Ahwatukee and Guadalupe and their residents who participated in these focus groups and community meetings to help inform us of the needs and assets of their communities. The following Family Resource Centers provided valuable insight into what families of children 0 – 5 are experiencing today:

- Thrive to Five (Tempe, Ahwatukee and Kyrene areas)
- Chandler Care Center
- Chandler Christian Community Center

The success of First Things First was due, in large measure, to the contributions of numerous individuals who gave their time, skill, support, knowledge and expertise.

To the current and past members of the Central Maricopa Regional Partnership Council, your dedication, commitment and extreme passion has guided the work of making a difference in the lives of young children and families within the region. Our continued work will only aid in the direction of building a true comprehensive early childhood system for the betterment of young children within the region and the entire State.

We also want to thank the Arizona Department of Economic Security and the Arizona Child Care Resource and Referral, the Arizona Department of Health Services and the Arizona State Immunization Information System, the Arizona Department of Education and School Districts across the State of Arizona, the Maricopa Homeless Management Information System, the Arizona Head Start Association, the Office of Head Start, and Head Start and Early Head Start Programs across the State of Arizona, and the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System for their contribution of data for this report.



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Executive Summary

The Central Maricopa Regional Planning Council supports the needs of young children in the section of Maricopa County including the cities of Tempe and Chandler, the town of Guadalupe, the Ahwatukee neighborhood of Phoenix, and the unincorporated area of Sun Lakes. According to the 2010 US Census, the population of the region was 501,632, of whom 37,448 were young children under the age of six.

The number of children under six in the region decreased slightly from the 2000 Census to the 2010 Census. In Chandler, however, there were about 2,500 more children in 2010 than there were in 2000.

Although the majority (87%) of the young children in the region live with one or both parents, about 5,000 were living in households that did not include either parent.

In Guadalupe, about 38 percent of children under the age of six live in their grandparent's household. These households may be multi-generational, including grandparents, parents, and the young children; or they may be grandparents raising grandchildren without the parents present.

In Chandler and Tempe, more than three-quarters of all households use English as the language of the home. In Guadalupe, in contrast, only 20 percent of households use English at home. The majority of the Guadalupe households contain at least one adult who speaks English well, but some are linguistically isolated.

The Central Maricopa Region has a smaller proportion of Hispanic population than the state as a whole (20% versus 30%), and a greater proportion of Asian or Pacific Islander residents (7% versus 3%).

Although the region is generally better off economically than much of the state, there are low-income families, largely in Guadalupe, northern Tempe, and downtown Chandler. About 63 percent of the young children in Guadalupe—and 27 percent of those in Tempe—live in poverty. An estimated 24 percent of the children in the region are in the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP). About 39 percent of all children under five participate in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program.

One indicator of school readiness or educational achievement is how well older children in the region perform on the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) tests in the third grade. In the Tempe School District, the AIMS scores are close to the state averages in both reading and math. The scores are above the state averages in the Chandler and Kyrene districts. In Tempe, 5 percent of third-graders fell “far below standards” in reading; in the other districts, only 2 percent did so.

According to state surveys, there are 211 licensed childcare centers in the region, of which 11 are Head Start centers. In addition, there are 32 certified home-based locations and 61 registered (but unregulated) home providers. There are an estimated 40 centers participating in First Things First's Quality First program, most at the two-star level. Head Start enrollment in



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the East Valley (including the Southeast and Northeast FTF regions) is 1,276 three- and four-year olds; an additional 179 younger children are enrolled in Early Head Start.

Qualitative data suggest that many families rely on kith-and-kin care. Childcare is a major expense for many families, especially those who have low incomes but do not qualify for assistance.

Childcare staff in the region have a variety of options for professional development. Several campuses of the Maricopa Community Colleges offer associates degrees in early childhood studies. In addition, Central Arizona College offers online associate's degrees relevant to early childhood education, and online coursework that prepares students to apply for a Child Development Associates (CDA) credential. The Central Maricopa Regional Planning Council funded 125 T.E.A.C.H. scholarships in the past year.

According to data collected by the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), the birthrates in the region are close to the state average of 16 births per thousand residents. Birthrates are a bit higher in Guadalupe (23 per thousand) and lower in Ahwatukee (11 per thousand).

Expectant mothers in Chandler and Ahwatukee are very likely to receive prenatal care early in pregnancy. Guadalupe and Tempe, however, do not meet the national Healthy People 2020 target of 78 percent of mothers beginning care in the first trimester. Nearly ten percent of mothers in Guadalupe receive fewer than five prenatal-care visits. Infant mortality in Tempe is higher than the HP 2020 target.

Lack of insurance coverage can be a barrier to receiving health care. In the state and in Maricopa County, the number of children covered by KidsCare has declined sharply in the past three years. With the recent establishment of KidsCare II, the number covered is expected to rise.

Children with special needs receive services from the Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP) and from the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). In the Region, 422 children were served by AzEIP and 666 were served by DDD during 2010.

Immunization rates among preschool children in the Central Maricopa Region are lower than in the state as a whole.

Oral health services for young children seem to be available, even to low-income parents, through family resource centers and through Chandler Regional Medical Center.

Home visitation programs are one way for parents to become better informed about the health and education needs of their young children, especially in locations where community-based services are less common. The region also has a rich network of family resource centers funded by First Things First, which provide families across the region with a variety of services, including parent education and enrollment assistance for programs such as AHCCCS.

The state Child Protective Services (CPS) reported that at least 290 children were removed from their homes in the region during 2010. Although local quantitative data are hard to obtain,



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domestic violence, parental incarceration, and homelessness are also challenges for some families in the region.

Significant assets in the region include the network of family resource centers, home-visitation programs, Head Start, nearby primary and specialist health-care providers, strong school districts, professional development opportunities, the Quality First initiative, and a strong sense of community in the towns that comprise the region.

Significant challenges identified in this report include low immunization rates, the expense of quality childcare, and problems associated with unemployment, incarceration, and other family crises. Qualitative data suggest that outreach to families in need could be improved, not only in Guadalupe but throughout the region.