



Parenting Outreach and Awareness

I. INTENT OF STRATEGY

The intent of the promising practice strategy, Parenting Outreach and Awareness, is to increase families' awareness of positive parenting practices, child development including health, nutrition, early learning and language acquisition, and knowledge of available services and supports to enhance their child's overall development. The expected result is an increase in knowledge and skills and a change in specific behaviors targeted through the information and activities provided.

II. DESCRIPTION OF SIGNIFICANCE

Given the important role that families and caregivers have as their child's first and most important teacher, providing information and services that support families must be part of the continuum of strategies within the family support system to meet the universal needs of all families.

Children are active participants in their world from the day they are born. Understanding the importance of early interactions on healthy brain development will assist families in making important choices that will support and optimize their child's development and health. Child development and neuroscience research emphasizes the importance of infants to engage in discovery through everyday explorations shared by a sensitive, attentive caregiver (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007; Stamm, 2007). Yet, according to the preliminary results in the FTF 2012 Family and Community Survey, less than half of Arizona families (46%) acknowledged that babies sense and react to their surroundings in the first month of life. Over half of Arizona families surveyed (54%) still believe that children do not take in and react to their environment until two months of age or later. These results suggest that about half of Arizona families do not yet fully understand that their child's very early interactive experiences with the environment are essential to optimal health and development. Research-based knowledge about developmental milestones at each age helps caregivers interact positively with their child and set appropriate expectations and boundaries throughout daily routines. Although 80 percent of Arizona families acknowledge that they can significantly impact a child's brain development at or before birth, not all are sure what they can do to best support their child's optimal development.

Parenting Outreach and Awareness provides families of young children with information, materials or connections to resources and activities that increase awareness of early childhood development and health. In most cases, outreach and awareness alone are not sufficient to make or sustain a behavior change. While awareness may increase, families may not have the resources or tools to effectively implement the change. For example, families may have heightened awareness of the benefits of reading to their child, but do not understand how to select books that are

developmentally appropriate or know how to read to children at different developmental stages. Additionally, they may not have access to books (e.g., may not be able to afford books; may not live near to a library, or they may not have transportation to get to the nearest library).

While the Parenting Outreach and Awareness strategy is considered to be a promising practice, some programs that increase awareness and knowledge may indeed be evidence-based or evidence-informed and result in behavior change. One such example is *Reach Out and Read*, which uses medical providers to promote early literacy in pediatric exam rooms during well-child visits by distributing books to children and offering advice to families about the importance of reading aloud. *Reach Out and Read* has been found to increase the frequency families read aloud to their children and increase children's receptive and expressive vocabulary scores (Mendelsohn, et.al, 2001; High, et.al., 2000). It is important to consider that Parenting Outreach and Awareness is likely one approach in the continuum of family support efforts that can provide assistance to families, and is likely most effective when coupled or bundled with other supports and services.

Parenting Outreach and Awareness components can include: earned media, paid advertisements, resource distribution and/or parenting activities. Earned media is defined as recognition from a major broadcast print or emerging media as well as information placed in smaller community newspapers, newsletters, and public service announcements. Paid advertising is defined as advertising through billboards, print ads, multimedia campaigns (TV), radio and online ads. Paid advertising requires a substantial financial investment and must be accompanied by other strategies in order to be effective in changing behavior. Resource Distribution can include: distribution of children's books, audio discs, community resource guides, child development and child health fact sheets, parenting tip sheets, brochures, pamphlets, and/or newsletters. Parenting Activities must offer one-time group based activities for parents and families that increase awareness about child development or child health topics.

III. IMPLEMENTATION STANDARDS

A. Program Standards

First Things First (FTF) is committed to funding programs that are evidence based or evidence informed. The emphasis on evidence-based programs is grounded in the idea that the maximum benefit for children and families is delivered by programs that base their practice in the most current, relevant, and reliable evidence about the effectiveness of the program. For some programs, an evidence-informed or best practice, or a promising practice model is appropriate. The following criteria are considered by FTF when determining to fund programs:

- ***Evidence based programs*** are programs that have been validated by documented and scientific research and the evidence has gone through a peer review process. Evidence is established through scientific research that has had a comparison between an intervention group and a control group where the intervention group has had a significant impact. Peer review means that someone external to the program or research team has reviewed the methodology and the findings to determine if standards were met.

