Every child should have the opportunity to attend early childhood education, so they may start attaining knowledge and at the same time making sure that child's physical, emotional and social well-being is balanced so the student will be ready for kindergarten."

Veronica De La O
Chair of FTF Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

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 Northwest Maricopa Region, there are 55,078 children (under age 6) with 20% living in poverty.

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

FTF Northwest Maricopa Region Strategic Priorities

Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

Families are a child's first and best teachers. FTF programs in the Northwest Maricopa 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. 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 Northwest Maricopa 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 Northwest Maricopa 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.
Quality First preschool helps Aguila boy find confidence

It took about two months,” Medina said. “Sometimes they would shift him back and forth between the classroom and the administrative office so he would get used to everyone. After a couple months Leo loved going to school to see his friends and teachers.”

Leo not only made friends in his class, he started speaking more to them in English.

The coping skills that Leo was given at Aguila Preschool helped lay a firm foundation for his learning, Medina said. After being in preschool most of the year and making progress, the COVID-19 pandemic forced families to bring their students home and attend school online. This was not an easy task for any child, let alone a preschooler. However, Leo was not swayed from his progress.

“He was excited to learn and read, and play games with his lessons,” Medina said.

As Leo’s first day of kindergarten approached, Medina was nervous her son would have problems starting school, but she shouldn’t have worried. Leo’s first day was a huge success.

“He really likes his teacher, Miss Darby, and loves playing outside at recess,” Medina said.

“I’m grateful for the programs of Quality First and First Things First that helped Leo start kindergarten with confidence.”

—Edi Medina, parent

Leo tells her he has seven friends he like to hang out with. There isn’t an ounce of shyness left and he is speaking in both English and Spanish very well. For Medina, this is a true story of success.

“I’m grateful for the programs of Quality First and First Things First that helped Leo start kindergarten with confidence,” she said.
FTF Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

The FTF Northwest 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 programs in this region include Quality First, oral health and home visitation.

FTF Northwest Maricopa SFY21 Total Regional Program Expenditures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality Child Care and Preschool</td>
<td>$6,268,917</td>
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<td>Strengthening Families</td>
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<td>Preventive Health</td>
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<td>Research and Evaluation</td>
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<td>Parent and Community Awareness</td>
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<td>Workforce Development and Training</td>
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<td>Coordinating Care</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$10,520,164</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FTF Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council and Staff

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Sherie Steele

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The FTF Northwest Maricopa Region lies entirely in Maricopa County and is densely populated in the east, but very sparsely populated in the west. It includes: six incorporated cities and towns — Peoria, El Mirage, Glendale, Surprise, Wickenburg and Youngtown; several unincorporated places — Aguila, Morristown, Sun City, Sun City West, Waddell and Wittmann; as well as small parts of the city of Phoenix. The FTF Northwest Maricopa Region includes Legislative districts 13, 15, 20, 21, 22, 29 and 30. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)

Learn more at FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Northwest-Maricopa