



EARLY CHILDHOOD TASK FORCE

ARIZONA EARLY CHILDHOOD MODEL SYSTEM—DESIRED OUTCOMES, CONDITIONS, SYSTEM ROLES AND OPPORTUNITIES

*System Roles in red reflect the Task Force recommendations on Priority Roles for FTF.

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| <p>FAMILY SUPPORT</p> <p>All families have the information, services, and support they need to help their children achieve their fullest potential.</p> | <p>Families receive high quality, diverse, and relevant information and education on the importance of the early years, child development, health, and early education in a variety of formats and from a variety of sources.</p> <p>Families have easy access to information on the quality and availability of programs and services.</p> | <p>Information and Education for Families - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for the development and coordinated dissemination of high quality, diverse, and relevant information and education on the importance of the early years, child development, health, early education, and related resources for families, providers, partners, and the public</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality information and support to effectively receive information to navigate the system of services and supports and access appropriate services, including follow-up – Improve and streamline how families get access to information about quality programs and services. Provide parents and caregivers with the tools to better understand how to navigate the early childhood and related systems, access services, and overcome barriers. • Provide family advocacy centers at elementary schools with parent research-based information. FTF can use this to extend outreach to FFN. With proper branding can provide information to newborn parents. • Opportunity to use local schools as health clinic and as a “hub” for families as the “go to” for information on services/resources in the community. Schools are a trusted source of information • Opportunity to explore/connect with local hospitals to distribute and connect families with information. • Communication strategy aimed at Family Friend and Neighbor care providers informing on availability of supports through Family Support strategy. • Biggest consistent issue with grantees is transportation for | <p>There is a continuum of family support services and programs available throughout Arizona funded by various state agencies and partners. However, the level of funding does not meet the complex needs of all families who could benefit from the services.</p> <p>Home visitation is an effective family support strategy that is available throughout Arizona in virtually every county and tribal community. Although home visitation models vary, all programs are designed to improve the lives of at-risk children and families through regular home visits. Target populations often served include high poverty, teen parents, and grandparents raising grandchildren.</p> <p>The state agencies come together regularly to coordinate home visitation services across Arizona and include First Things First, Arizona Departments of Education, Child Safety, Economic Security and AHCCCS. The Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visitation grant builds on the home visitation programs that are funded by the Department of Health, First Things First and Department of Child Safety and Early Head Start programs, serving nearly 20,000 families.</p> <p>Specifically, FTF invests nearly \$19M across 20 regions in evidenced based home visitation programs serving over 6,000 families. In addition, several</p> |

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| | <p>Families have access to a variety of high quality, culturally responsive, and affordable services, supports, and community resources, which promote their child’s development (physical, cognitive, speech and language, and social-emotional) and health.</p> | <p>Supports and Services for Families - Convene partners, provide leadership, provide funding, and advocate for development, enhancement, and sustainability of a variety of high quality, culturally responsive, and affordable services, supports, and community resources for young children and their families.</p> | <p>families: Advocate for increased (frequent) regional transit services for families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize families and children most in need, high risk and vulnerable populations’ access to care and underserved areas, including children with disabilities and developmental delays. Expand outreach to foster families to include faith-based groups, promote and support foster parent training. Work with local city government to sponsor specific recognition days. Due to growing opioid addiction culture, specific family support needs to address the growing grandparent raising grandchildren trend. • Scale and impact on families – There is a need to expand quality and evidence based services and programs for families and reaching families most in need of and who do not have access. • Leverage funding and coordination of family services – Capitalize on Medicaid reimbursement to support expansion of home visitation services throughout the state and provide an evidenced based service to families, particularly at risk families. | <p>counties have coordinated outreach and referral efforts where the organizations implementing home visitation come together to develop procedures for coordinating outreach and referrals to increase families access to timely and appropriate services. Discussions have occurred to explore leveraging Medicaid for home visitation programs.</p> <p>Casey Family Programs is initiating a collective impact approach that brings together stakeholders to address the critical issues facing Arizona’s vulnerable children and families. A survey and feasibility assessment report, called Improving Safety and Well- being for Arizona’s Children is being used to consider viable strategies for integrating safety, well-being and permanency, opportunities for cross-sector collaboration through the collective impact approach.</p> <p>Infants are the largest group of children to enter the child welfare system and therefore at the greatest risk for compromised development. The Court Team model works to increase awareness among all of those who work with maltreated infants and toddlers about the negative impact of abuse and neglect and best practices in system implementation to move these children as quickly as possible to safe and stable care. FTF regionally supports four (4) Court Teams in urban, rural and tribal communities.</p> <p>In addition, the continuum of family support strategies include parenting outreach and awareness which provides families of young children information, materials and connection to resources and activities that support an increase in literacy practices in community-based settings; Parenting Education through various models that provide parenting skills training and knowledge such as child development, parent-child communication, and managing difficult behaviors; Family Resource Centers, an evidence-informed information and support model delivered in community-based centers, school districts and health clinics offering parents and caregivers information, resource and referral support to increase family self-sufficiency and care giver confidence in raising their</p> |
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| | | | | <p>children; and Home Visitation as previously identified.</p> <p>Much of the Family Support work in Arizona is implemented and facilitated by community-based non-profits and local government and supported by philanthropic partners. Several regionally based collaboratives in the rural and tribal regions exist to coordinate services and supports available to families among the family support service providers. In addition, in Maricopa County, the Family Support Alliance, and in Pima County, the Southern Arizona Family Support was formed to deepen organizational relationships in order to benefit family's access to the right service at the right time, and reduce duplication of service.</p> |
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| HEALTH: All children have access to high quality preventive and continuous health care, including physical, mental, oral, and nutritional health. | Arizona has enough high quality, affordable, comprehensive health care services to meet the needs of children and families in all communities throughout the state. | Supply of Health Care Services - Collaborate with partners to assess and expand the supply of high quality, affordable, comprehensive health care services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for innovative efforts to increase health workers in areas where there are workforce shortages. Doing so will increase health access for communities in shortage areas. • Make better connection with work being done on certification of community health workers. • Look at hospital residency programs to address shortages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State efforts are underway to address workforce challenges, but resources and support are needed. |
| | Children and families have access to high quality, affordable health care coverage and services, including services that contribute to healthy births. | Access to Quality Health Care Coverage and Services - Collaborate with partners to increase access to high quality health care services (including oral health and mental health) and affordable health care coverage for young children and their families. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to understand tribal infrastructure to support care coordination. • There is a need to increase the health literacy of families so they can effectively advocate within the health system for timely, appropriate, and coordinated care for their children. • There is a need to continue to increase insurance coverage and ensure that coverage programs such as Medicaid and CHIP have strong benefits for children. • Continue efforts to improve children’s oral health. • Create a mental health referral system network. • Draw down and make smart investments with resources that are available to the state to address children’s health. Leverage flexibility within Medicaid reimbursement to help support services such as home visitation, physical health, and mental health services, particularly at risk families. Work with AHCCCS on issues affecting children. • Access to health care remains a challenge in rural and tribal communities. Issues around transportation, workforce, and local capacity create barriers to care for children in rural and tribal communities. As the health system continue to change, agencies need to adjust to new health system realities and help families navigate. • Explore telemedicine approaches to address access to care and how to build the capacity of local areas to use it. Improve education and build the capacity of primary care | <p>Discussions have been occurring about leveraging Medicaid for home visitation. A few tribes may use Medicaid to support their home visitation programs. Partnerships between AHCCCS and Arizona Early Intervention Program and Department of Child Safety to better support children with disabilities and children in the child welfare system are in place. AHCCCS has a proposal in for funding known as Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment (DSRIP) to support this work.</p> <p>Arizona recently restored its CHIP program, KidsCare, but there are many unknowns on the horizon for CHIP, Medicaid and the Marketplaces. Arizona has the highest percentage of children enrolled in the Affordable Care Act marketplaces.</p> <p>Federally funded Navigators at the Alliance of Community Health Centers and University of Arizona Center for Rural Health are engaged in outreach and enrollment efforts targeting the Marketplace (approximately \$1.5 million for the entire state). First Things First released a \$50,000 grant for awareness, coordination and outreach activities to increase enrollment for children. The grant went to Children’s Action Alliance and the dollars have been matched by local health foundations.</p> <p>Care coordination is increasingly recognized as a valuable service for families that improves outcomes and reduces costs. Various pediatric and</p> |