- **Evidence informed** is a program or service that has a clearly articulated theory of change (logic model) and has had some evaluation of the outcomes. This can be based on one program or service model that has been evaluated in multiple settings. An evidence informed program cannot be based on the evaluation of a program in only one setting, even if it has been done for many years in a community and everyone likes it.
- **Promising practice** is a program or service that has a clearly articulated theory of change (logic model) with specified implementation and operational processes (activities) and program outcomes. A promising practice program is *informed* by at least one of the following:
 - Evidence based practices of a similar program or service delivery system, but does not have complete fidelity to that model because of justifiable need to change factors such as staffing or written materials in order to adapt to geographic or cultural variation.
 - A similar program or service delivery model that is generally accepted as appropriate for use with the target population to achieve the program outcomes but has yet to be established as evidence based.
 - Culturally responsive practices that are known to contribute positively to program outcomes.

A promising practice must have no evidence that the program or service will cause any harm to recipients. Additionally, a promising practice program is committed to building evidence of program or service effectiveness through ongoing continuous quality improvement activities.

1. Implement an evidence based, evidence informed or promising practice model that meets FTF's accepted definition:
 - a. All information provided through media, advertisement, resource distribution and/or parenting activities must be research-based, developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, family-centered, and strengths-based.
 - All activities implemented must take into account local families' and children's needs, desires, histories, lifestyles, concerns, strengths, resources, culture, ethnicity, and priorities.
 - Print materials must be written at no higher than a 5th grade reading level.
 - Resources and information provided must be accurate and regularly updated to ensure information is current.
 - Permission for the use of copyright materials must be documented and cited.
 - All Parenting Outreach and Awareness activities will adhere to the FTF Communications guidelines including branding protocols which can be found in the First Things First Communications Toolkit.
 - b. Provide families participating in Parenting Outreach and Awareness activities with current, research-based information covering one or more of the following core areas of family support for child development and health:
 - **Expand the family's knowledge of child development and behavior** – Provide learning opportunities for families on all domains of child development (i.e.,

approaches to learning, social and emotional, language, cognitive and physical and motor development), understanding typical and atypical child development, recognizing age appropriate child expectations, and identifying developmental milestones and developmental red flags.

- **Support positive parenting practices** – Provide learning opportunities for families on appropriate adult and child interactions, development of parenting skills, positive guidance practices, and warm, sensitive and responsive caregiving.
 - **Improve child safety** – Provide learning opportunities for families to increase their awareness of injury prevention in the child’s environment, and removing safety hazards or making adjustments (e.g., safe sleep, choking hazards, and use of car seats).
 - **Improve child health** – Provide learning opportunities for families on nutrition, obesity prevention, breastfeeding, physical activity, immunizations, oral health, insurance enrollment, participation in consistent medical/dental homes, participation in prenatal care, and preventative services such as well-child visits, and developmental, vision and hearing screening.
 - **Contribute to family stability** – Provide learning opportunities for families to improve their stability (e.g. meet basic needs), functioning, and mental health (e.g., warmth, emotional availability, and stimulation). Provide learning opportunities for families to increase their support network and community involvement. Provide community specific resources at all class sessions that are relevant to the session topic. For example, during a session covering oral health topics, families should be provided with a list of dental providers in the community that serve children age 5 and under.
 - **Promote strong family relationships** – Promote strengthening relationships among caregivers, positive parenting, and family cohesion. Support the growth and development of all family members; encourage families to be resources for themselves and others. Promote families’ capacity to advocate for themselves within institutions and agencies.
- c. Implement one or more of the following Parenting Outreach and Awareness components:
- **Earned Media** campaigns center around various topics that raise families’ awareness such as: identification of an awareness gap as a community issue to be addressed, announcement of a new program or service to support behavior change, new or updated research about the behavior identified for change, milestones achieved in changing behaviors, and/or a success story about a specific child or family benefitting from a service.
 - **Paid advertising** provides research-based, outcome-focused, and professionally developed advertising that seeks to increase knowledge and change behavior. Provide the needed repetition in order to achieve market saturation (i.e., to ensure people see or hear the message enough times to change behavior).
 - Before a paid advertising campaign is utilized as an approach, the following information is necessary:

