Parenting Outreach and Awareness

I. INTENT OF STRATEGY
The intent of the promising practice strategy, Parenting Outreach and Awareness, is to increase families’ awareness of positive parenting; child development including health, nutrition, early learning and language acquisition; and, knowledge of available services and supports to support their child’s overall development. The expected result is an increase in knowledge and a change in specific behaviors addressed through the information and activities provided.

II. DESCRIPTION OF SIGNIFICANCE
Given the important role that parents and families have as their child’s first and most important teacher, providing information, services and programs that support families must be part of the continuum of strategies within the family support system to meet the universal needs of all families.

Children are active participants in their world from the day they are born. Understanding the importance of early interactions in healthy brain development will assist families in making important choices that will support and optimize their child’s development. Child development and neuroscience research emphasizes the importance of infants to engage in discovery through everyday explorations shared by a sensitive, attentive caregiver (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007; Stamm, 2007). Yet, according to the preliminary results in the FTF 2012 Family and Community Survey, just under half of Arizona parents (46%) acknowledged that babies sense and react to their surroundings in the first month of life. Just over half of Arizona parents surveyed (54%) still believe that children do not take in and react to their environment until two months of age or later. These results suggest that about half of Arizona parents do not yet fully understand their child’s very early interactive experiences with the environment are essential to optimal health and development. Research based knowledge about developmental milestones at each age helps parents interact positively with their child and set appropriate expectations and boundaries throughout daily routines. Although 80% of Arizona parents acknowledge that they can significantly impact a child’s brain development at or before birth, not all are sure what they can do to best support their child’s optimal development.

Parenting Outreach and Awareness provides families of young children with information, materials or connections to resources and activities that increase awareness of early childhood development and health. In most cases, outreach and awareness alone are not sufficient to make or sustain a behavior change. While awareness may increase, families may not have the resources or tools to effectively implement the change. For example, families may have heightened awareness of the benefits of reading to their child, but do not understand which books are developmentally
appropriate or know how to read to a child at different developmental stages. They may not have access to books (e.g., may not be able to afford books; may not live close to a library or have transportation). While the Parent Outreach and Awareness strategy is considered to be a promising practice, some programs that increase awareness and knowledge may indeed be evidence based or evidence informed and result in behavior change. One such example is Reach Out and Read, which uses medical providers to promote early literacy in pediatric exam rooms during well-child visits by distributing books to children and advice to families about the importance of reading aloud. Reach Out and Read has been found to increase the frequency of families reading aloud to their children and increase children’s receptive and expressive vocabulary scores (Mendelsohn, et.al, 2001; High, et.al., 2000). It is important to consider that Parenting Outreach and Awareness is likely one approach in the continuum of family support efforts that can provide assistance to families and is likely most effective when coupled or bundled with other supports and services.

Parenting Outreach and Awareness components can include: earned media, paid advertisements, resource distribution and parenting workshops. Earned media is defined as recognition from a major broadcast print or emerging media as well as information placed in smaller community newspapers, newsletters, and public service announcements. Paid advertising is defined as advertising through billboards, print ads, multimedia campaigns (TV), radio and online ads. Paid advertising requires a substantial financial investment and must be accompanied by other strategies in order to be effective in changing behavior.

III. IMPLEMENTATION STANDARDS

A. Program Standards

First Things First (FTF) is committed to funding programs that are evidence based or evidence informed. The emphasis on evidence-based programs is grounded in the idea that the maximum benefit for children and families is delivered by programs that base their practice in the most current, relevant, and reliable evidence about the effectiveness of the program. For some programs, an evidence-informed or best practice, or a promising practice model is appropriate. The following criteria are considered by FTF when determining to fund programs:

- **Evidence based programs** are programs that have been validated by documented and scientific research and the evidence has gone through a peer review process. Evidence is established through scientific research that has had a comparison between an intervention group and a control group where the intervention group has had a significant impact. Peer review means that someone external to the program or research team has reviewed the methodology and the findings to determine if standards were met.

- **Evidence informed** is a program or service that has a clearly articulated theory of change (logic model) and has had some evaluation of the outcomes. This can be based on one program or service model that has been evaluated in multiple settings. An evidence informed program cannot be based on the evaluation of a program in only one setting, even if it has been done for many years in a community and everyone likes it.