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| | | | <p>providers/pediatricians about early childhood health and development.</p> | <p>family practices may implement care coordination models. However, there are challenges with capacity, financing, and varying practices. AHCCCS's DSRIP proposal includes a focus on children at risk for behavioral health needs and the foster system includes care coordination as a key component. Care coordination is funded by 7 FTF regional councils at \$3M for SFY17 with partnerships with various health providers including hospitals and federally qualified health clinics.</p> <p>AHCCCS and tribal nations are leading some work around access to healthcare through a medical home model. IHS is a key provider for tribal communities and more work is needed to coordinate care across the continuum.</p> <p>Meaningful progress has been made to reduce early childhood tooth decay. However, oral health continues to experience many challenges associated with access, quality care, and affordability of services.</p> <p>There are several groups across Arizona currently working on new efforts to improve oral health for children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Arizona Oral Health Coalition (AOHC) is a new statewide group working to improve oral health policy statewide. AOHC policy priorities include advocating for an adult Medicaid benefit, improving screening in schools, strengthening surveillance and data, and securing Medicaid reimbursement for hygienists who are performing fluoride varnishes. • FTF currently funds preventive oral health programs in 11 regions totaling \$4M for SFY17 using a multi-pronged approach designed to promote good oral health practices and promote the dental home. • The Arizona American Indian Oral Health Initiative is a statewide partnership between AZ tribal nations to address health disparities among Native Americans. The group has focused on engaging tribal councils in prioritizing oral health. <p>A Senate oral health workgroup convenes to discuss policy around oral health. In the past, the group has successfully pushed for affiliated practice hygienists, teledentistry, and a Medicaid benefit for adults in the long-term care population.</p> |
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| | Families, those who serve young children and their families, and communities promote and support good nutrition and active lifestyles for Arizona’s children. | Nutrition and Physical Activity - Collaborate with partners to support improved nutrition and increased age/developmentally appropriate physical activity levels among young children. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better leverage existing activities on nutrition/obesity prevention occurring through partners. Food security - farm to school, farm to hospital, school gardens, community farms/gardens, traditional practices and knowledge. | FTF is a member of several community partnerships working at a systems level on food security and obesity prevention such as the Hunger Advisory Council, Food Desert Summit Steering Committee, and the Hunger Action Learning Team of the Preventive Health Collaborative. |
| | Health care for young children is coordinated via a medical and dental home. | Medical and Dental Homes - Collaborate with partners to increase access to medical and dental homes for young children and their families. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the quality of care and ensure parents are attending well child visits. | <p>FTF requires that all care coordination grantees are moving towards a medical home model. In recent years, there has been greater momentum for the health system to transition towards a medical home model. This is due to changing payment mechanisms that look to reimburse providers for the quality of services.</p> <p>FTF is looking to strengthen standards for oral health grantees so that children have a dental home. This is a challenge in provider shortage areas. At a system level, FTF is a member of the Arizona Oral Health Coalition and working to increase the accessibility of oral health care for children statewide. FTF is also a member of the oral health workgroup in the legislature and actively provides information and updates based on grantee observations and trends.</p> |
| | All children are provided access to early periodic screening and diagnosis to identify physical, mental, and developmental health issues and, if necessary, follow-up treatment/services are provided. | Early Screening and Intervention – Collaborate with partners to increase awareness of and access to a continuum of information, support, and services for families and their children who have or are at risk of having developmental, physical, and/or mental health issues. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with Arizona Academy of Pediatricians, pediatric and family practices to ensure children are receiving appropriate screenings during well visits and appropriately referred for evaluation and connected to appropriate services and treatment. Partner with school districts’ Child Find programs and provide support for those that are not determined eligible and have a need. There needs to be an improvement within the Child Find program; currently it can take 4-5 times to qualify. Also, once qualified the services aren’t always accessible. Explore Transportation to access services | <p>Through the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems federal grant, FTF has been convening work groups and trainings to improve the rates of quality early screening at a statewide level. While the grant ended in 2016, the workgroup has agreed to continue to work on enhancing early screening and intervention pathways for children and families.</p> <p>Outside of FTF, AHCCCS is engaged in a performance improvement plan to increase quality screenings conducted through the Medicaid program. FTF partners at the early intervention program are also looking to streamline the evaluation and enrollment of children at a systems level. There is interest in the community in learning more about the Help Me Grow</p> |