- Information about the root cause of the issue to be addressed;
- Documentation of evidence that the source of the information is credible;
- Documentation of evidence that the paid advertising will change the behavior;
- Sufficient resources are available to achieve the saturation required to effect change; and
- Strategies/tactics that will be implemented in addition to the paid advertising that will support behavior change (i.e., moving from awareness to action). For example, the advertisement includes a link to a website or a telephone number to call for more information about the subject.
- When an existing paid advertising effort is being utilized, information on the following is required:
 - Length of time the current creative content has been used;
 - The financial investment in the current campaign and specific markets used to determine effectiveness for the target population and geographic region proposed under this strategy;
 - Documentation of evidence that the campaign positively impacted behavior and specifically in the markets where the campaign was used (for example, a campaign seeking to increase immunization rates must have experienced success in increasing immunization rates where previously used);
 - Identification of other activities (e.g., a community event held after the broadcast of the paid advertisement) that were in place to support the paid advertising campaign and their effect on the impact achieved; and
 - Knowledge and understanding of the ability for co-branding or adding additional calls to action, restrictions on paid media time versus gratis media time, and restrictions on copyright use. Permission for the use of copyright materials must be documented and cited.
- **Resource Distribution** distributes children’s books, audio discs, community resource guides, child development and child health fact sheets, parenting tip sheets, brochures, pamphlets, and/or newsletters. Resources can be offered and distributed during community festivals, fairs, or exhibitions in community settings and through partner organizations.
- **Parenting Activities** offer group based activities for families that increase awareness about child development or child health topics. These may include activities such as:
 - Parenting workshops provides curriculum based parenting information and education to help parents improve their skills (includes one-time sessions, events, and conferences)
 - Parenting support groups provides opportunities for caregivers to share their parenting successes and concerns in a safe, supportive environment (includes peer support groups and professional led groups).

- Adult – child interactions support development and nurturing of infants and toddlers by encouraging quality social interactions between the caregiver and child.
- Socializations offers play opportunities for children in group settings and promote social skills, communication skills, and problem solving skills (includes playgroups and story times).
- Structured parenting activities must be accessible for families by being provided at times and locations that are convenient for families including weekend and evening hours.
- Parenting activities should be manageable in size and have appropriate staffing patterns.
 - Adult-only sessions shall be a maximum of 50 participants with a ratio of one staff per 25 adult participants. Conference keynote or plenary sessions are not held to the staff/participant ratio requirement.
 - Room size and space must be adequate to comfortably support the number of adults participating.
 - Parenting activities that offer on-site child care must adhere to the FTF Requirements for On-Site Child Care (attached).
- Parenting Outreach and Awareness programs that are providing food and/or snacks to children, their family members, or community members are expected to provide items that are healthy, nutritious, and support good oral health. Grantees will utilize the [USDA Infant and Child Care Meal Patterns](#) as a tool to align the provision of food and snack choices and ensure additional alignment with the [USDA Nutrition Guidelines](#). Grantee staff will be aware of the importance of early childhood nutrition and its link to overall health, success in kindergarten, and nutritious eating choices later in life.
- Incorporate family-centered practice into parenting activities. Components of family-centered practice must include:
 - Involvement of families in the planning, development and implementation of the workshop. Topics and activities are developed in response to the needs and interest of families.
 - Structured activities compatible with families’ availability and accessibility.
 - Both formal and informal opportunities for families to offer feedback about parenting activities. Take action based on families’ feedback and ensure that it is considered in future decision making.
 - Reasonable efforts to include all family members – including fathers, grandparents, and children.
- Incorporate strength-based approach to parenting activities, which focuses on families’ abilities, assets, needs and interests. Components of strength-based practice to be included:
 - Staff members work with family members in relationships based on equality and respect to identify their strengths, resilience, and resources.