- **Promising practice** is a program or service that has a clearly articulated theory of change (logic model) with specified implementation and operational processes (activities) and
program outcomes. A promising practice program is informed by at least one of the following:

- Evidence based practices of a similar program or service delivery system, but does not have complete fidelity to that model because of justifiable need to change factors such as staffing or written materials in order to adapt to geographic or cultural variation.
- A similar program or service delivery model that is generally accepted as appropriate for use with the target population to achieve the program outcomes but has yet to be established as evidence based.
- Culturally responsive practices that are known to contribute positively to program outcomes.

A promising practice must have no evidence that the program or service will cause any harm to recipients. Additionally, a promising practice program is committed to building evidence of program or service effectiveness through ongoing continuous quality improvement activities.

1. Implement an evidence based, evidence informed or promising practice model that meets FTF’s accepted definition of these models:
   a. All information provided through media, advertisement, resource distribution and/or workshops must be research-based, developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, family-centered, and strengths-based.
      - All activities implemented must take into account local families’ and children’s needs, desires, histories, lifestyles, concerns, strengths, resources, culture, ethnicity, and priorities. Print materials must be written at no higher than a 5th grade reading level.
      - Resources and information provided must be accurate and regularly updated to ensure information is current. Permission for the use of copyright materials must be documented and cited.
      - All Parenting Outreach and Awareness activities will adhere to the FTF Communications guidelines including branding protocols which can be found in the First Things First Communications Toolkit.
   b. Provide parents and families participating in Parenting Outreach and Awareness activities with current, research based information covering one or more of the following core areas of family support for child development and health:
      - **Expand the family’s knowledge of child development and behavior** – Provide learning opportunities for families on all domains of child development (i.e., social, emotional, language, and physical and motor development); understanding typical and atypical child development; recognizing age appropriate child expectations; and identifying developmental milestones and developmental red flags.
      - **Support positive parenting practices** – Provide learning opportunities for families on appropriate parent and child interactions, development of parenting skills, positive guidance practices, and warm, sensitive and responsive caregiving.
• **Improve child safety** – Provide learning opportunities for families to increase their awareness of prevention of unintentional injuries in the child’s environment (e.g., safe sleep, choking hazards, and use of car seats). Unintentional injuries are predictable and preventable when proper safety precautions are taken. These injuries can be prevented, reduced and eliminated with early interventions and parent education.

• **Improve child health** – Provide learning opportunities for families on nutrition, obesity prevention, breastfeeding, physical activity, immunizations, oral health, insurance enrollment, participation in consistent medical/dental homes, participation in prenatal care, and preventative services such as well child visits, and developmental, vision and hearing screening.

• **Contribute to family stability** – Provide learning opportunities for families to improve their stability (e.g. meet basic needs), functioning, and mental health (e.g., warmth, emotional availability, and stimulation), and promote stable relationships among caregivers, positive parenting, and family cohesion.

• **Promote strong family relationships** – Provide learning opportunities for families to increase their support network and community involvement. Provide community specific resources at all class sessions that are relevant to the session topic. For example, during a session covering oral health topics, parents should be provided with a list of dental providers in the community that serve children age 5 and under.

c. Implement one or more of the following Parenting Outreach and Awareness components:

• **Earned Media** campaigns must center around various topics that raise families’ awareness such as: identification of an awareness gap as a community issue to be addressed; announcement of a new program or service to support behavior change; new or updated research about the behavior identified for change; milestones achieved in changing behaviors; and/or a success story about a specific child or family benefitting from a service.

• **Paid advertising** must provide research-based, outcome focused, and professionally developed advertising that seeks to increase knowledge and change behavior. Provide the needed repetition in order to achieve market saturation (i.e., to ensure people see or hear the message enough times to change behavior

  o Before a paid advertising campaign is utilized as an approach, the following information is necessary:
    § Information about the root cause of the issue to be addressed;
    § Evidence that the source of the information credible;
    § Evidence that the paid advertising will change this behavior;
    § Sufficient resources are available to achieve the saturation required to effect change; and
    § Strategies/tactics that will be implemented in addition to the paid advertising that will support behavior change (i.e., moving from awareness to action). For example, the advertisement includes a link to a website or a telephone number to call for more information about the subject.
When an existing paid advertising effort is being utilized, information on the following is required:

- Length of time the current creative content has been used;
- The financial investment in the current campaign and specific markets used to determine effectiveness for the target population and geographic region proposed under this strategy;
- Evidence that the campaign positively impacted behavior and specifically in the markets where the campaign was used (for example, a campaign seeking to increase immunization rates must have experienced success in increasing immunization rates where previously used);
- Identification of other activities (e.g., a community event held after the broadcast of the paid advertisement) that were in place to support the paid advertising campaign and their effect on the impact achieved; and
- Knowledge and understanding of the ability for co-branding or adding additional calls to action; restrictions on paid media time versus gratis media time; and, restrictions on copyright use. Permission for the use of copyright materials must be documented and cited.

