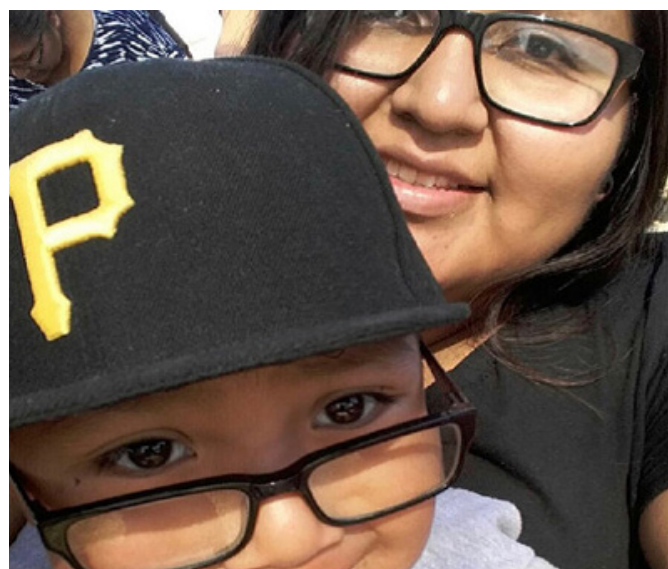


🍌 FIRST THINGS FIRST

Gila River Indian Community 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 Gila River Indian Community Region, there are **1,530 children** (under age 6).

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

“Our children are precious and amazing. Each child deserves every opportunity to discover their potential. I am thankful to those who started and who continue this extremely impactful work.”

Sandra Nasewytewa

Chair of FTF Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council

FTF Gila River Indian Community Regional Key Impact Highlights [Fiscal Year 2020]

Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

60 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.

Preventive Health

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

Quality Preschool and Child Care

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

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

4 Preschools and child care programs participated in Quality First, receiving coaching, quality improvement supports, health consultation and access to professional development.

Additional Strategies

2 Early childhood educators received college scholarships to improve their skills in working with infants, toddlers and preschoolers.



Home visitation program helps teen mom from Coolidge care for her daughter

Evelia Acuna found out she was pregnant at age 15. As the fourth of nine children, Acuna had experience caring for her younger siblings, but she felt unprepared to take on the full responsibility of her own child.

"I was overwhelmed," Acuna said. "I was 15, and I was barely still in high school. I was living with my boyfriend, because my mom couldn't provide for me."

Through referrals from Gila River Health Care, Acuna, who lives in Coolidge, signed up for the Well Child Family Care program when she was six months pregnant.

The First Things First Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council funds the Well Child Family Care program, formally named the Family Support Coordination, to provide support to teenage parents, ages 13 to 18 years old, living in the community. Young parents receive parent education about early childhood development, breast feeding, infant sleep safety, using car seats and other information. Their development specialist connects them to resources within the community, like AHCCCS and WIC benefits, and helps them to pursue a GED or high school diploma.

For Development Specialist Rochelle LodgePole, a parent educator in the program, the first step was building a relationship with Acuna. She didn't want to overwhelm Acuna with information, instead LodgePole let her know she was accepted and supported.

"We would talk, and I'd let her know she could do this and I had confidence in her," LodgePole said. "Then we started doing parent education through home visits. She was one of my youngest clients at the time, but she became very focused on being the best mom she could be. I was completely floored."

One of Acuna's goals is to finish high school and pursue a career. She was recently accepted into a three-year program to become a nursing assistant. Acuna takes nursing classes in the morning and high school classes in the afternoon.

After giving birth to her daughter, Alexandria, Acuna worked with LodgePole on learning how to care for her infant daughter, and how to care for herself while managing stress in her roles as a mother and student.

"She taught me how to cope whenever I got frustrated, like reevaluating situations," Acuna said. "She teaches me how to interact with my daughter and to do better things for her development. I learned to meet her needs better and try new things. These are simple things that I didn't know."

Now with Alexandria at 18 months old, Acuna likes to point at objects with her daughter and tell her the word. Acuna wants to prepare Alexandria for preschool so she can communicate with others. Acuna says the program has really helped her to learn how to better care for her daughter.

"She teaches me how to interact with my daughter and to do better things for her development." - Evelia Acuna, first-time mom

"I took care of my siblings," she said. "But what I'm learning now is different from what I used to do with my siblings. Now I understand developmental stages. I didn't know about those before, so it helps me. I want to teach Alex better things. I would have said I would have known how to take care of her, but I didn't. Now I am learning to do better."



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

FTF Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council

The FTF Gila River Indian Community 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 and Home Visitation/Parenting Education, Baby Smarts Program.

FTF Gila River Indian Community FY20 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool

\$304,039

Strengthening Families

\$217,245

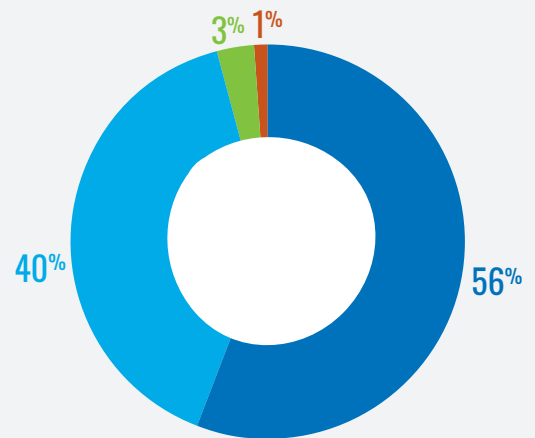
Research and Evaluation

\$15,805

Preventive Health

\$6,708

Total \$543,796



FTF Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council and Staff

Chair

Sandra Nasewytewa

Vice Chair

Elisia Manuel

Members

Priscilla Antone

Deborah Chadwick

Anna Edwards

Gleebah Enos

Priscilla Foote

Kami Hart

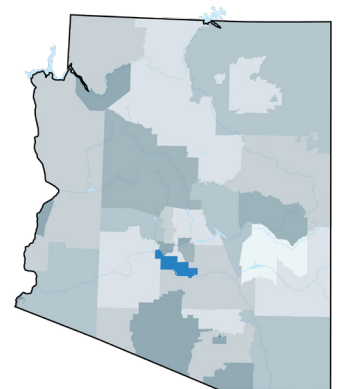
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Geographically, the **FTF Gila River Indian Community** is located on 372,000 acres of land in south-central Arizona. The community lies south of the cities of Phoenix, Tempe and Chandler, and north of Casa Grande, and its east to west borders run from Coolidge to Tolleson. The FTF Gila River Indian Community Region includes Legislative Districts 8 and 27. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)

Learn more at

[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Gila-River-Indian-Community](https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/Regions/Gila-River-Indian-Community)