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| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the opportunity of who can navigate and provide follow up • Opportunity for schools to serve as community hub | model and how it might apply to Arizona. |

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| <p>EARLY LEARNING:</p> <p>All children have access to high quality, culturally responsive early care and education that promotes their optimal development.</p> | <p>There is a comprehensive early care and education system that is aligned both across the spectrum of settings and with the full continuum of the educational system.</p> | <p>Early Care and Education System Development and Implementation - Convene partners and provide leadership in the development and implementation of a comprehensive early care and education system that is aligned both across the spectrum of settings and with the full continuum of the educational system.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage and coordinate other resources such as the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), private and philanthropic sector investments to increase quality and access. | <p>The Quality First (QF) Advisory Subcommittee convened in 2015/2016 to review the QF model recognized leveraging resources and coordination as critical areas for QF and made specific recommendations in these areas particularly focused on coordination and alignment across the state agencies and Head Start. A focused effort is underway between FTF and the Department of Economic Security (DES) to align and leverage CCDBG funding to increase the number of children with access to high quality early care and education programs.</p> <p>The 2014 reauthorization of the CCDBG Act was designed to help States advance improvements to the quality of child care in order to promote the healthy social-emotional, cognitive and physical development of participating children with a specific emphasis on ensuring that low-income and vulnerable children can access high-quality care. The reauthorization added a provision that States must also develop and implement strategies to increase the supply and improve the quality of child care services for the following: (1) children in underserved areas; (2) infants and toddlers; (3) children with disabilities; and (4) children who receive care during non-traditional hours.</p> <p>Opportunities with Arizona and National philanthropic organizations are also under development to increase access to quality early care and education.</p> <p>The Arizona Early Childhood Alliance (AZECA), comprised of early childhood system leaders represent the united voice of the early childhood community in advocating for early childhood programs and services. One of the top priorities for AZECA is for the State to implement a tiered reimbursement system for early care and education providers at quality levels.</p> <p>New Head Start Program Performance Standards (2016) require that Head Start participate in their state’s quality and improvement and rating</p> |
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| | There are health, safety, and quality standards for early care and education; support for attaining the standards; and a process for monitoring them. | Quality Early Care and Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for the development and implementation of quality standards for early childhood care and education programs and related curricula and assessments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the quality of early care and education – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve the overall quality of all licensed and regulated child care providers. ○ Address the Quality First (Arizona’s quality improvement and rating system) waitlist so all programs who want to participate are able to. ○ Quality improvement efforts should focus on more than educating staff, but also ensure that administrative practices are being improved in order to address staff retention. • Access to and cost of care – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Children need access to early care and education programs regardless of where they live and this is particularly critical in rural and tribal areas. ○ To help support improving access to early care and education the child care subsidy program needs to be expanded. ○ Focus on increasing access to high quality in rural and tribal communities where demand exceeds capacity and for target populations such as children in foster care or with special needs. • Coordinate with the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) to work more closely with Arizona tribes and nations on meeting and implementing new requirements. • Children in the child welfare system – Children in foster care are a particularly vulnerable group of children who have disparities in terms of school readiness, later academic and societal outcomes. With the significant number of out of home placements, a significant number of children 0-5 in the foster care system are accessing child care through child care subsidies. Children in the child welfare system and receiving | <p>systems and state education data systems (exception for American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start).</p> <p>Nearly 50% of licensed and regulated programs are participating in Quality First (QF) with almost 70% of the programs achieving quality levels. Recently, a QF Advisory Subcommittee was convened to review the QF model and present recommendations to the FTF board for strategy, model, and/or policy changes to enhance participation in QF and contribute to the system goal of reaching statewide scale. FTF with the state agency and system partners are working towards implementing the recommendations.</p> <p>Quality First includes standards for administrative practices that include staff education, retention, curriculum development, child assessment, child-staff ratios, and maximum group sizes.</p> <p>Arizona currently receives more than \$118 million per year in CCDF funds which are used in a number of ways, including ensuring that low-income working families have access to safe, reliable child care (which may reduce instances of abuse or neglect because children are not left to be cared for in unsafe environments), and to provide child care for families providing temporary placement to children in the child welfare system (such as foster families and relatives). In 2015 28,293 children were served through the child care subsidy program.</p> <p>First Things First has funded Quality First Scholarships throughout Arizona for low income children since 2009. In SFY16 9,250 infants, toddlers, and preschools accessed high quality early learning with the help of QF Scholarship in the amount of nearly \$34.8M. Arizona benefits from \$124M in Head Start and Early Head Start dollars supporting 20,987 children birth to age 5.</p> <p>In regards to quality early care and education, currently 11% of children receiving DES subsidy are in a program that has achieved a quality rating in</p> |
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| | | | <p>child care subsidies need access to high quality early care and education. This includes having teachers who are well-trained in trauma-informed care and using evidence based practice that facilitate trust and security.</p> | <p>Quality First or are nationally accredited. The reimbursement rate for DES subsidy is not aligned with the cost of providing quality early care and education, thus quality programs typically charge a co-payment (the difference between the DES subsidy rate and the tuition) which may not be affordable for families.</p> <p>First Things First held a Tribal Consultation in 2013 in which Quality First was discussed. Tribal leaders expressed the need to align QF standards with regulation of other tribal program standards such as Head Start and CCDF. This is an area in which coordination is still necessary.</p> <p>State partners and AZECA are engaging in discussion and exploring the best strategies to support children in the child welfare system to have access to high quality early care and education. This includes changes to Quality First as mentioned previously through the recommendations of the Quality First Advisory Subcommittee, financing mechanisms and leveraging CCDBG funding and requirements.</p> <p>Child maltreatment during infancy and early childhood has been shown to negatively affect child development, including brain and cognitive development, attachment, social emotional development, and academic achievement. First Things First has prioritized an evidence informed early childhood mental health consultation strategy, (funded in 11 regions, \$3.6M in SFY16 and expanded through the Department of Education’s Preschool Development Grant). Mental Health Consultation supports early childhood teachers in supporting the social emotional development of young children and to effectively address challenging behaviors.</p> |
| | <p>Arizona has enough high quality, culturally responsive, affordable early care and education programs and settings to meet</p> | <p>Quality, Access, and Affordability of Regulated Early Care and Education Settings - Convene partners, provide leadership, and</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensing requirements do not align with quality – The State's child care licensing requirements are intended to ensure the basic health and safety of children. Requirements for staff-child ratios, group size, and training requirements for providers are not aligned with best practices that support quality early care and education. For many parents (and | <p>While there have been discussions in regards to changing child care licensing regulations to support best practices and quality environments the child care licensing rules have not been opened to allow for changes. Department of Health and FTF meet regularly and have identified opportunities to align and leverage resources to reduce redundancy; however, change in rule is necessary to bring further alignment to the</p> |

