

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Southwest Maricopa Region

2020 Impact Report



From birth to age 5, a child's brain grows more than any other time in life.

90%

of a child's brain growth happens before kindergarten.

Early childhood matters.

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

Many young children in Arizona face challenges that threaten their healthy development and learning. In the FTF Southwest Maricopa Region, there are **28,512 children** (under age 6) with **16% living in poverty**.

Here is how FTF is working to support young children and their families in this region.



There is nothing more rewarding than seeing the short-term and long-term impact of early childhood programs. Through education, health and family support, investing in children brings a bounty of benefits not only for an individual child's future, but for the future of our community."



JoEllen Johnson

Chair of the FTF Southwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

FTF Southwest Maricopa Regional Key Impact Highlights [Fiscal Year 2020]



Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

3,326

Families or caregivers served by receiving referrals or by participating in activities at family resource centers.

248

Parents and other caregivers participated in evidence-based trainings designed to improved knowledge of parenting practices and children's development.



Quality Preschool and Child Care

2,062

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

255

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



Preventive Health

134

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

783

Fluoride varnishes applied to protect against childhood tooth decay.

Additional Strategies

1, 235

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 social-emotional development.



“It was important that I put my children’s health and nutrition first, but I didn’t know how.”
- Bonnie Lopez, mother

Home visitation program provides Avondale boys path to success

After the unexpected and exciting news that she was pregnant with twins, Bonnie Lopez knew she needed support. On a tip from the local women’s center, Lopez found a program that would help her be her babies’ best and first teacher.

“I knew I needed to listen to my mommy instinct,” Lopez said. “It was important that I put my children’s health and nutrition first, but I didn’t know how.”

The First Things First Southwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council funds the Arizona Children’s Association’s home visitation program, which provides parents with regular in-home visits from a trained professional, who provides parenting information, models ways to support healthy development and shares connections to other community resources.

After the boys, Aaron and Ethan, were born, a parent educator would visit Lopez once a month. Together, they worked on social interaction activities, how learning through play was vital in child development and the importance of becoming a strong reader.

“My entire library is filled with First Things First books,” Lopez said with a laugh.

The educator soon referred Lopez to the nearest Family Resource Center to have the boys’ eyes and ears checked after Lopez raised concerns.

“I especially love all the community resources,” Lopez said. “There were so many free services. Every time I used one, I walked away with a new, positive way to parent my kids, and I can see they are happier for it!”

Now 4 years old, Aaron and Ethan are not shy about playing with other children and reading to their younger sister, Caroline. They are very enthusiastic about learning, love books and Lopez knows they are ready for kindergarten.

“When I see how happy they are, it pumps up my self-esteem as a parent,” Lopez said. “The support I received took something that I could have been afraid of and made it into something I truly enjoy.”



Read more FTF stories at
[FirstThingsFirst.org/Region-Stories](https://www.FirstThingsFirst.org/Region-Stories)

FTF Southwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

The FTF Southwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council is made up of volunteers who study the unique needs of the local community and decide how funds should be used to best support the healthy development and early learning 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. Some of the programs in this region include First Teeth First, Quality First and family resource centers.

FTF Southwest Maricopa FY20 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool

\$2,114,060

Strengthening Families

\$1,361,243

Preventive Health

\$846,231

Research and Evaluation

\$132,649

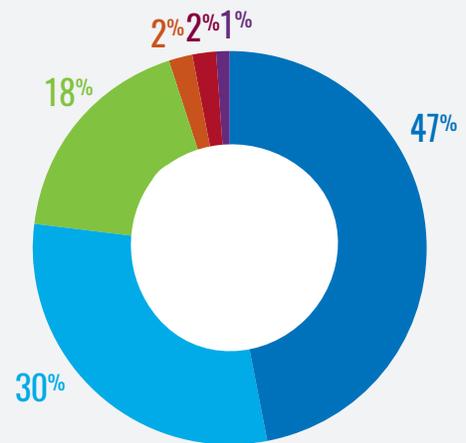
Parent and Community Awareness

\$120,639

Coordinating Care

\$49,317

Total \$4,624,139



FTF Southwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council and Staff

Chair
JoEllen Johnson

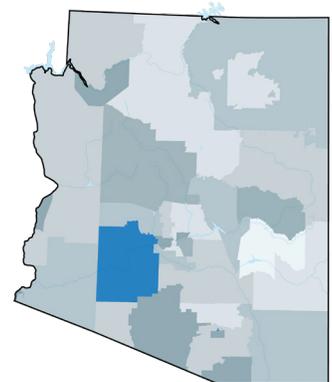
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The **FTF Southwest Maricopa Region** spans 4,325 square miles across the Southwest Valley. The largest region in Maricopa County, it is a predominantly rural area that has been one of the fastest-growing population centers in the state. This expansive region includes Avondale, Buckeye, Gila Bend, Goodyear, Litchfield Park, Tolleson and Tonopah. The FTF Southwest Maricopa Region includes Legislative Districts 4, 13 and 19. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)

Learn more at
[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Southwest-Maricopa](https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/Regions/Southwest-Maricopa)