



FIRST THINGS FIRST

2019 IMPACT REPORT

Gila River Indian Community Region



Early experiences build the
foundation for a lifetime





of a child's brain growth happens before kindergarten

From birth to age 5, a child's brain develops more than any other time in life. Research shows that the quality of a child's early life experiences shape how their brain develops.

First Things First partners with families and communities to help our state's youngest children prepare for kindergarten and beyond.

“Teaching and providing for our children during the early years of growth and development sets a strong foundation and begins the beautiful journey of education. Together, we all take part in children thriving and embracing education, love for their culture and success.”

Elisia Manuel

Chair, FTF Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council

Fiscal Year 2019 Gila River Indian Community Region Impact Highlights

Here are a few highlights of the proven programs and innovative strategies from this region.



Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

59 Families with young children participated in voluntary home visiting programs proven to reduce parental stress levels, increase connections to community supports, and improve children's cognitive, motor, behavioral and socio-emotional development.



Quality Preschool and Child Care

230 Children attended preschools and child care programs participating in Quality First.

4 Preschools and child care programs participated in Quality First, receiving coaching, quality improvement supports, health consultation, and access to professional development.

48 Children birth to age 5 received a Quality First scholarship to attend high quality preschools and child care programs.



Preventive Health

86 Children monitored to receive appropriate screenings to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues to prevent learning challenges later on.

Additional strategies:



4 Early childhood educators

received college scholarships to improve their skills in working with infants, toddlers and preschoolers.



Quality First scholarships allow two sisters to access high quality care

Angelina Ramirez is a single mom who is determined to provide the best for her two daughters, Ella and Jewel.

However, as a working mom, affording quality child care can be difficult. There was a time when Ramirez had family members watch her oldest daughter, Jewel. “She would be in front of a television all day,” said Ramirez.

Then she applied and received a scholarship to attend the Early Education Child Care Center in Sacaton, which participates in First Things First’s (FTF) signature program, Quality First. Her scholarship was one of 48 Quality First scholarships funded by FTF Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council in State Fiscal Year 2019. Quality First scholarships help eligible families afford to send their child to quality child care centers and preschools.

FTF’s Quality First program partners with child care and preschool providers across Arizona to improve the quality of early learning. Quality First funds quality improvements that research proves help children thrive, such as training for teachers to expand their skills and to help create learning environments that nurture the emotional, social and academic development of every child.

“Jewel started at the center when she was 7 months old,” said Ramirez. “Her motor skills weren’t developed. She flopped and didn’t hold her head up. Her teachers worked with her on motor activities, like counting and scooping.”

Jewel started to develop at a fast rate and performing above average. Now 2, Jewel has a vocabulary of almost 100 words, knows the alphabet and can count to 10. She’s also developed social skills to interact well with her teachers and other children.

When Ramirez had her second daughter, Ella, she applied for a second Quality First scholarship and received it. Ramirez said Ella is now 3 months old and receiving wonderful care.

“Ella needs comfort, embracing and holding. They do that,” said Ramirez. “They hold the children like they were their own. They cradle and rock and sing to them, everything a mother would do.”

The Quality First teachers are trained to be attuned to each child’s needs. Ramirez said she’s seen that in the way they treat her children.

“Jewel’s teachers really work with her one-on-one,” Ramirez said. “She’s also in her terrible twos, so they discipline her right away by having her take a seat next to the teacher. She’s learning to say ‘thank you’ or apologize. She loves going there because she’s treated with respect, and she is learning.”

Ramirez also likes the way the teachers interact with her by providing photos throughout the day and a daily form that reports what her children ate, when diapers are changed, nap times and what they played with and learned.

“I get paid a little more than minimum wage,” said Ramirez. “I wouldn’t be able to afford to the quality care my children deserve without these scholarships. Both of my children are performing above average and receiving quality care. I’m blessed and amazed.”

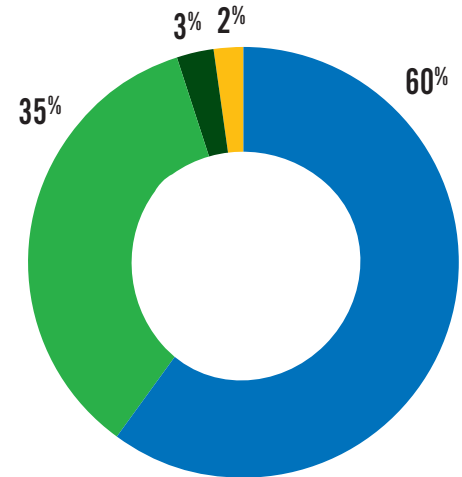
“Jewel’s teachers really work with her one-on-one ... She loves going there because she’s treated with respect, and she is learning.”

FTF Gila River Indian Community Regional Council

The FTF Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council is made up of volunteers who study the unique needs of the local community and decide how funds will be used to best support the development, education and health of young children birth to age 5. FTF invests in proven programs and innovative strategies through grants to community organizations that provide services to children and families.

FY19 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool	\$262,090
Strengthening Families	\$154,344
Research and Evaluation	\$14,462
Preventive Health	\$5,284
TOTAL	\$436,179



FTF Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council

Chair
Elisia Manuel

Vice Chair
Jane Johnson

Members

Sherilyn Analla

Gleebah Enos

Priscilla Antone

Priscilla Foote

Deborah Chadwick

Kami Hart

Anna Edwards

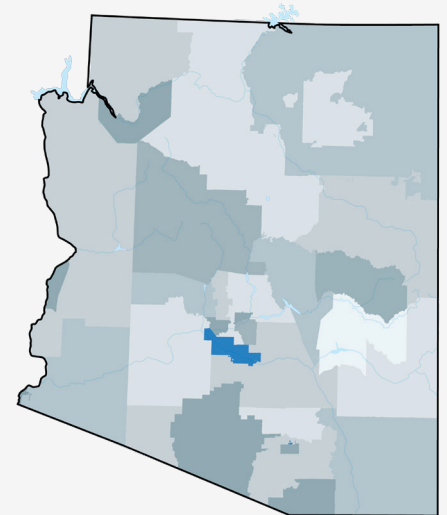
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Geographically, the Gila River Indian Community is located on 372,000 acres of land in south-central Arizona. The community lies south of the cities of Phoenix, Tempe and Chandler, and north of Casa Grande, and its east to west borders run from Coolidge to Tolleson. The Gila River Indian Community Region includes Legislative Districts 8 and 27. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)



Learn more at: FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Gila-River-Indian-Community