

FTF SIGNATURE PROGRAMS

QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION

It's an economic reality: 60% of children in Arizona live in homes where all of the adults work. In order for parents to continue working, they need safe, reliable child care. And, in order for children to start school ready to succeed, child care needs to include a curriculum focused on early literacy, teachers trained to engage young learners, and teaching materials that are appropriate for young kids. First Things First's early education signature programs offer a comprehensive approach to improving the quality of child care throughout Arizona. They also help parents afford an early education for their kids, and give families tools to make the best choices on quality care for their children.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EARLY EDUCATION IN ARIZONA

Quality First!

Quality First provides support, funding and education to qualified centers and homes to improve the quality of their care and education for children birth through 5 years old. 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
- Professional development scholarships for teachers and caregivers
- Child care health consultation to ensure the health and safety of children in centers and homes
- A star rating system to define and share levels of quality (in development)

Total FY2009-2012 Commitment to improve child care quality: \$56.3 million



Progress to Date: More than 700 early care and education centers and homes are participating in quality improvement through Quality First, with expansion of more than 150 programs planned for the future. A pilot of the rating system is in process with 34 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 gives staff in child care centers and homes 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 and stable workforce for Arizona's young children. The components of T.E.A.C.H. are:

- Support for tuition and books, a travel stipend and time off from work to attend classes
- A bonus upon completion of college coursework
- Commitment by the participant to continue working at their current program for a specified period of time

Total FY2009-2012 Commitment for qualified teachers and caregivers for young kids: \$20.3 million

Progress to Date: Approximately 630 teachers and caregivers have received scholarships to attend college courses since the program began in 2009.

Child Care Health Consultation

Child care health consultants (CCHCs) are nurses and child health experts who work with child care settings to provide caregivers with information and guidance they need to assure the health and safety of children in care. Children cannot learn if they are hungry, ill or unsafe. 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

Total FY2009-2012 Commitment to keep children healthy, safe and ready to succeed: \$17.7 million

Progress to Date: Child care health consultants are providing support and guidance to approximately 760 child care programs across the state.

Mental Health 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 come highly skilled with Master's degrees in a mental health field and with specialized training in young children's social-emotional development and how to support early care and education providers.

Through onsite guidance and coaching, Smart Support consultants offer specific approaches that may include staff training, classroom improvements, and resources and referrals for specific children or situation. These supports:

- Ensure that children are engaged in learning
- Help early care and education staff manage children's difficult behaviors effectively
- Enhance staff communication skills with children and parents
- Ensure early identification of children that may need more support and mental health services

Total FY2009-2012 Commitment to help caregivers promote healthy social/emotional development: \$12.5 million

Progress to Date: Thirty-nine (39) Smart Support mental health consultants are providing support and guidance to 210 child care programs in 13 First Things First regions of the state.

FTF Professional REWARD\$

One of the reasons many of the most seasoned and gifted teachers of young children leave this field is low salaries. FTF Professional REWARD\$ helps keep the best teachers with our youngest kids. Elements of Professional REWARD\$ include:

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

Total FY2009-2012 Commitment for a more educated and stable early childhood workforce: \$7.3 million

Progress to Date: Awards have been made available to 569 early childhood staff since the program began in FY2010.





HELPING MORE CHILDREN ACCESS QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Research has proven that kids with quality early childhood experiences do better in school. They are more likely to advance into college and successful careers. First Things First helps thousands of children in Arizona access quality early education services through two statewide strategies.

Quality First Scholarships

The high cost of early care and education is one of the most difficult obstacles to obtaining and maintaining employment for many low-income families. Without access to quality care, working families are forced to decide whether to quit their jobs or leave children in the care that is not their primary choice. Quality First scholarships help low income families who may be working, looking for work or improving their work skills through training or education or wish their children to benefit from a quality learning environment, to be able to afford a better educational beginning for their young children. Scholarships can be used in both center and home-based child care settings and function to:

- Increase access for low income families to quality care and education for their young children
- Support early care and education providers to maintain a quality program

Total FY2009-2012 Commitment for better access to quality early education for kids: \$42.6 million.

Progress to Date: Approximately 15,000 scholarships have been funded since their inception in 2009.

Pre-kindergarten Scholarships

Pre-kindergarten Scholarships support the provision of high quality early care and education in center or classroom-based settings during the two years prior to kindergarten entry in participating regions. Both public schools and community-based early childhood providers may participate. Elements of Pre-Kindergarten Scholarships include:

- Coaching support to facilitate partnerships between public schools and community providers
- Financial support for high quality classes for pre-kindergarten children

Total FY2009-2012 Commitment to help children access quality preschool programs: \$8.2 million.