- Encourage family members to build upon their strengths by enhancing their capacity to understand and promote their own optimal cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.
 - Help families identify and acknowledge formal and informal networks of support and community resources. Include information for families on how they can utilize the information or access additional resources identified in the resource distribution, parenting activity, media or advertisement in order to support the families' desire to make a behavior change.
2. Literacy learning in early childhood provides the foundation for future literacy success and is rooted in exposure to rich language experiences and engaging activities that build knowledge, understanding and speaking, expands vocabulary, and supports a child's ability to become a successful independent reader.
- a. Promote and support meaningful early literacy experiences and opportunities for young children in the appropriate context of program implementation.
 - Provide learning opportunities for families to learn about early language and emergent literacy development.
 - Provide information to increase families' awareness of the use of language to communicate, and respond to and elaborate on child's vocalizations (e.g., daily storytelling, talking, singing to infant and child).
 - Inform families about pre-literacy skills: concepts of print, phonological awareness, vocabulary development, comprehension, analysis of the content and structure of text, and making meaning through drawing and writing.
 - b. Support families and caregivers with parenting and child-rearing skills that help increase understanding of early language and emergent literacy development.
 - c. Engage families in meaningful, day to day two-way communication about how a child develops language and early literacy skills.
 - d. Encourage families to use the language in which they are most confident and competent.
 - e. Encourage families to learn how to observe, guide, promote, and participate in everyday language and literacy development of their children at home, early care, and in their communities.
 - f. Encourage families to advance their own learning interests in language and literacy development through education, training, and other experiences that support their parenting, careers, and life goals.
 - g. Encourage families to support and advocate for their child's learning and development as they transition to new learning environments.
3. Follow the FTF Child Welfare Policy when working with children and families enrolled in services provided by the Arizona Department of Child Safety or if service is being provided on Tribal lands, Tribal Child Protective Services, to promote non-duplication and coordination of child welfare services.

4. FTF recognizes the importance of collaborative partnerships among community partners that utilize a variety of formal and informal mechanisms to facilitate coordination of services in the community. The Coordination and Collaboration standard requires a grantee to:
 - a. Develop and implement a plan to understand and make connections with other initiatives, strategies and efforts in the region or state that support the early childhood system.
 - b. Develop processes that ensure staff implementing FTF funded strategies understand the connections between this strategy and the early childhood system to avoid duplication of services and promote collaboration between other services and supports offered to children and families in the regions.

5. Continuous Quality Improvement
 - a. Adopt a process of continuous self-monitoring and reflection to improve program practices that is articulated in a written policy.
 - b. In the written policy, the following should be addressed:
 - How data is used to assess the progress and outcomes of program implementation; and
 - How data collection is used to improve staff performance.

6. FTF embraces cultural responsiveness as an intentional life long journey that holistically explores, honors, and values the diversity of the human experience.
 - a. Offer programs and services congruent with the needs of diverse children and families.
 - b. Offer programs and services that are responsive to the impact of cultural factors such as histories, traditions, values, family systems and structures, social class, and religion and spiritual beliefs.
 - c. Create a learning environment conducive to and includes all children and families no matter their ethnic, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds.
 - d. Use the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of diverse children and families to make learning more appropriate and effective for them.

B. Staffing Standards

1. The process of developing written guidelines is the strategic link between the FTF Standards of Practices and day-to-day operations of the program. A well developed and highly utilized set of policies and procedures builds infrastructure and capacity and supports continuous quality improvements of programs and services for children and families. FTF requires grantees to have a written document that is accessible to all employees and contract staff members that provides staff with direction, consistency and set expectations for service delivery (e.g., Standard Operating Procedures, Implementation Guide, Policies and Procedures Manual.) The written document must be updated annually and be read and understood by all employees and contract staff members. The document must contain policies that align with the FTF Standards of Practice and provide a framework for overall program implementation. The policies must have procedures that describe the

process of how each step of program implementation adheres to the Standards of Practice, including staff specific roles, responsibilities and timelines. The written document must be developed by June 30, 2017.

2. Parenting Activities Direct Service Staff
 - a. Employ staff who reflect the cultural and ethnic experiences and language of the targeted population with whom they work with and integrate their expertise into the entire program. The length of employment and experience/education are reflective of high quality staff.
 - b. Ensure that staff at all levels receives initial and ongoing professional development in culturally and linguistically responsive service delivery.
 - c. Ensure staff receive professional development on early language and literacy development.
 - d. Staff developing materials or providing parenting activities (including volunteers and sub-grantees or partner personnel delivering the strategy) must be subject-matter experts and demonstrate extensive knowledge of the community, the culture, and the community's resources.
 - e. All staff work as a team, modeling respectful relationships consistent with program goals and whose top priority is the well-being of families and children.
 - f. Staff skills and abilities are regularly assessed to ensure they are able to engage families while maintaining a professional rapport.
 - g. Staff receive annual professional development on the FTF Parenting Outreach and Awareness Standards of Practice.
 - h. Direct service staff and supervisors must receive professional development through the Arizona Department of Education on the utilization of the following as a regular part of practice:
 - Arizona Infant and Toddler Developmental Guidelines,
 - Early Learning Standards, and
 - Program Guidelines for High Quality Early Education: Birth through Kindergarten.All staff will have ongoing access to standards and guideline materials.
3. Supervisory Staff
 - a. Supervisory staff are required to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in early childhood development, education, family studies, social work, nursing or a closely related field.
 - b. Establish an effective, consistent supervisory system that provides support for all staff members and ensures accountability to participants, funders, and the community
 - c. Supervisors work with staff to prepare and implement individual professional development plans which are reviewed and updated annually. Plans are used to identify areas for growth and support access to planned professional development opportunities and information based on the needs and interests of the staff.
4. The Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry (Registry)

