

FIRST THINGS FIRST Cochise Region 2020 Impact Report



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

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.

“Watching preschool children learn, play, interact and experience their new world makes us realize that everything they do is a critical part of their early education. First Things First helps to provide parents, families, caregivers and educators the resources and tools to make these early years the best they can be.”

Peter Huisking

Vice Chair of FTF Cochise Regional Partnership Council

FTF Cochise Regional Key Impact Highlights [Fiscal Year 2020]

Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

- 518** Families of newborns received the Arizona Parent Kit, filled with tips and tools to help support their child's healthy development.
- 106** 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 socio-emotional development.
- 64** Parents and other caregivers participated in evidence-based trainings designed to improve knowledge of parenting practices and children's development.

Quality Preschool and Child Care

- 1,098** Children attended preschools and child care programs participating in Quality First.
- 229** Children birth to age 5 received a Quality First scholarship to attend high-quality preschools and child care programs.

Preventive Health

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

Additional Strategies

3,297,504

views of Google and Facebook ads of Sesame Street's "Healthy Teeth, Healthy Me" campaign in the FTF Cochise Region to raise awareness about the importance of early childhood dental care and dental health benefits through Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS).



Parent educator helps Bisbee mom bond with infant daughter after recovering from life-threatening illness

At age 35, after several miscarriages and heartbreak, Delfina Saenz delivered a healthy baby girl named Esperanza in 2017. Saenz's joy of having a daughter felt bittersweet. During her pregnancy, Saenz developed a life-threatening disorder associated with preeclampsia, a serious complication of high blood pressure during pregnancy. The syndrome left Saenz physically weakened and unable to care for Esperanza after birth.

"Esperanza was induced for premature delivery because of the HELLP syndrome," said Saenz. "I was in and out of the hospital after delivery, and I couldn't walk or hold my daughter when I came back home. I was being treated with chemotherapy and steroids, so I couldn't breastfeed her."

Saenz and Esperanza moved in with Saenz's parents in Bisbee, who took care of Esperanza, while Saenz recuperated. During recovery, Saenz realized that she and Esperanza lacked a mother-daughter attachment. Esperanza responded to her grandmother as her caretaker.

"There was a lot of frustration," said Saenz. "I never got to initially bond with my daughter. I felt emotionally and physically detached. She was the only surviving baby out of 10 pregnancies. I worked so hard to get pregnant and stay pregnant, and then I couldn't be the mother the way I wanted to be a mother."

Saenz's friend recommended that she contact Parents as Teachers, a home visitation program that provides in-home parent coaching. The program is funded by the First Things First Cochise Regional Partnership Council. The free program provides a parent educator who makes home visits twice a month to work with parents on nutrition, child development, age-appropriate communication and discipline techniques. They also provide health, vision, hearing and social and emotional screenings and connect parents to resources.

"Home visitation is so important because of the rural nature of Cochise County," said Rainy Couchenour, a Parents as Teachers program supervisor. "The program provides important services that families might not be able to access because it's not in their area or families lack the ability to bring their children to services."

Couchenour started working with Saenz on 29 parenting behaviors that the PAT program uses in their evidence-based curriculum that would set Esperanza up for success in the classroom. Couchenour and Saenz got creative to overcome Saenz's physical challenges.

"She showed me how to talk and interact with Esperanza," said Saenz. "She would explain, then step back and encourage me to do it. It was nice to know she was there for reassurance. She encouraged me and would say, 'Just because everyone does it this way, doesn't mean you can't do it this way.' We figured out how I could interact with my daughter."

"She showed me how to talk and interact with Esperanza." - Delfina Saenz, first-time mother

Couchenour first evaluated Saenz for the 29 parenting behaviors, and then reevaluated her six months later.

"She did all 29 behaviors in 20 minutes of play with her daughter," Couchenour said.

Saenz got even more excited because Esperanza started to connect with her. "We were playing with a paper wrapping tube and balls, and she called me 'momma' for the first time," Saenz said. "I was so excited. It meant everything to me."

Now at age 3, Esperanza began attending a Head Start preschool for the first time in 2020 and as Saenz knows she is well-prepared to succeed.



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

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 Parents as Teachers, Quality First and Care Coordination Medical Home.

FTF Cochise FY20 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool

\$1,659,103

Strengthening Families

\$387,580

Preventive Health

\$362,576

Workforce Development and Training

\$74,117

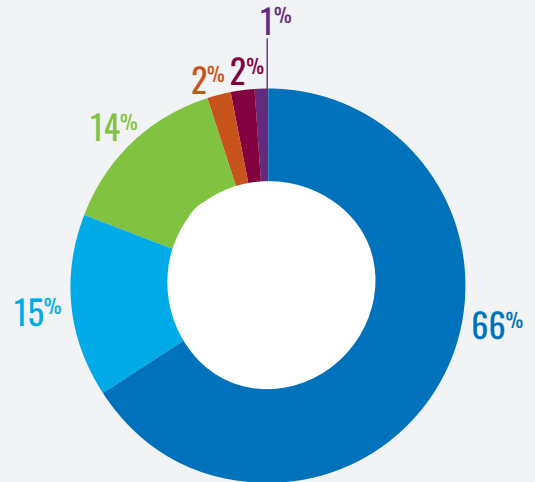
Research and Evaluation

\$73,258

Parent and Community Awareness

\$27,771

Total \$2,584,406



FTF Cochise Regional Partnership Council and Staff

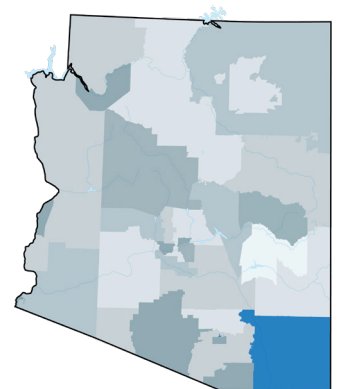
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*The **FTF Cochise Region** includes all of Cochise County and the northeastern corner of Pima County. The FTF Cochise Region includes Legislative District 14. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)*

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