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| | <p>the needs of children and families in all communities throughout the state.</p> <p>Children and families have access to high quality, culturally responsive, affordable early care and education programs where they live and work.</p> <p>Families have a choice of schedules (part-day or full-day, part-year or full-year), type of provider, and type of setting.</p> | <p>provide funding for increased availability of and access to high quality, regulated, culturally responsive, and affordable early care and education programs.</p> | <p>professionals) these requirements are often viewed as the "markers" of adequate care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tribal Child Care Standards—Align standards for federally supported child care and state supported child care standards with quality standards. • For tribes without licensing, encourage them to develop licensing standards for self-regulation. • Universally apply the Kindergarten Development Inventory (KDI) across the state. The KDI provides the opportunity to annually review aggregate data trends for new kindergarten classes across the state. • Facilitate the development of model early care and education centers at high schools; Opportunity to partner with school districts to build a continuum of services to include program for early childhood | <p>early care and education system.</p> <p>In regards to the 2014 CCDBG reauthorization, there are additional standards required for programs that accept child care subsidy. DHS Licensing and DES Child Care Administration have an agreement for DHS licensing surveyors to monitor the additional standards required during annual licensing visits. While this supports the state in compliance with CCDBG, programs that accept DES subsidy must adhere to higher standards than programs that do not accept subsidy.</p> <p>First Things First held a Tribal Consultation in 2013 in which Quality First was discussed. Tribal leaders expressed the need to align QF standards with regulation of other tribal program standards such as Head Start and CCDF. This is an area in which coordination is still necessary.</p> <p>The Kindergarten Developmental Inventory (KDI) is intended to be a voluntary observational assessment used to help inform teachers and families about a child’s learning. The KDI would be utilized in classrooms within 45-60 days after the start of kindergarten. It is intended to assess a child’s “best fit” on a developmental scale ranging from preschool to grades beyond kindergarten using 12-15 indicators that represent all developmental domains.</p> <p>The Department of Education is leading the development of the KDI and it is currently in the field test stage with about 45 kindergarten through third grade teachers throughout the state. The goal is to have the KDI ready for implementation for the 2017-2018 school year.</p> <p>The state approved assessment for early childhood is Teaching Strategies Gold. School district special education programs are required to use Teaching Strategies Gold as the ongoing progress monitoring tool. Many Head Start and some other early care and education programs use Teaching strategies Gold, however, this is not a universal child assessment</p> |

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| | | | | <p>tool.</p> <p>Ongoing progress monitoring is a component of the Quality First rating, early care and education programs are to implement ongoing progress monitoring as a component of their program.</p> |
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| | | <p>Quality of Family, Friend, and Neighbor Early Care and Education Settings - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding to improve the quality of culturally responsive early care and education provided by family, friends, and neighbors.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support family, kinship and neighbor care in providing quality care for children. | <p>The Alliance for Family Friend and Neighbor Child Care (AFFNCC) was formed in August 2011 to build a collaborative Alliance of family, friend and neighbor partners with the interest and commitment to serve this population of child care providers and the children they serve through an integrated system of services.</p> <p>Currently FTF funds Family, Friend and Neighbor strategies in 10 regions, totaling \$3.6M for SFY17.</p> <p>Because FFN providers are unregulated it is through community outreach that they are identified. FFN providers are a target population for participation in the Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network. As FFN providers become members of the Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry (Registry), the identification of FFN providers becomes easier, and thus, services are able to be targeted in a more efficient way.</p> |

