



HIGH QUALITY EARLY CHILD CARE AND EDUCATION



Quality First!

Quality First is Arizona's new statewide voluntary quality improvement and rating system. It establishes the foundation for quality early care and education for child care centers and family child care homes which serve children birth through age 5. Quality First provides support, funding and education to qualified centers and homes to improve the quality of their care and education so children can begin school safe, healthy and ready to succeed. In the future a rating system will be implemented to assist families in choosing quality child care.

The components of Quality First include:

- On-site, intensive coaching to develop and implement quality improvement plans
- Pre-and-post assessment to determine the level of quality prior to and after receiving support
- Financial resources to reach goals in quality improvement plan and to improve quality
- Professional development scholarships for teachers and caregivers
- Child care health consultation to ensure the health and safety of children in centers and homes

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$16.8 million

First Things First Regional Funding: \$18.4 million

First Things First Total Funding: \$35.2 million toward improved quality for children and families

Progress to Date: Over 600 early care and education centers and homes are participating in quality improvement through Quality First. A pilot of the star rating is in process with 60 volunteer sites participating.

T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® ARIZONA

T.E.A.C.H. ARIZONA is a comprehensive scholarship program that provides individuals who work in early childhood centers and homes with access to college coursework leading to a degree or certificate in early childhood education. T.E.A.C.H. ARIZONA promotes quality early childhood care and education by establishing a well-qualified, equitably paid and stable workforce for Arizona's young children. **The following are components of T.E.A.C.H. ARIZONA:**

Educational scholarships: support for tuition and books, a travel stipend and paid release time

- Compensation: incentives in the form of a bonus or raise upon completion of college coursework
- Continuity of care: commitment by participant to continue working at current program for a specified period of time

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$3.2 million

First Things First Regional Funding: \$12 million

First Things First Total Funding: \$15.2 million for qualified teachers and caregivers for Arizona's children

Progress to Date: Scholarships are available to early childhood staff through state funding in conjunction with Quality First participation and through regional funding. Almost 700 scholarships were awarded during the 2009-2010 school year.



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Child Care Health Consultation

Child care health consultants (CCHCs) are child health experts who consult with child care settings. Their role is to provide child care staff the information and guidance they need to prevent and intervene appropriately to assure the health and safety of children in care. **CCHCs serve as health resources to early care and education settings through:**

- Onsite, email and telephone guidance and consultation
- Staff training on health and safety best practices and requirements
- Nutrition and physical activities to promote health and prevent obesity
- Referrals to community resources

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$2.8 million

First Things First Regional Funding: \$8.5 million

First Things First Total Funding: \$11.3 million to keep children healthy, safe and ready to succeed

Progress to Date: County and Tribal health departments employ CCHCs, with Pima County Health Department serving as the administrative home to provide recruitment, training and quality assurance. CCHCs and Coaches coordinate to provide services and support to participating Quality First centers and homes. Regional funds also support access to CCHC by non-Quality First programs. Twenty eight contracts with county health departments or community health agencies have been completed.

FTF Professional REWARD\$

To build an educated and stable early childhood education workforce and improve quality, low teacher salaries must be addressed. Improved compensation will encourage early childhood staff to improve their education and remain in the field, resulting in higher quality and more stable care for young children. **This salary and retention strategy includes:**

- Financial incentives to teachers and caregivers based on educational achievement, wages earned and hours worked per week
- Commitment from staff to remain in current employment

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$602,000

First Things First Regional Funding: \$4.1 million

First Things First Total Funding: \$4.7 million for a more educated and stable early childhood workforce

Progress to Date: Incentives were made available to 415 early childhood staff during fiscal year 2010.



SUPPORTING FAMILIES & HEALTHY CHILDREN

Arizona Parent Kits

Arizona Parent Kits provide information and education to all parents of newborns in the state. They are distributed to parents upon discharge from the hospital. **The Parent Kit includes:**

- 6 DVDs/videos on prenatal care, child health and nutrition, child development, child safety, quality child care, early literacy and discipline
- 80-page Arizona Parents Guide
- Picture book for parents to read to their baby

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$2.05 million

First Things First Regional Funding: \$50,000

First Things First Total Funding: \$2.1 million for valuable information support for Arizona families

Progress to Date: All hospitals and birthing centers in Arizona are participating in providing Parent Kits to parents of newborns. FTF is also piloting a program to check-out Kits in Pima County libraries for families of young children. Over 65,000 Kits have been distributed to date.

Health: Physician Education and Outreach

Physician education and outreach improves the quality of health care for young children by providing technical assistance and support to medical practices throughout Arizona, including pediatric practices, family medicine, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Indian and Tribal Health facilities. **This quality improvement strategy includes:**

- Implementation of best practices, including a medical home model of care
- Use of developmental screening using a standardized, validated screening tool
- Promotion of systems that track children referred to early intervention services
- Assisting practices in identifying community resources that support child development

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$540,000 to improve 50 physician practices serving young children

First Things First Regional Funding: \$624,000

First Things First Total Funding: \$1.2 million

Progress to Date: The Best Care For Kids program is being delivered through the Arizona Chapter of the Academy of Pediatrics. Practices throughout the state are completing the assessment process. Recruitment of new participants is ongoing.

Health: Therapist Workforce Support and Readiness

The health workforce strategy establishes a partnership with Arizona State University's speech language pathology program to increase the number of therapists with the specialized knowledge and skills to work with children birth to three in early intervention programs. **Components of this program are:**

- Scholarships for tuition to complete a master's level program
- Commitment of two years of service with birth to three populations in Arizona
- Specialized coursework for currently practicing therapists and other early intervention personnel

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$630,000

Progress to Date: Through a contract between FTF and ASU, a cohort of 11 students were enrolled during the 09-10 school year and 13 students are enrolled in the program for the current year. Additionally, three students graduated in May 2010 and are currently working full time with children birth through age five.

Health: Oral Health Care Demonstration

Oral health care is a pressing need for young children. This state funding will support a collaboration between FTF and DHS to expand “teledentistry” in rural and hard to serve areas of the state. Regional funds support dental services for young children such as varnish and dental screening.

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$50,000

First Things First Regional Funding: \$5.3 million

First Things First Total Funding: \$5.35 million to create a plan to improve oral health care for children birth to five

Progress to Date: Discussions are underway with the professional dental associations, dentistry schools and state agencies to form a planning task force.

Mental Health Education and Consultation

Mental health consultants work with early care and education providers to create environments that support children’s social and emotional development and enhance their learning experience. **Consultants help:**

- Ensure that children are engaged in learning;
- Early care and education staff manage children’s difficult behaviors effectively;
- Enhance staff communication skills with children and parents;
- Communicate with parents about children’s needs and behaviors and,
- Provide referrals to community resources as needed.

Health consultants come highly skilled with master level degrees in a mental health field and all have specialize training in children’s social-emotional development and early care and education staff development.

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$518,356

First Things First Regional Funding: \$6.5 million

First Things First Total Funding: \$7 million to promote healthy social-emotional development of young children

Progress to Date: 33 consultants are employed (with more to be hired) and providing services to early care and education centers and homes.

Workforce Recruitment

Stipends/Loan forgiveness and many rural areas of Arizona lack health professionals, such as pediatricians, therapists, and family practice doctors. This strategy provides stipends or loan forgiveness to health professionals who commit to practice in particular regions.

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$2.5 million

First Things First Total Funding: \$2.5 million to increase the number of health professionals in under served areas.

Progress to Date: FTF is collaborating with the Department of Health Services (DHS) who will administer the program. Applications are available online through the DHS website.



For more information about First Things First, please visit us at: www.azftf.gov