

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Phoenix South Region

IMPACT REPORT 2021



FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Phoenix-South

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 Phoenix South Region, there are **65,037 children** (under age 6) with **42% living in poverty**.

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

“Investment in early childhood education is not only important to ensuring equal access and educational attainment for the youngest members of our community, it is important to developing sustainable and viable communities. Early childhood education touches just about every area of importance in our communities, to include economics, healthcare and workforce development. Continued investment, planning and forward thinking now will help to protect Arizona's greatest resource, it's people.”

Kimulet Winzer

Health Representative of FTF Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council

FTF Phoenix South Region Strategic Priorities



Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

Families are a child's first and best teachers. FTF programs in the Phoenix South region give parents choices for how they want to support their child's health and learning. **Family resource centers** in the region offer a wide range of family activities, programs and referrals to additional services, and voluntary **home visiting** programs provide comprehensive, one-on-one support for families with young children. Families of newborns throughout the region and across the state also receive the **Arizona Parent Kit**, with helpful information and resources to support new parents.



Quality Preschool and Child Care

Children who attend high-quality early learning programs go on to do better in school and are more likely to graduate. The Phoenix South region provides funding for child care providers and preschool programs to participate in FTF's **Quality First**. Providers benefit from training, coaching and a wide range of evidence-based supports to improve the quality of their early learning programs in ways that help children learn, grow and thrive. The region also funds **Quality First Scholarships** to help low-income families afford quality early learning for their young children.



Preventive Health

Undetected or untreated health issues can impact learning later on. Left unaddressed, developmental delays and chronic medical conditions can contribute to serious learning problems. FTF works to support the health and development of young children in the Phoenix South region by funding **developmental and sensory screenings** to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues and help prevent later learning challenges. **Oral health screenings and fluoride varnishes** are also offered to protect children against childhood tooth decay, a leading cause of school absences.



Phoenix couple gets help from FTF-funded program to raise twin daughters born prematurely

After the first ultrasound, Lindsay and Brent Barentine knew that their babies were special.

Barentine was pregnant with monoamniotic-monochorionic or mono-mono twins, which means the identical twins shared both a placenta and an amniotic sac. The rare pregnancy was also high-risk, which meant that Barentine's physician scheduled frequent check-ups to monitor the twins' prenatal health and development.

Born seven weeks early, Nora and Katie Barentine, were placed in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). After initial tests, medical staff identified the twins would need extra support to get them developmentally on track.

"When your children do not qualify for the Arizona Early Intervention Program, but you are told by medical professionals your children will need extra support, where do families turn?" Lindsay asked.

Many families who don't meet specific eligibility criteria for state or school district services share this concern and struggle to find special needs services for babies and toddlers. The First Things First Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council is dedicated to helping families with young children in the region and funds a program called Side by Side.

The Side by Side program through Southwest Human Development is designed to identify and address developmental concerns early and provide coaching supports to families of babies and toddlers in the region who don't meet the eligibility requirements for state or school district intervention services.

The free program also provides a special technical assistance team to help families with their children's motor, social-emotional skills and communication. They also refer the families to other resources.

The NICU staff referred the Barentines to the Side by Side program so they could receive the support they needed for their daughters.

"I didn't have experience raising kids," said Brent, who is now a stay-at-home dad. "I didn't know what to look for, but our home visitor could see those early signs immediately and shared with us ways to support their needs and get ahead of the concern."

The Barentines shared that since participating in this program Nora and Katie were given access to occupational therapists, speech therapists and are assessed regularly to identify concerns. The coaches give the Barentines information on how to implement practices into their parenting to help the girls develop and thrive.

"Having this program has saved our lives. We don't know where we or our girls would be without it."

—Lindsay Barentine, parent

"This program isn't clinical – it's relational," Brent said. "The support we receive goes beyond the focus of just the girls, it's about the whole family as a unit."

Now Nora and Katie are getting the support they need to develop and are on the right track to getting prepared for kindergarten.

"Having this program has saved our lives," Lindsay said. "We don't know where we or our girls would be without it."

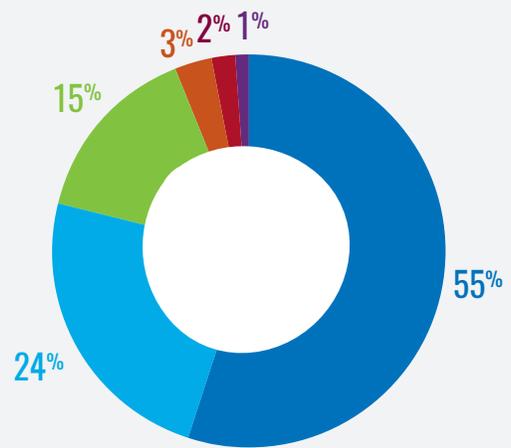
FTF Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council

The FTF Phoenix South 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 from 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 Family Friend & Neighbor, Smart Support and Reach Out & Read.

FTF Phoenix South SFY21 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool	\$9,464,981
Strengthening Families	\$4,193,442
Preventive Health	\$2,762,902
Research and Evaluation	\$606,969
Parent and Community Awareness	\$203,317
Coordinating Care	\$53,854
Total	\$17,285,466



FTF Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council and Staff

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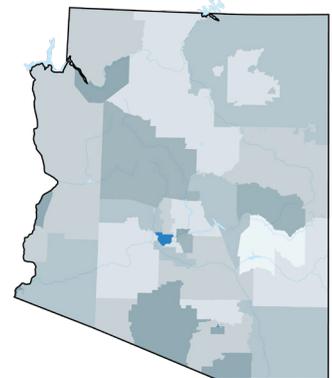
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The **FTF Phoenix South Region** is primarily the southern part of the city of Phoenix. Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council provides services in the city of Phoenix, south of Thomas Road, but also including the communities of Maryvale, north of Thomas (full ZIP code areas of 85031 and 85033 and the city of Phoenix portion of 85037). The region does not include Ahwatukee. The FTF Phoenix South Region includes Legislative Districts 19, 24, 27, 29 and 30. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)

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