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| <p>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:</p> <p>All early childhood education and health professionals are well prepared, highly skilled, and compensated commensurate with their education and experience.</p> | <p>Arizona has enough culturally diverse early childhood professionals working in a variety of capacities to meet the needs of Arizona’s children and families in all communities throughout the state.</p> <p>Early childhood professionals meet specified educational/professional development requirements and continue their professional development throughout their careers.</p> <p>There are sufficient educational opportunities to meet the needs of early childhood professionals throughout Arizona.</p> <p>Early childhood professionals throughout Arizona have access to the education</p> | <p>Professional Development System - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for the development and enhancement of an early childhood professional development system that addresses availability, accessibility, affordability, quality, and articulation.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued emphasis on the development of Arizona’s committed early childhood professionals is necessary in order to address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The lack of an adequately and appropriately trained professional workforce. ○ The need to provide higher-caliber teachers for early childhood programs, particularly those who serve high risk, vulnerable, and minority populations. ○ Increase the skills of caregivers across the mixed service delivery system, including those in regulated environments (licensed centers and homes, certified homes, Tribal regulated programs, and programs regulated by the military) and family, friend, and neighbor care. (Proactively include family home care and unregulated providers in the professional development system.) ○ Coordination of entry points for professional development across regions. • Increased coordination and alignment with Institutes of Higher Education—a seamless pathway for degree completion is important for effective use of funding, bringing individuals into the workforce and ensuring coursework that is taken is applicable to degree completion. This includes tribal community colleges. • Alignment of PD with the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies in order to understand the types of topics that are currently available as well as the level of depth within each topic (Core Knowledge Areas) • Increased focus on professional development for professionals working with children 0-3. Increased focus on pathway ensuring infant/toddler courses are included in core curriculum. Related to college pathway; infant/toddler coursework be part of the core coursework. Difficulty of finding qualified instructors that | <p>The infrastructure needed to support the early childhood workforce includes state standards for programs and children, effective literacy practices, workforce competencies, career lattice, and the technological infrastructure to capture data about the education and professional development of the workforce.</p> <p>FTF staffs the Professional Development Work Group (PDWG) which has the responsibility for strengthening the early childhood workforce. Participation in the workgroup includes early childhood professionals from a variety of roles in the field and represents urban, rural, and Tribal communities throughout Arizona. Continuing work of the PDWG includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development, launch, and continuing implementation review of the AZ Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network that ensures consistent standards/competencies and career pathways for the workforce as well as a database to support the ongoing professional development of the early childhood workforce. ○ Development and implementation of the Current Practices inventory to support alignment of college curriculum to the statewide workforce knowledge and competencies which ensures a common standard from which to make decisions about curriculum and articulation agreements. <p>In alignment with the work of the PDWG, FTF funds the Registry and College Scholarships which supports the improvement of professional skills for those providing care and education to children 5 and younger through a web-based system that enables early childhood professionals and those interested in a career in early education to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Keep a record of their experience, education, professional development and credentials in a central location 2) Apply for college scholarships and track their certificate/degree achievement, and |

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| | and ongoing professional development required to work in the setting of their choice and facilitate their professional growth. | | <p>aligns with Pima Community College’s standards and their accrediting body.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify continued professional development opportunities (through the Registry) to include best place to work practices to retain employees. • Provide a pathway for seasoned teachers to pursue a Master’s degree. • Invite lending institutions to the ECE field. These partnerships would help lenders understand First Things First and the early childhood field strategies in building highly qualified early childhood teachers/child care centers. • Finding and highlighting success stories related to retention. Use public awareness goal to publicize this. • Partner with Intertribal Council of AZ to create statewide Tribal recruitment program to train/develop Tribe specific specialists. | <p>Find and register for community-based professional development opportunities.</p> <p>College degree attainment (at minimum a Bachelor’s degree) is the recommendation of the Institutes of Medicine as part of a comprehensive early childhood professional development system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DES (through CCDBG), First Things First, and ADE through Preschool Development Grant (PDG) fund college coursework so that early childhood professionals can increase their education. • DES funds early childhood college coursework that leads to a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential and certificate of completion. • First Things First college scholarships support the CDA assessment fees, associate degree completion and Bachelor’s degree completion. • ADE PDG college scholarships support Bachelor degree completion, post Bac completion, and Master’s degree completion. <p>Professional Development is also funded by DES, FTF, and ADE. All state agencies have agreed to align the professional development funded with the workforce knowledge and competencies and ensure that all training is entered in and accessed through the Registry. In addition, the state agencies are meeting to ensure coordination of training so as to build upon each other, rather than duplicate efforts.</p> <p>The workforce Registry will produce data that will be valuable in understanding the landscape of professional development that will support a movement towards a more coordinated system for professionals. We will soon be able to look where professional development offerings are lacking, what topics might need additional focus, and to what levels are professionals advancing.</p> |