The Registry is a component of the newly developed Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Network (Network). The Network is a comprehensive system designed to meet the professional development needs of Arizona’s early childhood professionals working with or on behalf of children birth-8 years of age.

- a. Staff employed at the administrative home and any sub-grantee who are working directly with or on behalf of children birth – age 8 as a part of the implementation of this strategy must enroll in the Registry.

C. Additional Standards

1. For implementation of parenting activities, Arizona law (ARS §13-3620.A) requires early childhood program staff who suspect that a child has received non-accidental injury or has been neglected, to report their concerns to the Arizona Department of Child Safety or local law enforcement. All staff, grant partners, consultants and participants of this component must receive training and adhere to these requirements (see attached FTF Suspected Child Maltreatment Mandated Reporting Policy).

IV. REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- A. National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2007). The Timing and Quality of Early Experiences Combine to Shape Brain Architecture: Working Paper #5. <http://www.developingchild.net>
- B. Stamm, J. (2007). *Bright from the Start: The Simple, Science-backed Way to Nurture Your Child’s Developing Mind from Birth to Age Three*. New York, NY: Penguin Press.
- C. Mendelsohn A., Mogiler L., Dreyer B., Forman J., Weinstein S., Broderick M., Cheng K., Magloire T., Moore T. and Napier C. 2001. “The Impact of a Clinic-Based Literacy Intervention on Language Development in Inner-city Preschool Children” *Pediatrics* 107(1): 130-134.
- D. High P., LaGasse L., Becker S., Ahlgren I., and Gardner A. 2000. “Literacy Promotion in Primary Care Pediatrics: Can We Make a Difference?” *Pediatrics*. 104: 927-934.
- E. USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Patterns. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks>
- F. First Things First Communications Tool Kit: http://ftf/extranet/apps/pgms/FTF%20Brand%20Materials%20for%20Grantee%20Marketing%20%20Communi/Communications_Toolkit.pdf
- G. Arizona Department of Education Trainings: <http://www.ade.az.gov/onlineregistration/SelectEvent.asp?viewall=%22yes%22&GroupID=31>
- H. Arizona Department of Health Services Injury Prevention Plan for infants, toddlers and young children found at: <http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/owch/pdf/injuryprevention/az-injury-surveillance-prevention-plan-2012-2016.pdf>
- I. Centers for Disease Control, *Protect the Ones You Love*, website for injury prevention at: www.cdc.gov/safefchild
- J. Reach out and Read Arizona: <http://www.roraz.org/>
- K. Read On Arizona. (2014) Developing a Thriving Reader from the Early Years: A Continuum of Effective Literacy Practices. <http://readonarizona.org/wp-content/themes/read-on/PDF/continuum-project-web.pdf>

- L. Read On Arizona. (2014) Building Blocks to Becoming a Reader. <http://readonarizona.org/wp-content/themes/read-on/PDF/continuum-bb-chart.pdf>
- M. FTF Child Welfare Policy (attached)
- N. FTF Suspected Child Maltreatment Mandated Reporting Policy (attached)
- O. FTF Requirements for On-Site Child Care (attached)
- P. Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network
Website: <http://azearlychildhood.org>
- Q. wikiHow. How to Write Policies and Procedures for your Business. Retrieved from:
<http://www.wikihow.com/Write-Policies-and-Procedures-for-Your-Business>
- R. Professor Michael Griffin. How to Write a Policy Manual. Retrieved from:
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- S. Linda Ballasy, Mark Fulop, and Michael Garringer. (2007). Generic Mentoring Program Policy and Procedure Manual CUSTOMIZABLE TEMPLATE VERSION. Retrieved from:
<http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CB4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Feducationnorthwest.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fpolicy-template.doc&ei=X6FwVf68FJLkoASytoPADw&usg=AFQjCNEU9H9CjdFp0GsiVvpW6nSQQVcJGw>