- **Resource Distribution** must distribute children’s books, audio discs, community resource guides, child development and child health fact sheets, parenting tip sheets, brochures, pamphlets, and/or newsletters. Resources can be offered and distributed during community festivals, fairs, or exhibitions in community settings and through partner organizations.

- **Parenting Workshops** must offer one-time workshops for parents and families that increase awareness about child development or child health topics. These may include such activities as parent-child interactive, parent support groups, library story times, informational sessions about programs or services available in the community, or a session on brain development, early literacy, child development or child health. For example, child health parenting workshops may be offered to increase parent’s knowledge about topics such as injury prevention, oral health, preventative health care, or nutrition. One or more of these activities can be implemented in conjunction with other FTF early learning, health and/or family support strategies as part of regional funding plan implementation.

  - Structured workshop activities must be accessible for families by being provided at times and locations that are convenient for families including weekend and evening hours.

  - Workshops should be manageable in size and have appropriate staffing patterns.

    - Adult-only sessions shall be a maximum of 50 participants with a ratio of one staff per 25 adult participants. Conference keynote or plenary sessions may exceed the staff/participant ratio requirement.

    - Room size and space must be adequate to comfortably support the number of adults participating.
Parent workshops that offer on-site child care must adhere to the FTF Requirements for On-Site Child Care (attached).

- Incorporate family-centered practice into parenting workshops. Components of family-centered practice must include:
  - Involve families in the planning, development and implementation of the workshop. Topics and activities are developed in response to the needs and interest of the family.
  - Structure activities compatible with the family’s availability and accessibility. Create both formal and informal opportunities for families to offer feedback about workshops. Take action based on family’s feedback and ensure that feedback is considered in future decision making.
  - Make reasonable efforts to include all family members – including fathers, grandparents, and children.

- Incorporate strength-based approach to parenting workshops, which focuses on the family’s abilities, assets, needs and interests. Components of strength-based practice that must be included:
  - Staff members work with family members in relationships based on equality and respect to identify their strengths, resilience and resources.
  - Encourage family members to build upon their strengths by enhancing their capacity to understand and promote their own optimal cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.

- Help families identify and acknowledge informal networks of support and community resources. Include information for families on how they can utilize the information or access resources identified in the workshop, media or advertisement in order to support the parent or families’ desire to make a behavior change.

2. Literacy learning in early childhood provides the foundation for future literacy success and is rooted in exposure to rich language experiences and engaging activities that build knowledge, understanding and speaking, expands vocabulary, and supports a child’s ability to become a successful independent reader.
   a. Promote and support meaningful early literacy experiences and opportunities for young children in the appropriate context of program implementation.
      - Provide learning opportunities for families to learn about early language and emergent literacy development.
      - Provide information to increase families’ awareness of the use of language to communicate, and respond to and elaborate on child’s vocalizations (e.g., daily storytelling, talking, singing to infant and child).
      - Inform families about pre-literacy skills: concepts of print, phonological awareness, vocabulary development, comprehension, analysis of the content and structure of text, and making meaning through drawing and writing.
   b. Support families and caregivers with parenting and child-rearing skills that help increase understanding of early language and emergent literacy development.
c. Engage families in meaningful, day to day two-way communication about how a child develops language and early literacy skills.
d. Encourage families to use the language in which they are most confident and competent.
e. Encourage parents and families to learn how to observe, guide, promote, and participate in everyday language and literacy development of their children at home, early care, and in their communities.
f. Encourage parents and families to advance their own learning interests in language and literacy development through education, training, and other experiences that support their parenting, careers, and life goals.
g. Encourage parents and families to support and advocate for their child’s learning and development as they transition to new learning environments.

3. Follow the FTF Child Welfare Policy when working with children and families enrolled in services provided by the Arizona Department of Child Safety to promote non-duplication and coordination of child welfare services.

