

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Cochise Region

IMPACT REPORT 2021



FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Cochise

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 Cochise Region, there are **10,177 children** (under age 6) with **28% living in poverty**.

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

“The first five years of life are critical for a child's development. Investing in these early years can provide the strong foundation children need to thrive later in life.”

Danielle Brownrigg

Vice Chair of FTF Cochise Regional Partnership Council

FTF Cochise Region Strategic Priorities



Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

Families are a child's first and best teachers. FTF programs in the Cochise region give parents choices for how they want to support their child's health and learning. The region provides free, **evidence-based trainings** designed to improve knowledge of parenting practices and children's development. It also offers parents voluntary **home visiting** programs that 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 for 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 Cochise 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 Cochise region by funding **developmental and sensory screenings** to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues and help prevent later learning challenges.



Sierra Vista mom learns how to connect with 5-year-old daughter after taking parenting class

Angela Caruso needed help connecting with her 5-year-old daughter, Analee, who had difficulty communicating due to hearing loss.

Living in Sierra Vista when the COVID-19 pandemic started, Caruso enrolled in a free, virtual parenting class offered by the Arizona's Children Association, funded by the First Things First Cochise Regional Partnership Council.

The six-week class offered a research-based curriculum to help parents learn about early childhood brain development, positive discipline and effective parenting for children under age 6.

The online format of the class made it easy for Caruso to attend. "I didn't have to find a sitter," she said. "When I took this parenting class, I was dating a man and together we had six children. I was doing all the parenting and some of what I was doing as a parent wasn't working. I needed other options."

With Analee, Caruso knew that she didn't respond well to loud noises or angry body language. From the class, Caruso learned to get down to Analee's level and make eye contact.

"I learned about brain development," said Caruso. "And how girls need face-to-face communication. I also learned about flight or fight responses. If I would come to her angry, then she would be defensive and more difficult to redirect."

Caruso learned to create individual behavioral strategies for Analee and each of her children. Instead of impulsively reacting, she learned to take five seconds to take some deep breaths and help her children through the moment.

"Sometimes kids need their minute to have their meltdown," said Caruso. "Analee needs 10 minutes to get out her feelings, then I sit beside her on the floor and ask her to sit in my lap. She likes to be held and have face-to-face conversations. Before, I would have put her in the corner and got upset myself. There would have been more yelling and screaming."

Now Caruso says she doesn't get stressed anymore. She uses her strategies, and her children are learning to regulate their own emotions.

"The class has helped me to not get all worked up," said Caruso. "I'm having more fun with my kids."

Dominica Aquino, parent educator for Arizona's Children Association, said part of the class is to encourage positive interactions with children by providing parents with puppets, blocks or books.

"Since I took the class, I can take them out. Every Friday night, we go to a local basketball game, and we have fun."

—Angela Caruso, parent

"The class helps parents to understand positive parenting and creating quality time with their children," said Aquino.

With Analee, Caruso plays dolls, board games or card games with her for an hour each day.

Now after the classes, Caruso sees a change in her children's behavior and her home atmosphere. "It's not as tense. We also go out more. I would never take them in public, because they wouldn't listen," said Caruso. "Since I took the class, I can take them out. Every Friday night, we go to a local basketball game, and we have fun."

Now, Analee has a better understanding of boundaries and rules and the ability to regulate her behavior, which has set her up to be ready for kindergarten, Caruso said.

"Knowledge is power. If you have the knowledge, you have different ideas to try," she said. "If you don't have that knowledge, you'll be stuck. I felt like I was parenting wrong for so long, but now I have confidence and my kids are benefitting from it."

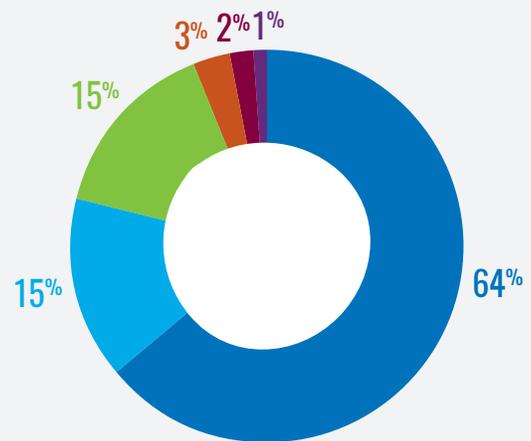
FTF Cochise Regional Partnership Council

The FTF Cochise 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 Quality First, care coordination medical home and the oral health awareness campaign.

FTF Cochise SFY21 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool	\$1,485,440
Strengthening Families	\$350,976
Preventive Health	\$350,768
Research and Evaluation	\$87,356
Workforce Development and Training	\$43,052
Parent and Community Awareness	\$20,000
Total	\$2,337,592



FTF Cochise Regional Partnership Council and Staff

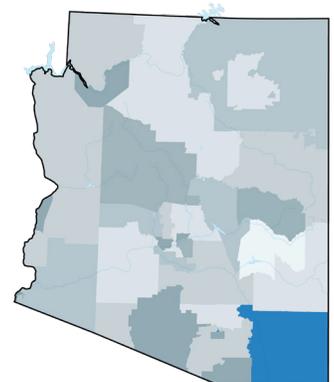
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The **FTF Cochise Region** includes all of Cochise County and the northeastern corner of Pima County. The FTF Cochise Region includes Legislative District 14. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)

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