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| | | | | <p>The development and implementation of the Current Practices Inventory has supported alignment of college curriculum to the statewide workforce knowledge and competencies (WFKC) which ensures a common standard from which to make decisions about curriculum and articulation agreements. Through the Articulation Task Force, the Institutes of Higher Education have agreed to align all early childhood programs of study with the WFKC so that alignment and articulation between Associate and Bachelor's degrees can be seamless.</p> <p>The issue of specialists and trained professionals in rural and tribal areas is a recognized challenge across the areas of early learning, family support and health. There are strategies that exist to recruit and retain professionals such as loan forgiveness and stipends, as well as partners engaging in discussion to identify strategies and opportunities to address workforce shortages.</p> |
| | <p>High quality professionals are recruited and retained in the early childhood system.</p> <p>Early childhood professionals are paid commensurate with other fields requiring similar education and experience.</p> | <p>Recruitment and Retention of Professionals in the Early Childhood System - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for the recruitment, adequate compensation, and retention of high quality, culturally diverse early childhood providers.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compensation – Balancing quality programs while paying a wage and offering benefits that is enough to sustain an employee. Early childhood often loses the best employees as they "transition" to higher paying jobs. • Provide incentives – Use incentives to entice early childhood professionals to stay in the field over other minimum wage jobs. • Recruitment – Attracting professionals into the early childhood workforce is essential to maintaining a robust and qualified workforce • Retention – Teacher retention and higher pay to truly attract professionals to the field. • Opportunities created through recently passed minimum wage legislation. | <p>WAGES Compensation has not kept pace with the increasing education expectations for the early childhood workforce. While some programs offer higher salary and benefits (Head Start, School Districts), wages still continue to keep much of the early childhood workforce in poverty. The challenge of wages is complex in that early care and education tuition set at a rate that would provide compensation aligned with quality expectations is largely unaffordable for families. FTF addresses the affordability of tuition through a quality reimbursement rate for QF Scholarships. However, the amount of available scholarships is not enough for a program to sustain higher compensation for all staff. Additionally, DES subsidy increases that would allow for compensation aligned with quality expectations would result in fewer children being served, without significant state investment.</p> <p>FTF funds College Scholarships that provide both tuition assistance as well as a bonus for education attainment. For professionals making a</p> |

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| | | | | <p>wage that is often at poverty levels, this assistance and bonus support the achievement of a degree that supports their knowledge and skills in working with young children.</p> <p>FTF also funds Professional REWARD\$ in some regions which provides a financial bonus to acknowledge educational attainment. Retention in the current position is required, so this strategy also addresses staff turnover.</p> <p>In addition, FTF is working with Central Arizona College to research effective strategies used to support compensation for early childhood professionals. The Report on Financing Early Care and Education with a Highly Qualified Workforce will inform how FTF moves forward with compensation strategy.</p> <p>RECRUITMENT The Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network (Network) website (azearlychildhood.org) includes information about careers, resources, education pathways, and compensation in the early care and education field. While this is more of a passive recruitment, more active efforts to recruit people into the field is lacking.</p> <p>Career and Technical Education programs exist in some high schools that offer coursework in early education. FTF College Scholarships work with CTE programs to support dual enrollment in college courses that support high school students in achieving a CDA on the pathway to an associate degree.</p> <p>RETENTION Retention efforts include strategies that have been described above (Quality First Standard for Retention, Professional REWARD\$). As noted above with compensation, this work often results in low wages, which affects the ability to retain qualified staff as they increase their education and skills.</p> |

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| | Arizona has sufficient numbers of health services providers of all types who have had specialized training in working with young children and their families. | Specialized Training for Health Services Providers - Collaborate with partners to provide funding and implement strategies for increasing the number of health services providers who have had specialized training in working with young children and their families. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of specialists in rural and tribal areas across the areas of children’s health. • Work with professional development providers across Arizona regarding trauma-informed work with at-risk kids. | |
| | Family support providers have the knowledge and skills required to work with young children and their families. | Specialized Training for Family Support Providers - Collaborate with partners to provide funding and implement strategies for increasing the number of family support providers who have knowledge and skills required to work with young children and their families. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of specialists in rural and tribal areas across the areas of family support. • Include family support in the professional development (the Registry and College Scholarships) funded by the Department of Economic Security, FTF, and Arizona Department of Education. | |

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| <p>EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM:</p> <p>The early childhood system is high quality, child and family centered, coordinated, integrated, and comprehensive.</p> | <p>Partners in the early childhood system have clearly defined and well understood roles and responsibilities; planning, program development, service delivery, data, and resources are coordinated among federal, state, tribal and local jurisdictions.</p> <p>Partners in the early childhood system work together to identify and attain the capacity required to build and sustain the system.</p> <p>Families of young children and other partners are involved in the design and evaluation of Arizona’s early childhood system.</p> | <p>Early Childhood System Leadership - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for the conceptualization and implementation of a high quality, child and family centered, coordinated, integrated, and comprehensive early childhood system that includes clearly defined roles and responsibilities.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System infrastructure, including transportation to services – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Build the necessary system infrastructure for birth to 5, beyond regional councils, and scale up successful programs particularly in rural and tribal areas. • System coordination – Build on and strengthen the collaboration fostered through the regional partnership councils and regional collaboratives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Continue partnerships that are effective in coordinating services, resources and supports statewide and local level (examples include Read On Arizona and the Read On Communities) c. Siloed information makes it difficult to prioritize as a whole system. d. Engage other state agencies (such as Department of Corrections and child welfare) to address challenges faced by children and families within those systems. e. Create a system for coordinating the availability of services for the early childhood population that makes services understood, accessible and sustainable. f. All state agencies and groups to align their work on behalf of young children and families. Differentiating the roles of all entities involved. g. Policy change and alignment as a continued priority. | <p>Previously highlighted throughout the document are areas where system infrastructure and coordination are taking place at the statewide and regional levels across rural, urban and tribal communities. In addition, areas needing continued focus and movement to action have been identified as opportunities to accelerate the system and outcomes for children.</p> |

