

FIRST THINGS FIRST

La Paz/Mohave Region

IMPACT REPORT 2021



FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/La-Paz-Mohave

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 La Paz/Mohave Region, there are **13,469 children** (under age 6) with **31% living in poverty**.

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

“ We know that it takes a village to raise children, but not everyone has a village. With families facing more challenges than ever, it's never been more obvious how important it is to support parents and caregivers from all backgrounds through programs such as accessible quality child care, parenting education, preventative care and other trusted resources.”

Christy Rail

Chair of FTF La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council

FTF La Paz/Mohave Region Strategic Priorities



Strengthening Families

Families are a child's first and best teachers. FTF programs in the La Paz/Mohave region give parents choices for how they want to support their child's health and learning. The region offers a wide range of family activities and a voluntary **home visiting** program to provide comprehensive, one-on-one support for families with young children. Families of newborns throughout the region and across the state can receive the **Arizona Parent Kit**, with helpful information and resources to help new parents. The region also supports work with infants and toddlers involved with the child welfare system by **coordinating efforts** to meet their unique developmental needs.



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 La Paz/Mohave 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. Early childhood educators can **attend trainings** or sessions to improve their skills in working with infants, toddlers and preschoolers in child care programs. 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 La Paz/Mohave region by funding **developmental and sensory screenings** to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues and help prevent later learning challenges.



5-star Quality First center in Mohave Valley helps develop the whole child

As a rural community in northwest Arizona, sometimes it's a challenge to get professional development to early childhood teachers at the Ft. Mojave Child Care Center in Mohave Valley.

Since enrolling in Quality First, a signature program of First Things First, the center's teachers have gained experience and access to professional development to expand their skills to create learning environments that nurture the emotional, social and academic development of every child.

The First Things First La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council funds the Quality First program, which partners with child care and preschool providers to improve the quality of early learning across Arizona. Research shows that quality improvements to early care programs help children thrive, such as providing training for teachers.

The center's director, Betsy Lewis, is proud of the center's reputation as one of the best in the area. The center has a 5-star Quality First rating, the highest available through the program. The center is located on the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe and is about 30 miles from Bullhead City. Their students eventually feed into three nearby school districts.

"We always hear from school districts that they can tell which children had access to early care and education, because they can see how advanced the children are when they are being assessed in kindergarten," said Lewis, who has been involved with early childhood with the tribe since the child care center opened in the 1980s. "They are really school-ready."

At the center, the children are divided and placed into the infant, toddler and preschool rooms, but "we're looking at that whole child, physically, emotionally, mentally to make sure that they're really ready to move to that next step."

Quality First provides coaching to the center's staff, as well as different learning opportunities.

"It is helping our teachers gain those skills to benefit the children," Lewis said. "For example, they'll help us look at the classroom environment and how we can improve it."

Like in the majority of child care centers statewide, the COVID-19 pandemic forced a shutdown of in-person learning for the babies, toddlers and preschools while teachers are still seeing a struggle with the transition back for the students.

"Quality First helped us be prepared for those behaviors," Lewis said. "So many of the children missed the transition from one (developmental) room to the next."

For example, they kept the 3-year-olds in the toddler room, because they might need extra attention with parts of their development, Lewis said.

The children also came back to the center in smaller numbers, but the center's staff push through. They are also finding new ways of communicating with parents.

"It is helping our teachers gain those skills to benefit the children."

—Betsy Lewis, director of Ft. Mojave Child Care Center

"We've learned so much being involved with Quality First," Lewis said. "Parents are also understanding that having this strong foundation when they're little is critical in a child's life."

She always tells parents to watch as their child is preparing to make great strides.

"It's the starting point to your child's life," Lewis said. "We're working on the whole child to prepare them for the next step into school and into life."



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

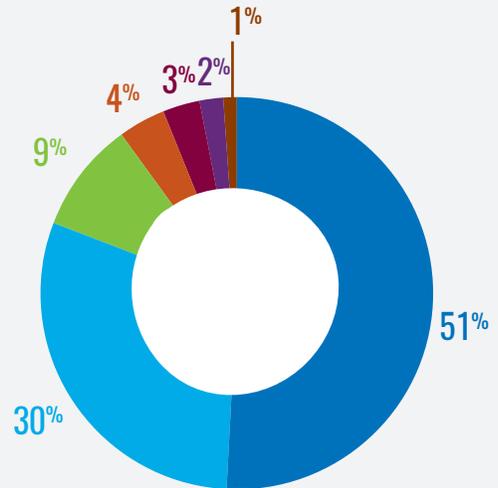
FTF La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council

The FTF La Paz/Mohave 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 Early Childhood Education Associates, Inc., Quality First and service coordination.

FTF La Paz/Mohave SFY21 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool	\$1,786,981
Strengthening Families	\$1,062,834
Workforce Development and Training	\$298,985
Research and Evaluation	\$127,858
Parent and Community Awareness	\$86,898
Preventive Health	\$66,075
Coordinating Care	\$57,826
Total	\$3,487,457



FTF La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council and Staff

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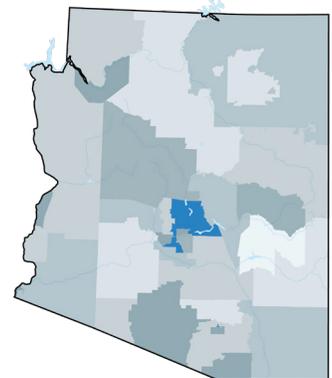
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The **FTF La Paz/Mohave Region** is defined as the combined area of the two counties, not including the lands belonging to the Colorado River Indian Tribes, the Hualapai Tribe and the Kaibab Paiute Tribe. The region does include the Arizona portion of the land belonging to the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe. The region covers about 16,700 square miles, with its northern end separated from the rest by the Grand Canyon. The communities of the region are diverse in population density and in demographics, and are often isolated by large areas of unpopulated land. People and services are concentrated in larger places in the region such as Bullhead City, Kingman, Lake Havasu City and Parker. The FTF La Paz/Mohave Region includes Legislative District 5. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)

Learn more at
[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/La-Paz-Mohave](https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/Regions/La-Paz-Mohave)