

2013

ANNUAL REPORT



LA PAZ/MOHAVE
REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Ready for School. Set for Life.

Why Early Childhood Matters

Research shows that 80% of a child's brain is formed by age 3; more than 90% by age 5. Because of this rapid development, what happens to children in the early years lays the foundation for a lifetime.

Research has demonstrated that kids with quality early childhood experiences do better in school. They are more likely to advance into college and successful careers. They also tend to be healthier and demand less from the public welfare system.

On November 7, 2006, Arizonans made a historic decision on behalf of our state's smallest citizens. By majority vote, they made a commitment to all Arizona children 5 and younger: that kids would have the tools they need to arrive at school healthy and ready to succeed.

The voters backed that promise with an 80-cent per pack increase on tobacco products, so some reliable funding for early childhood services for our youngest children would be available.

The initiative also created the statewide First Things First Board and the 31 regional partnership councils that share the responsibility of ensuring that these early childhood funds are spent on strategies that will result in improved education and health outcomes for kids 5 and younger.



Not all children have the same needs; and voters designed First Things First to meet the diverse needs of Arizona communities. Decisions about which early education and health strategies will be funded are made by the 31 regional partnership councils made up of community volunteers. Each regional council member represents a specific segment of the community that has a stake in ensuring that our children grow up to be healthy productive adults, including: parents, tribal representatives, educators, health professionals, business leaders, philanthropists and leaders of faith communities. The regional councils study the challenges faced by children in their communities and the resources that exist to help kids in their area. Because of all these factors, the regional councils know best what their kids need.

The La Paz/Mohave Region includes La Paz and Mohave counties, including the tribal lands of the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe within Arizona. The region does not include the tribal lands of the Colorado River Indian Tribes, the Hualapai Tribe, and the Kaibab Paiute Indian Tribe.

Regional Council Members

Nancy Mongeau, *Chair*

Riley Frei, *Vice Chair*

Alisa Burroughs

Reverend Jose Garcia

Terri Holloway

Betsy Lewis

Vijette Saari

Debra Weger

Catie Sondrol

Lenore Knudtson

Howard Weiske

A SNAPSHOT OF CHILDREN IN OUR REGION

Demographics

13,395

Number of Kids Under 6 in Region

9,126

Number of Households with Kids Under 6

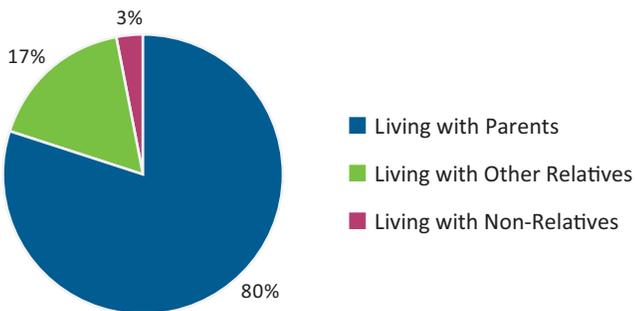
10%

Percentage of Households with Kids Under 6

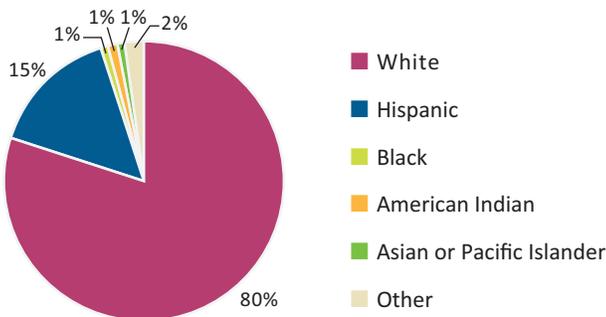
43% La Paz **28%** Mohave

Percentage of Young Kids in Poverty

Living Arrangements of Kids Under 6



Ethnic Breakdown of Kids Under 6



Education

72%

Percentage of 3- to 4-Year-Olds in the La Paz/Mohave Region Who Don't Go to Preschool

40% La Paz **22%** Mohave

Percentage of 3rd Grade Students Not Passing AIMS in Reading

Economics

\$33,818 La Paz **\$36,446** Mohave

Median Family Income

60%

Percentage of Children Under Age 6 with All Available Parents in the Labor Force

Health

12% La Paz **6%** Mohave

Percent of Births with Fewer than Five Prenatal Visits



OUR REGION'S PRIORITIES

Research regarding children 5 and younger in the La Paz/Mohave Region revealed the need for the following programs to promote optimal development and school readiness:

Early Learning: Parents need choices when it comes to early learning settings for their children 5 years old and younger, including children with special needs. Specifically, stakeholders surveyed identified preschool programs as the most important service missing in the region. The region partners with school districts to expand preschool programs, particularly in rural communities where access to early childhood education is limited.

Family Support: Inadequate access to prenatal care, high infant mortality, and a lack of access to services for children with special physical/mental health care needs were identified as significant concerns in the region. Families in the region are frequently isolated, lack transportation, and live in communities with limited resources. The region's home visitation program provides voluntary, comprehensive, in-home family support, including routine developmental screenings, information and resources to support optimal child health and development, and timely referrals to community programs based on the needs of the family.