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| | <p>There is a coordinated process in use for collecting, analyzing, and utilizing accurate and relevant data related to early childhood development, health, and education and results are used to guide decision making.</p> | <p>Coordinated Use of Early Childhood System Data – Convene and collaborate with partners to identify data needs and resources; define and carry out roles related to collecting, analyzing, and reporting data; and utilize data to design, develop, plan, and evaluate the early childhood system.</p> | <p>Use available evidence to improve the early childhood system, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Kindergarten Developmental Inventory (KDI) can provide a baseline on children’s school readiness and will provide data on areas of focus for families, teachers and the system. • Leverage KDI and data systems to show outcomes across the state. Utilize Quality First and KDI as the universal metrics for sustainable improvement in the area of quality early learning and school readiness. • Need data to determine if strategies implemented are having an impact. • Use data to drive decision-making and target services to those most in need (not only by ZIP code). <p>Focus beyond a child’s vocabulary as a marker of school readiness. Self-regulatory skills are an important predictor of school readiness and later outcomes along the child and adolescent continuum.</p> | <p>The development of the KDI is underway as highlighted previously and will be integrated into the Department of Education’s data system.</p> <p>Working from FTF’s research and evaluation plan, recommended by the National Research and Advisory Panel, FTF has established data sharing agreements with Departments of Education and Economic Security and working towards an agreement with Department of Health and AHCCCS. The data sharing agreements support the effort to establish an administrative data system to assess progress for young children. In addition, FTF is working on expanding data collection for its strategies to get to intermediate and long term outcomes and collect child level data where appropriate.</p> <p>Through the state interagency leadership team for home visitation, an integrated data system for all home visiting programs is being developed.</p> |
| | <p>Early childhood programs, services, and resources are evaluated and results used to foster continuous improvement.</p> <p>The early childhood system as a whole is evaluated to determine if it is child and family centered, coordinated, integrated, and comprehensive and</p> | <p>Early Childhood System Evaluation - Provide leadership in the evaluation of the early childhood system and collaborate with partners to utilize the results to foster continuous improvement of the system.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase communication about regional and statewide outcomes, including lessons learned and changes instituted as the result of data analysis. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • |

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| | <p>results are used to strengthen the system and guide future planning.</p> <p>Impact of the early childhood system on children and families is evaluated and results are used to guide policy development, public awareness messages, resource allocation, and future planning.</p> | | | |
| | Resources required to develop and sustain the early childhood system are generated from public and private sources. | <p>Early Childhood System Funding – Secure, coordinate, and advocate for resources required to develop and sustain the early childhood system.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create partnerships that increase and leverage public and private funding to develop and sustain the early childhood system. Funding should be prioritized for strategies to support the whole child, focus on prevention, increase alignment and coordination, and expand programs that work. • Tax credits for charitable contributions to preschools/ECE programs. | <p>Various partnerships and collaborative efforts are established and underway to improving areas of the early childhood system and include public and private funding such as Read On Arizona to increase school readiness and 3rd grade reading.</p> <p>Two priority areas for the Arizona Early Childhood Alliance are increasing public funding for early childhood and developing strategies for effective business engagement in support of early childhood investments.</p> <p>Several philanthropic organizations throughout Arizona fund and support early childhood services and programming in the area of children’s health, family support and early learning, and professional development.</p> <p>FTF has established a Strategic Partnerships and Investment Committee of the board that has established specific goals to support and increase public and private partnerships.</p> <p>Successful partnerships have been established between FTF and tribes to</p> |