4. FTF recognizes the importance of collaborative partnerships among community partners that utilize a variety of formal and informal mechanisms to facilitate coordination of services in the community. The Coordination and Collaboration standard requires a grantee to:
   a. Develop and implement a plan to understand and make connections with other initiatives, strategies and efforts in the region or state that support the early childhood system.
   b. Develop processes that ensure staff implementing FTF funded strategies understand the connections between this strategy and the early childhood system to avoid duplication of services and promote collaboration between other services and supports offered to children and families in the regions.

5. Continuous Quality Improvement
   a. Adopt a process of continuous self-monitoring and reflection to improve program practices that is articulated in a written policy.
   b. In the written policy, the following should be addressed:
      • How data is used to assess the progress and outcomes of program implementation; and
      • How data collection is used to improve staff performance.

6. FTF embraces cultural responsivity as an intentional life long journey that holistically explores, honors, and values the diversity of the human experience.
   a. Offer programs and services congruent with the needs of diverse children and families.
   b. Offer programs and services that are responsive to the impact of cultural factors such as histories, traditions, values, family systems and structures, social class, and religion and spiritual beliefs.
c. Create a learning environment conducive to and includes all children and families no matter their ethnic, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds.
d. Use the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of diverse children and families to make learning more appropriate and effective for them.

B. Staffing Standards
1. Parenting Workshop Direct Service Staff
   a. Hire staff who reflect the cultural and ethnic experiences and language of the targeted population with whom they work with and integrate their expertise into the entire program.
b. Ensure that staff at all levels receive initial and ongoing professional development in culturally and linguistically responsive service delivery.
c. Employ well-trained and competent staff and provide continual relevant professional development opportunities.
d. Staff developing materials or providing workshops demonstrate extensive knowledge of the community, the culture, and the community’s resources.
e. The length of employment and experience/education are reflective of high quality staff. Establish an effective, consistent supervisory system that provides support for all staff members and ensures accountability to participants, funders, and the community.
f. All staff work as a team, modeling respectful relationships consistent with program goals and whose top priority is the well-being of families and children.
g. Staff skills and abilities are regularly assessed to ensure they are able to engage families while maintaining a professional rapport.
h. Annual staff training on the FTF Parenting Outreach and Awareness Standards of Practice principles is provided.
i. Supervisors and staff (including direct service staff, volunteers and sub-grantee or partner personnel implementing the strategy) must receive training through the Arizona Department of Education on the utilization of the Arizona Infant and Toddler Developmental Guidelines, the Early Learning Standards and the Program Guidelines for High Quality Early Education: Birth through Kindergarten as a regular part of practice. All staff will have ongoing access to guideline materials.
j. Provide ongoing staff development to ensure program quality and give staff an opportunity to develop professionally.

2. Supervisory Staff
   a. Supervisors work with staff to prepare and implement professional development plans.
b. Supervisory staff is required to have a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in early childhood development, education, family studies, social work, nursing or a closely related field.

3. The Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry (Registry)
The Registry is a component of the newly developed Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Network (Network). The Network is a comprehensive system designed to meet the professional development needs of Arizona’s early childhood professionals working with or on behalf of children birth-8 years of age.

a. Staff employed at the administrative home and any sub-grantee who are working directly with or on behalf of children birth – age 8 as a part of the implementation of this strategy must enroll in the Registry by June 30, 2016.

b. All participants of this strategy are expected to enroll in the Registry by June 30, 2016.

C. Additional Standards

1. For implementation of parenting workshops, Arizona law (ARS §13-3620.A) requires early childhood program staff who suspect that a child has received non-accidental injury or has been neglected, to report their concerns to the Arizona Department of Child Safety or local law enforcement. All staff, grant partners, consultants and participants of this component must receive training and adhere to these requirements (see attached FTF Suspected Child Maltreatment Mandated Reporting Policy).

IV. REFERENCES AND RESOURCES


F. Arizona Department of Education Trainings: [http://www.ade.az.gov/onlineregistration/SelectEvent.asp?viewall=%22yes%22&GroupId=31](http://www.ade.az.gov/onlineregistration/SelectEvent.asp?viewall=%22yes%22&GroupId=31)


I. Reach out and Read Arizona: [http://www.roraz.org/](http://www.roraz.org/)

L. FTF Child Welfare Policy (attached)
M. FTF Suspected Child Maltreatment Mandated Reporting Policy (attached)
N. FTF Requirements for On-Site Child Care (attached)
O. Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network
   Website: http://azearlychildhood.org (available Fall 2015)