Health: Over the last few years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of kids entering state care. This created a need to better support kids 5 and younger in the child welfare system who are at greater risk due to their rapidly developing brains and physical frailty. The Court Team for Maltreated Infants and Toddlers coordinates essential services related to the health, development and social/emotional needs of vulnerable young children. The team also provides specialized training and technical assistance on infant and toddler mental health to professionals serving young kids and their families region-wide.

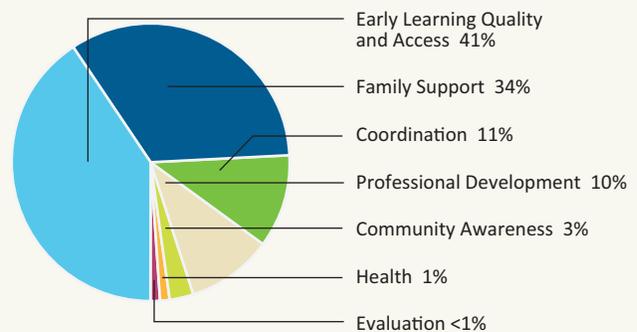
Community Outreach and Awareness: Awareness of the importance of early childhood is crucial so that all stakeholders can do their part to support school readiness. The Community Outreach and Awareness strategy provides grassroots support and engagement to increase parent and community awareness of the importance of early childhood development and health.

Financial Report

EXPENDITURES BY GOAL AREA – FY2013

Early Learning Quality and Access	\$1,437,357
Family Support	1,188,689
Coordination	379,522
Professional Development	331,179
Community Awareness	91,257
Health	27,348
Evaluation	17,387

TOTAL **\$3,472,739**



OUR REGION'S IMPACT

Preschool Expansion in Underserved Areas

Research shows that children with access to high quality early learning programs score higher on school readiness assessments, do better in school and are more likely to graduate and go on to college. The region's preschool expansion program ensures that more children have access to early learning.

"Preschool expansion is the largest strategy that we fund, and partnering with school districts is an approach that has allowed us to reach some of the most underserved communities in the region," said Merritt Beckett, La Paz/Mohave Regional Director.

In SFY 2013, preschool expansion sites in Littlefield, Topock, Bouse, Salome, Quartzsite, Mohave Valley, Bullhead, Lake Havasu City and Kingman allowed 234 additional children to attend preschool.

According to Topock Superintendent John Warren, the preschool expansion has resulted in more than double the number of students who come into kindergarten meeting literacy benchmarks.



Court Team Works to Improve Outcomes for Young Kids in State Care

The Infant and Toddler Mental Health Court Team was created when an increasing number of young children with serious physical, mental health, and developmental problems were coming in to the state's child welfare system.

Because 90% of the brain is developed by the age of 5, these children are at great risk for long-term harm from early traumatic experiences.

The team has implemented a number of system improvements, including: specific days set aside for cases involving young children; and, specific case managers from Child Protective Services and Mohave Mental Health assigned to work only on cases involving children ages birth to 5. Specialized training is also provided to foster parents and caregivers of kids 5 and younger to address the unique needs of this vulnerable population.

According to Coordinator Tonya Ford, parents are engaging more readily in their case plans and the Court Team is seeing a shorter time to permanency for these at-risk youngsters as a result of the team's work.

271

FAMILIES ENJOY STRONGER, MORE SUPPORTIVE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

18

CHILD CARE CENTERS AND HOMES OFFER CHILDREN A HIGHER STANDARD OF CHILD CARE THROUGH QUALITY FIRST

706

INFANTS, TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS RECEIVED SCHOLARSHIPS TO ACCESS EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

22

EARLY EDUCATORS RECEIVED COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS TO EXPAND THEIR SKILLS WORKING WITH INFANTS, TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS

1281

PARENT KITS DISTRIBUTED

160

MALTREATED INFANTS AND TODDLERS RECEIVED MORE COORDINATED SERVICES TO ADDRESS THEIR SPECIAL NEEDS

MOVING FORWARD

The La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council takes great pride in the progress made over the past five years. Together with our grantees and community partners, we are fulfilling our commitment to build a solid foundation for all young children and their families.

The regional council is committed to being responsive at the local level and reaching communities and families that historically have been underserved. A number of key strategies – including home visitation, pre-kindergarten scholarships, community-based professional development and community outreach – are offered region-wide and specifically target vulnerable populations.

The council will continue to work diligently with partners to improve access to these programs, so that all families with kids 5 and younger – from Ehrenberg to Colorado City – are able to access a variety of essential early childhood programs that help children arrive at school healthy and prepared to succeed!

The council recognizes that families from neighboring areas frequently access services within this region, so First Things First will continue to encourage cross-regional collaboration and the provision of early childhood programs to neighboring communities.



Grantees – FY2013

- Arizona Board of Regents for and on behalf of University of Arizona
- Arizona Department of Economic Security
- Arizona Department of Education
- Arizona Department of Health Services
- Arizona's Children Association
- Association for Supportive Child Care
- Bouse Elementary School
- Bullhead City Elementary School District
- Child and Family Resources Inc.
- Fort Mojave Indian Tribe
- Kingman Unified School District #20
- Lake Havasu Unified School District #1
- Littlefield Unified School District
- Mohave County Superior Court
- Mohave Valley Elementary School District
- Pima County Health Department
- Southwest Human Development
- The Learning Center for Families
- Topock Elementary School District
- University of Arizona Cooperative Extension
- United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona

La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council

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