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| | | | | <p>expand early childhood services and programming in tribal regions.</p> <p>Various efforts are underway as described previously to align and leverage federal and state funding.</p> |
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| <p>PUBLIC AWARENESS:</p> <p>All Arizonans understand the importance of the early years and the impact of early childhood development, health, and education on Arizona’s economy and quality of life and, as a result, substantially support early childhood development, health, and education both politically and financially.</p> | <p>Arizonans receive accurate and data-based information on the importance of the early years, the link between early childhood experiences and subsequent success in school and in life, and the impact of early childhood development, health, and education on the state’s economy and quality of life.</p> <p>Faith-based communities, community-based organizations, foundations, businesses, and other partners demonstrate their support for early childhood development, health, and education and convey their support to elected officials and other policy makers.</p> <p>Elected officials and other policy makers</p> | <p>Building Public Awareness and Support - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for efforts to increase public awareness of and support for early childhood development, health, and early education among partners, public officials, policy makers, and the public.</p> | <p>Public awareness for families that include the importance of early experiences–</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase parent awareness that learning starts at birth, and how they can impact their child’s health and learning; include the importance of early experiences. • Continue to help parents and caregivers understand the early childhood programs and services available in their communities. • Target specific groups for messaging using blogs and social media such as mom’s/dad’s groups, Tribal, doctor’s offices, etc. • Time messages to correspond with specific times of the year most appropriate for the message (i.e. back to school, flu season, etc.) <p>Policymaker awareness –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone needs to become more involved in political and system advocacy. • Ensure that policymakers understand the importance of early childhood and the role of FTF and the regional councils in the early childhood system. • Include information on how various tax policies can have an implication on families with young children, as well as early childhood programs. • Build awareness among policymakers on how early childhood links to their priorities around early literacy, high school graduation rates and college/career readiness. <p>Leverage partners –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At a local level, build partnerships and allies that are key to advance the early childhood system and promote the work of early childhood. | <p>Through a variety of universal strategies – including the Birth to 5 Helpline and the Arizona Parent Kit – FTF focuses on giving ALL parents of young children access to information and resources to support their young child’s health and learning.</p> <p>In addition, FTF recently launched enhanced online information for parents of young children, including the more intentional and strategic placement of early childhood content and resources in the digital platforms that today’s parents frequent. Future plans for this parenting site include a searchable database of early childhood programs funded in all the regions, as well as continuously growing the amount of high-quality parenting content available on the site and being “pushed out” through digital sources.</p> <p>FTF has met with all members of the legislature and all Arizona members of Congress (or their staff) to build their awareness of the importance of early childhood and answer their questions regarding First Things First. FTF also is in the process of reaching out to all freshmen policymakers (elected this fall) to ensure that they have an understanding of early childhood and FTF as they begin their public service. Whenever possible, these meetings include regional council members who have relationships with policymakers and can speak to the impact of early childhood funds in their communities and these meetings include invitations for policymakers to visit early childhood programs in their districts to see firsthand the impact of early childhood investments. Several policymakers have participated in site tours as a result.</p> <p>FTF sends emails to all policymakers regarding information on the impact of early childhood investments (such as the FTF annual report) and also has instituted a quarterly e-Newsletter for policymakers and their staff with the latest news regarding early childhood, FTF and its impact</p> |
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| | actively support early childhood development, health, and early education. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure educational leaders support the mission of FTF and early childhood, such as leaders of Institutions of Higher Education. • More site visits by community leaders and policymakers are needed statewide. When people see what is happening they get excited and support it. • There is still a broad based lack of public awareness that presents significant opportunities for further engaging people across the state. Legislators and service providers generally know what FTF does, but increased public awareness and opportunities to participate are necessary to advance the system. • Need to better connect with business community as spokespeople and resource development. • Develop public-private partnerships. • Partner with the foster care system and help identify ways to work together more effectively. <p>Building public awareness and support for early childhood and First Things First, including outcome of data/work –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our end goal should be to make early childhood a priority in the state, for families, caregivers, policymakers and the general public. • Lead early childhood messaging and focus on "getting the message out" broadly so that all stakeholders understand the benefits of intervening early in a child's life. • Create opportunities for individuals to act on their support for early childhood or to directly support young children and families at a level that meets their ability and interest. • Ensure that FTF is known for making major contributions to school readiness for Arizona kids that are "top of mind" whenever FTF is mentioned or referenced in policymaker | <p>In addition, FTF holds both statewide and one-on-one consultations with elected leaders from Arizona's Indian tribes and nations to engage them in early childhood system building efforts, and to obtain feedback that can lead to more effective and culturally responsive early childhood programs.</p> <p>Arizona Early Childhood Alliance (AZECA) will be the lead sponsor in a 2017 Early Childhood Day at the Capitol that includes visits with policymakers to build awareness and talk about the early childhood priorities for the 2017 session.</p> <p>FTF has engaged its Friends, Supporters and Champions to build awareness of the impact of early childhood legislation for their communities. In the 2016 session, when a bill targeted FTF funding – the volume of phone calls and emails to policymakers highlighting the impact this loss of funding would have on young children in communities statewide led to the Chairman of the Education Committee refusing to give the legislation a hearing, effectively killing the bill.</p> <p>There are several early childhood system stakeholders actively engaged in building public awareness of the importance of early childhood and its impact on school readiness/educational success.</p> <p>First Things First – through the support of 20 regional partnership councils statewide – has implemented a variety of strategies to help community leaders become more aware of the importance of early childhood and become more active in spreading the word through their personal and professional networks. Either through direct funding or through partnerships with other regions, these efforts include many tribal communities throughout the state. This work has included more than 2,000 presentations, almost 230 tours of early childhood programs, the training of almost 8,700 individuals in early childhood messaging, and the placement of more than 2,400 stories in media statewide (SFY11-SFY16).</p> |

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| | | | <p>conversations or the media (consider top 3). Reframe the elevator pitch and getting it into the hands of community leaders and champions.</p> | <p>To date, these efforts have recruited 25,685 Friends, 3,674 Supporters and 965 Champions of early childhood. Each of these engagement levels corresponds to a level of action regarding early childhood – from routinely receiving information about early childhood and FTF, to becoming trained on early childhood messaging and using that messaging with personal/professional contacts, or writing letters to the editor and meeting with policymakers. FTF Supporters and Champions have completed almost 1,100 actions on behalf of young children.</p> <p>First Things First has also focused heavily on digital engagement. Its strategic approach to building digital engagement has resulted in 124,000 page likes on Facebook (significant growth from 3,000 in 2012) and almost 4,000 followers on Twitter. Digital engagement is particularly impactful, since it allows individuals to connect and engage with early childhood content in real time. In 2015, FTF digital engagement was about 10,000 per week.</p> <p>Expect More Arizona regularly includes information on the link between early childhood and school success in its efforts to engage Arizonans as education champions, its outreach and media efforts, as well as efforts to inform parents on what they can do to support their young child’s readiness to enter kindergarten.</p> <p>Information provided previously on efforts to engage local leaders in supporting early childhood and actively using that information with their personal and professional contacts.</p> <p>During the 2016 effort to transfer early childhood funds to the K-12 system, major educational organizations such as the Arizona Education Association, Arizona’s School Superintendent’s Association and the Arizona School Boards Association raised objections to the proposal. In addition, at a recent meeting on the importance of kindergarten, ASU President Michael Crow reminded participants on the importance of early childhood to</p> |
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| | | | | <p>academic success by stating that the best indicator of college success is vocabulary at age 5.</p> <p>FTF outreach efforts focus on engaging leaders across sectors – including business, faith, philanthropy, public policymakers and early childhood providers – in the work of spreading the word about the importance of early childhood.</p> <p>In addition, in partnership with early childhood leaders statewide, FTF is engaged in actively building awareness among business leaders and organizations on the link between early childhood and economic development for our state.</p> |