

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Yuma Region

IMPACT REPORT 2021



FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Yuma

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 Yuma Region, there are **17,983 children** (under age 6) with **26% living in poverty**.

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

“As both the City of Yuma Mayor and a father, I believe it is extremely important to ensure our youngest in the community have every opportunity to succeed in life. Actively participating in early childhood development and education from day one is key to building strong families, and strong families are a vital component to building strong communities.”

Douglas Nicholls

City of Yuma Mayor

FTF Yuma Region Strategic Priorities



Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

Families are a child's first and best teachers. FTF programs in the Yuma region give parents choices for how they want to support their child's health and learning. The region offers voluntary **home visiting** programs to 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 Yuma 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 living in the region can also apply to receive **college scholarships** to pursue an early education certification or degree. In addition, 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 Yuma region by funding **developmental and sensory screenings** to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues and help prevent later learning challenges. **Oral health screenings** are also offered to protect children against childhood tooth decay, a leading cause of school absences.



Home visitation helps Yuma mom keep her premature baby on track with his developmental milestones

On the day Teresa Garcia's baby was born, he weighed less than a quart of milk.

Nicolas, born at 29 weeks, weighed a pound and a half and Garcia, a mother of two teens, knew she would need some parental guidance this time around.

Garcia was concerned that baby Nicolas could have disabilities or developmental delays. He was in the newborn intensive care unit for two weeks, while his body learned to breathe on his own. While there, the NICU nurses told Garcia about the Healthy Families program, which provides parents with regular in-home visits from a trained parent coach, who offers in-home support, parenting education, hands-on creative activities that support healthy development, and shares community resources at no cost to qualifying families. They called her the next day and enrolled her in the program.

The First Things First Yuma Regional Partnership Council funds the home visitation program to help parents become their child's first and best teacher.

After Nicolas went home to his family, the home visits started immediately. At 4 months old, Nicolas was screened with the Ages and Stages Questionnaires tools to determine if he had any developmental delays. Results revealed a delay with his fine motor and problem solving skills. Nicolas wasn't capable of holding his toys, reaching out for items in front of him, looking at objects, putting them in his mouth, nor was he able to sit up.

"I already knew he was behind, but Healthy Families was able to provide me with tools and tell me what my child should be doing at a certain stage," Garcia said.

For the first two years of a premature child's life, development is measured at a child's corrected age — the age they would be if born on their original due date. So, to accurately track his development, Garcia learned to look at the typical development of babies about three months younger than he was.

Garcia learned how to support Nicolas through stimulating activities to enhance his facial movements and self-control, and his ability to recognize different textures and sounds. For example, she was given a sock with a bell to stimulate his hearing and see if he would follow the noise.

She also noticed how similar activities using pipe cleaners and baby wipe bags helped him learn how to grasp and touch objects.

Now at age 2, Nicolas is able to have conversations with simple sentences of two to five words, such as "I want to go outside, please."

"It was new to us, to hear him try have a conversation with us," Garcia said. "Nicolas is also able to express his emotions verbally or by showing facial expressions."

"I already knew he was behind, but Healthy Families was able to provide me with tools and tell me what my child should be doing at a certain stage."

—Teresa Garcia, parent

The parent educator also helped him with the milestone of eating on his own. Marlene, from Healthy Families showed Garcia how to keep track of when he could start eating solids and encouraged the mother to let him feed himself with a fork, spoons or his hands.

Having someone there to ask questions about his development was a key, Garcia said.

"Because of Healthy Families they ended up helping me get him up to his milestones," she said.

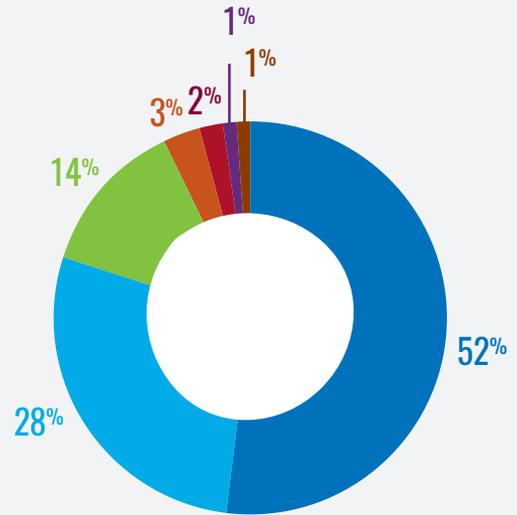
FTF Yuma Regional Partnership Council

The FTF Yuma 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, Parents as Teachers and Healthy Families.

FTF Yuma SFY21 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool	\$2,652,848
Strengthening Families	\$1,417,531
Preventive Health	\$614,352
Research and Evaluation	\$173,494
Workforce Development and Training	\$144,940
Parent and Community Awareness	\$99,135
Coordinating Care	\$57,007
Total	\$5,159,307



FTF Yuma Regional Partnership Council and Staff

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Mary Beth Turner

Vice Chair
Donald Vickers

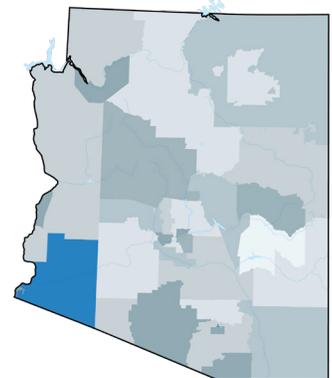
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*The **FTF Yuma Region** is defined as Yuma County, not including the lands belonging to the Cocopah Indian Tribe. The Arizona portion of the Fort Yuma Quechan Reservation is also located within the region along the Colorado River near the city of Yuma. The FTF Yuma Region includes Legislative Districts 4 and 13. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)*

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