

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Yuma Region

2022 Impact Report



From birth to age 5,
a child's brain develops more than
any other time in life.

90%

of a child's brain grows before kindergarten.

Early childhood matters.

First Things First (FTF) 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 Regional Key Impact Highlights

[State Fiscal Year 2022]



Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

2,632

Families of newborns received the Arizona Parent Kit, filled with tips and tools to help support their child's healthy development.

349

Families with young children participated in voluntary home visiting programs proven to reduce parental stress levels, increase connections to community supports, and improve children's cognitive, motor, behavioral and social-emotional development.



Quality Preschool and Child Care

1,978

Children attended preschools and child care programs participating in Quality First.

297

Children birth to age 5 received a Quality First scholarship to attend high-quality preschools and child care programs.



Preventive Health

1,977

Children received a screening to detect tooth decay, which left undetected and untreated could cause damage to permanent teeth, impair speech development and failure to thrive.

529

Children monitored to receive appropriate screenings to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues to prevent learning challenges later on.

Additional Strategies

149

Early childhood educators received college scholarships to improve their qualifications for working with infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

63

Parents and other caregivers participated in evidence-based trainings designed to improve knowledge of parenting practices and children's development.



Home visitation program helps Yuma boy live up to his legendary name

Karla Thomas says her son, Legend, has been catching up since day one. Born two months premature and weighing just over four pounds, Legend spent a month in the neonatal intensive care unit before Thomas was able to take him home.

“He was so small and underdeveloped,” Thomas said. “He couldn’t eat on his own. I had to teach him. He couldn’t suck, swallow and breathe at the same time. In the beginning he was being fed through a tube in his nose, and slowly we taught him how to be able to suck a bottle and swallow and breathe at the same time. By the time he left the hospital, we had taught him how to eat properly. He gained enough weight that he ended up weighing five pounds the day he left the hospital.”

Thomas wasn’t anticipating the challenges of a newborn who was born prematurely, but her adult daughter did. She signed up Legend and her mother with the Easterseals Blake Foundation home visitation program.

The First Things First Yuma Regional Council funds the program that provides personalized support that includes practical, hands-on activities and techniques that prompt early learning, knowledge and understanding of important developmental milestones.

“Once he came home, everyone from doctors and Easterseals were definitely watching closely to ensure he continued on the positive path,” Thomas said.

The home visitor from Easterseals Blake, Teri, has been a strong support, she said. At first the visits were weekly and the COVID-19 pandemic forced visits to be virtual.

“They’ve visited us since day one. They have been checking his vision, hearing, weight and growing pattern. Making sure that he is within normal range for a child of his age. Reassuring he is doing well and constantly checking cognitive and physical abilities.”

Every week, Teri encouraged Thomas to read books to Legend on a regular basis and have back and forth conversations with him.

“She told me to repeat what he says to encourage his talking and grow his vocabulary,” Thomas said. Recently Legend’s vocabulary exploded.

“Within the last three months, he began speaking four- to five-word sentences, using descriptive and advanced words. He’s able to tell me where he wants to go and what he wants to eat. He’s able to fully communicate with me.”

At some visits, Teri would suggest finger painting and ways to create puzzles out of household items or fill a plastic bottle with rice and beans and use it as a rattle.

“These were things that anyone can do,” Thomas said. “She goes over ‘this is where we should be’ and any time I bring up a concern, we go over it in our next session. She helps with research and provides suggestions. She’s amazing. Another thing that she does is she sets goals and revisits to see progress. It gives me something to shoot for and focus on what Legend should be working on.”

Now at age 3, Legend runs to the door and shouts, “Teri is here!” when she arrives. Recently, the home visitor recommended Legend attend a child care center for more social interaction with other children and Thomas also returned to work.

“At this point he is starting to be able to be with children and he loves kids,” Thomas said. “I look forward to him growing socially as well as everything else. We are at the stage where he’s learning to share and that is a challenge because he hasn’t been able to be around other children. While I love that he knows that I am his support and he comes to me for all of his needs, I want him to continue to be a little independent and I’m sure that will come with time.”

Today Legend is a healthy and loving boy.

“He is 3-years-old and into everything. He’s finding new things and creating new things. He is going to get through it and be able to meet his milestones,” Thomas said. “Through the support of the people around me he is able to be at a 3-year-old level or beyond. His name is Legend and I personally feel that he lives up to that name because of where he has been through and where he is at this point.”



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

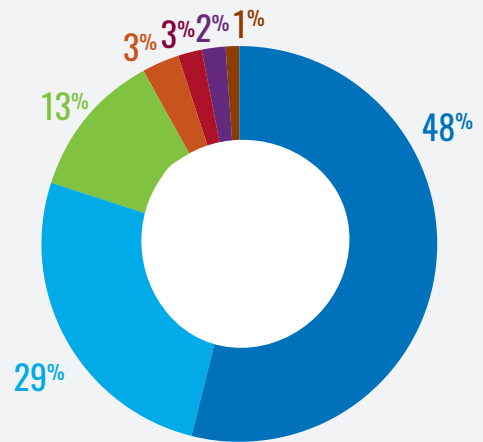
FTF Yuma Regional Partnership Council

FTF regional partnership councils are made up of volunteers who study the unique needs of the local community and inform 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 Parents as Teachers, Quality First and Healthy Families.

FTF Yuma SFY22 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool	\$2,270,043
Strengthening Families	\$1,367,182
Preventive Health	\$623,687
Research and Evaluation	\$148,947
Workforce Development and Training	\$139,887
Parent and Community Awareness	\$102,398
Coordination	\$47,041
Total	\$4,699,185



FTF Yuma Regional Partnership Council and Staff

Chair
Donald Vickers

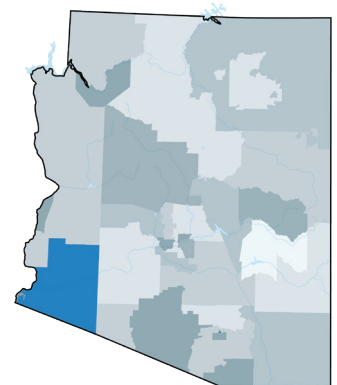
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The **FTF Yuma Region** is defined as Yuma County, not including the lands belonging to the Cocopah Indian Tribe. The Arizona portion of the Fort Yuma Quechan Reservation is also located within the region along the Colorado River near the city of Yuma.

Learn more at
FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Yuma