Progress to Date: Almost 2,300 3- to 5-year-olds have been able to access pre-kindergarten education in schools and child care centers.

FTF SIGNATURE PROGRAMS HEALTH

Many elementary school absences and learning problems are caused by developmental delays or illnesses that were not detected before children entered kindergarten. That's why access to screenings and health care are vital components of any successful early childhood development program. First Things First signature health programs ensure that medical professionals are available to children – even in the most rural areas – and that those medical professionals have the training and support they need to meet the needs of their youngest patients. Our health consultation strategies also provide training and support to early care and education providers to better meet the physical and mental health needs of their young students.



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 and family medical practices, Federally Qualified Health Centers, and Indian and Tribal Health facilities. This 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 medical practices in identifying community resources that support child development

Total FY2009-2012 Commitment to improve physician practices serving young kids: \$2 million

Progress to Date: The Arizona Chapter of the Academy of Pediatrics has partnered with First Things First to recruit medical practices in to the physician education program (Best Care for Kids). Participating practices are completing assessments of the level of training required for their doctors and staff, and have begun providing needed training. Recruitment of additional participants is ongoing.

Therapist Workforce Support and Readiness

First Things First has partnered 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 5 in early intervention programs. Components of this program include:

- Scholarships for tuition to complete a Master's-level program
- Upon graduation, requires a commitment of two years of service with birth to 5 populations in Arizona
- Specialized coursework for currently practicing therapists and other early intervention personnel

Total FY2009-2012 Commitment to increase the number of speech pathologists trained to work with young kids: \$900,000

Progress to Date: Fourteen (14) students were enrolled in the program in the 2010-2011 academic year. Three (3) students graduated in May 2010 and are currently working full time with children birth through 5.

Workforce Recruitment – Loan Forgiveness and Stipends

Many rural areas of Arizona lack therapy professionals, such as speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists and physical therapists. This strategy provides stipends and/or loan forgiveness to health professionals who commit to practice in underserved regions for a specified amount of time.

Total FY2009-2012 Commitment to increase the number of health professionals in underserved areas: \$3.7 million

Progress to Date: FTF has partnered with the Department of Health Services (DHS), which administers the program. Applications are available online through the DHS website, www.azdhs.gov.

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FAMILY SUPPORT

It is often acknowledged that parenting is one of the toughest jobs around, and that parents are the “first teachers” of their children. But too often parents do not receive the support they need to do this important work. That’s why First Things First partners with parents to give them the information and support they need to make the best choices for their children. Our Family Support Signature Programs offer a continuum of services aimed at meeting parents where they are at – whether they just have one question, or need long-term, in-home support. These programs stress the importance of early education and health, teach invaluable parenting skills and promote early literacy skills by emphasizing the importance of reading to children at an early age.

Arizona Parent Kits

Arizona Parent Kits provide information and education to all parents of newborns in the state. They are offered to parents upon discharge from the hospital or birthing center. The kit includes critical information about healthy parenting practices and how to support their baby’s development and early learning. Each Kit includes:

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

Total FY2009-2012 Commitment to help parents of newborns with information and support as they leave the hospital: \$3.3 million

Progress to Date: More than 105,000 kits have been provided to the parents of Arizona newborns. A pilot program is underway in Pima County to offer the kit at local libraries for check-out.

Birth to 5 Helpline

The Birth to Five Helpline is available for all families with young children looking for the latest child development information from experts in the field. Professionals who work

with families may also take advantage of this free service. Staffed by early childhood development specialists, registered nurses, disabilities specialists, early literacy specialists, and mental health counselors, the Helpline provides a toll-free number and/or an online form for all Arizona families with young children, and parents-to-be, to call or write with questions or concerns about their infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

- The toll-free helpline is available at 1-877-705-KIDS
- The online question submission form can be found at: www.swhd.org/get-help/birth-to-five-helpline

Total FY2009-2012 Commitment to help families get access to early childhood development and health professionals to answer their toughest parenting questions: \$270,000

Progress to Date: Helpline experts have responded to more than 3,700 phone calls from parents and caregivers.

Home Visitation

Parenting is one of the toughest jobs anyone will ever do. Some parents face additional challenges in effectively parenting their children, including lack of education, financial instability, homelessness or difficult parenting situations, such as premature or multiple births. First Things First’s home visitation programs offer free, voluntary, in-home support that is tailored to meet the specific needs of the family. All services stress the importance of health and safety, parent/child interactions and promotion of early literacy by offering parents fun reading and other language activities to do with their children at various stages of development.

Total FY2009-2012 Commitment to supporting families in their efforts to more effectively meet parenting challenges: \$47.5 million

Progress to Date: Almost 9,400 families have received home-based services to strengthen their families and support their child’s early learning and health.