

FIRST THINGS FIRST
La Paz/Mohave 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 La Paz/Mohave Region, there are **13,469 children** (under age 6) with **31% living in poverty**.

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



I have been a regional partnership council member for as long as First Things First has been in the region. I've witnessed first-hand how our grantees and community partners have worked together over the last 12 years to build a thriving early childhood system so our most at-risk families have the support they need to face life's challenges."



Pastor Jose Garcia

Chair of FTF La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council

FTF La Paz/Mohave Regional Key Impact Highlights [Fiscal Year 2020]



Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

1,134

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

38

Infants and toddlers involved with the child welfare system benefitted from coordinated efforts to meet their unique developmental needs.



Quality Preschool and Child Care

1,235

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

300

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

229

Early childhood educators attended a training or session to improve their skills in working with infants, toddlers and preschoolers in child care programs.



Preventive Health

178

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

Additional Strategies

9,196

Adults attended parenting activities to learn more about the importance of early childhood development.

163

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.



Professional development program in Lake Havasu City provides teacher opportunity to help grow babies' brains

On her first day as a formally credentialed early educator, Melissa Palacios arrived early to work at Little People's Day Care in Lake Havasu City and celebrated two years of hard work with one of her students.

"There was a little girl being dropped off as I was opening the school, and we both did a little happy dance," Palacios said. "It felt amazing that I had accomplished something I worked so hard on."

The Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential is a nationally recognized credential in early childhood education that focuses on building an educator's knowledge and skills in working with young children ages birth to 5. In the La Paz/Mohave region, the CDA is part of the Professional Development for Early Childhood Professionals Strategy funded by the First Things First La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council.

The FTF La Paz/Mohave Regional Council currently works with Early Childhood Education (ECEd) Associates, Inc., along with Mohave Community College to create a pathway for early childhood educators to earn their CDA Credential.

"Anyone working at a preschool should pursue it," Palacios said. "It's a wonderful feeling to feel better prepared to do my job of helping to grow baby brains."

Earning a CDA often involves a minimum two-year commitment of courses, trainings, a portfolio review and observation. The educators cover topics that include cognitive, social/emotional, physical and language development. They also cover health, safety, nutrition and engaging families as well as many other related topics.

Palacios is the lead teacher in the toddler room, which goes up to about age 3. She said that she was able to apply what she learned in her courses into her classroom and watch the positive changes that resulted.

"When a child is having an issue with something, positive reinforcement can really help to redirect their attention."
- Melissa Palacios, early childhood educator

"I didn't realize how important having a schedule in the classroom is or all of the different styles of learning there are for children," she said.

Palacios said that keeping even young children on a schedule or routine helps to create good habits and builds a positive learning environment, so that they are prepared to start school when they enter kindergarten.

She also builds partnerships with parents, with debriefings every morning at drop-off to gauge the child's mood and at every pick up to talk about the child's day. The strategies she learned in building better communication with parents as part of her coursework means that she's able to gain a parent's trust and have productive conversations about developmental topics.

"When a child is having an issue with something, positive reinforcement can really help to redirect their attention," Palacios said.

From a workforce development perspective, the skills learned through earning a CDA not only means being a better teacher, but being a better employee. Palacios said she has learned how to run a classroom and take on bigger responsibilities at work.

"We have children come to us at age 1 and leave when they are 5," she said. "It's wonderful having an opportunity to grow future minds."

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

FTF La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council

The FTF La Paz/Mohave 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 Court Teams, Professional Development and Quality First.

FTF La Paz/Mohave FY20 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool

\$1,845,479

Strengthening Families

\$1,127,899

Workforce Development and Training

\$345,378

Research and Evaluation

\$107,224

Parent and Community Awareness

\$89,574

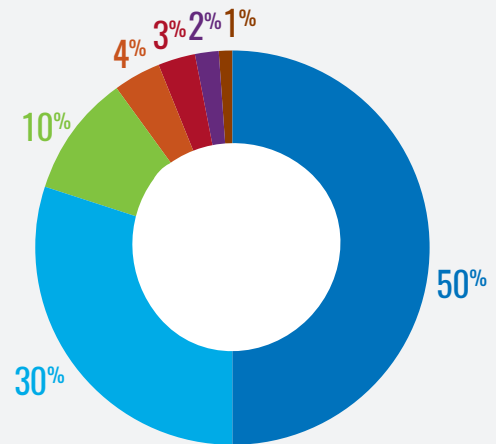
Preventive Health

\$73,386

Coordinating Care

\$59,957

Total \$3,648,897



FTF La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council and Staff

Chair
Jose Garcia

Vice Chair
Christy Rail

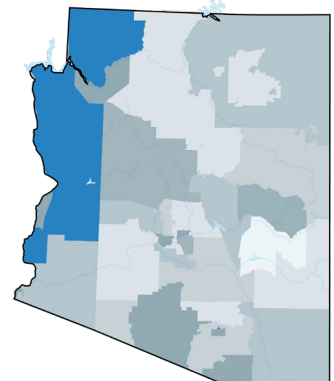
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The **FTF La Paz/Mohave Region** is defined as the combined area of the two counties, not including the lands belonging to the Colorado River Indian Tribes, the Hualapai Tribe and the Kaibab Paiute Tribe. The region does include the Arizona portion of the land belonging to the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe. The region covers about 16,700 square miles, with its northern end separated from the rest by the Grand Canyon. The communities of the region are diverse in population density and in demographics, and are often isolated by large areas of unpopulated land. People and services are concentrated in larger places in the region such as Bullhead City, Kingman, Lake Havasu City and Parker. The FTF La Paz/Mohave Region includes Legislative District 5. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)

Learn more at
[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/La-Paz-Mohave](https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/Regions/La-Paz-Mohave)