

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Pinal 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 Pinal Region, there are **34,984 children** (under age 6) with **24% living in poverty**.

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



By the time children enter school many likes, dislikes and behaviors are set. It is important to introduce healthy habits such as eating nutritious foods at an early age as it sets the foundation for healthy choices and a healthy lifestyle. Creating healthy choices in the early years are the building blocks to a successful future."

Sybil Peters

AZ Health Zone

FTF Pinal Regional Key Impact Highlights

[State Fiscal Year 2022]



Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

1,400

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

461

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

2,197

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

326

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



Preventive Health

2,564

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

642

Children received fluoride varnishes applied to protect against childhood tooth decay.

Additional Strategies

1,119

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.

12

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

Casa Grande provider helping children learn and grow

Shelly Kinyon knew she still had a lot of love to give.

The mother of 10, self-proclaims that she loves kids, especially preschool-aged children. A little over a decade ago, she was a foster mom and at the tail end of her years of fostering, she considered caring for children in her home again. Off and on she had done some child care in her home, helping out family and friends, but she never thought of it as a career.

“During fostering you make connections with other foster parents,” Kinyon said. One of them introduced the Casa Grande mother to the Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) program. The First Things First Pinal Regional Council funds the program to support caregivers in helping the young children in their care to learn and grow.

The program is run through the United Way of Pinal County, which provides in-home child care providers, which can also include foster and adoptive parents, with no-cost assistance to help ensure children birth to age 5 get access to quality education outside of a licensed child care setting.

“I felt so good as a foster parent, I knew I could do this in my home,” Kinyon said. She started with two children, who were both a year and a half. “They were both part-time and my daughter was 2 at the time.”

Shelly’s Sunflowers Child Care was born, with Kinyon’s intentions of helping families through being someone they could trust with their children.

The Family, Friend and Neighbor program is free and includes classes or group meetings with other caregivers that are led by trained professionals. Caregivers learn how to better support the health, development and learning of the young children in their care through health and safety practices, educational activities and understanding more about child development.

“One of the things I love about the program is how we’re connected as providers,” Kinyon said.

“Whatever made us a provider, whether a grandparent, family, community provider, we’re connected. There’s a Facebook page where we can ask questions or we can email Liz or Lindsay or whomever. You don’t feel like you’re a bother. They’ll give you a strategy for whatever the challenge is.”

Sometimes it’s about how to talk to parents, taking on new clients or helping each other when someone is having a bad day.

“This profession can be lonely and isolating, it’s nice when we know somebody is there,” Kinyon said. “One thing Lindsey (from United Way) always does for me is she gives me the tools I need. She asks, ‘What can you do? Where does the problem start?’ Then she gives me strategies to help.”

Ultimately, if the caregiver benefits, so do the children in their care.

“The kids are getting the knowledge,” Kinyon said. “Many times the things we’re learning about helps the kids with their creativity. It helps us help them feel free to express themselves.”

For example, in her playroom, there’s room for water play and messy play.

“Yeah we’re going to have shaving cream. Yeah, we’re going to get wet,” Kinyon said. “The kids get dirty. But being in FFN has helped me in that because they’re explaining the research to back it up and show how it helps kids learn.”



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

FTF Pinal 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.

FTF Pinal FY22 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool

\$2,956,628

Preventive Health

\$1,560,148

Strengthening Families

\$772,166

Research and Evaluation

\$164,346

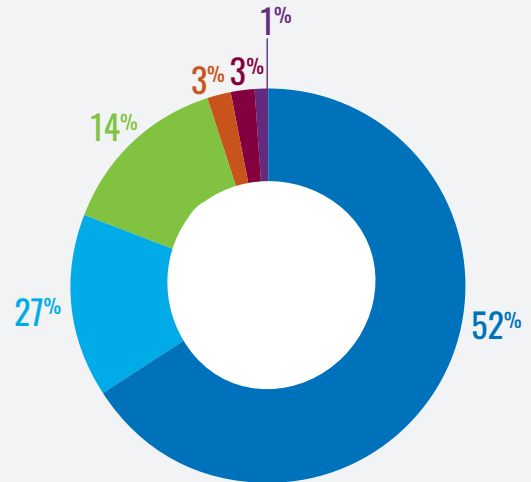
Workforce Development and Training

\$156,223

Parent and Community Awareness

\$60,991

Total \$5,670,502



FTF Pinal Regional Partnership Council and Staff

Chair
Briana Frenzel

Vice Chair
Jason Clark

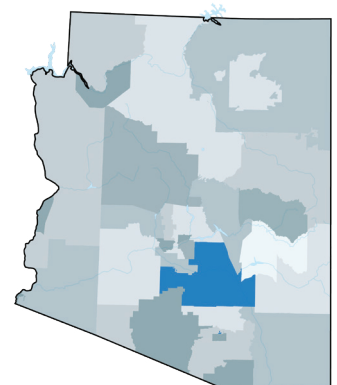
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The **FTF Pinal Region** is defined as Pinal County, not including the lands belonging to the Gila River Indian Community, the Tohono O'odham Nation or the San Carlos Apache Tribe. The region does include the land belonging to the Ak-Chin Indian Community.

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