

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Colorado River Indian Tribes 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 Colorado River Indian Tribes Region, there are **739 children** (under age 6) with **57% living in poverty**.

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

“One of the most valuable programs that we as the Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Council help support is our NOPA program. This program is a rising star in our area, providing physical activities and nutritional/healthy meal awareness and classes for all, but especially for caregivers of our birth to age 5 children. As with many tribal areas, childhood obesity and early diabetes are serious problems. By supporting our Nutritional and Physical Activity program, we are hoping to make inroads in addressing these issues. We are extremely proud to help support this developing and vital program in our community.”



Norma Ray

Chair of FTF Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Council

FTF Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Key Impact Highlights [State Fiscal Year 2022]

Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

98 Books getting into the homes of infants, toddlers and preschoolers through a local distribution program.

10 Early childhood professionals and adults attended activities to learn more about the importance of early childhood development.

Quality Preschool and Child Care

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

16 Children participated in a summer transition program to prepare to be successful in kindergarten.



Parker family gets physical

When Elvira Aspa goes for her usual run in the evening, her 5-year-old son eagerly sprints beside her for a while. In the past several months, the mother said her youngest boy's interest in physical activity definitely has grown.

"I'm just amazed at how much energy he has," said Aspa, who credits her son Ty's wanting to spend more time being active on a program for families of children up to age 5.

The Nutrition, Obesity and Physical Activity (NOPA) strategy provides education on topics that include nutrition, preparation of healthy meals with young children, and age-appropriate physical activity. The First Things First Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Partnership Council funds the program in Parker, where Aspa's family lives.

Shawni Laffoon, who runs the program, said NOPA offers free workshops for youngsters and their parents and caregivers.

"We talk about nutrition and physical activity, and how we can be more mindful when it comes to choosing the food that we eat or how we engage in physical activity," she said.

Laffoon frequently reminds families that engaging in physical activity doesn't necessarily mean having to take up a strenuous exercise regimen. Any voluntary movement, like walking short distances, is considered physical activity, she said.

Children enrolled in the program engage in a variety of physical activity that ranges from "tummy time" that turns infants on their bellies to help boost development, to potato sack races for 5-year-olds like Ty. Children also spend time on the playground and get a nutritional snack. The program also provides kits with take-home activities for families to use when they're unable to attend the workshops.

Ty and his mother have used some of the recipes included in the kits to prepare healthy meals. Cooking together turned out to be a great opportunity to educate her son about healthy food choices, Aspa said.

"With my child eating more vegetables and fruits, he learned what those vegetables and fruits can do for him, like how you get Vitamin C from oranges," she said.

Cooking also gave the mother a chance to spend one-on-one time with the youngest of her three boys. In addition to recipes, Aspa said the kits included other activities, "like doing exercises, meditation, as well as hands on activities like drawing, painting and designing your own aprons."

When he and his mother participate in the program in person, Ty's favorite activity is lifting foam weights. Her son's zest for physical activity extends to their home, where Ty spends a good amount of time being active outside, his mother said. "He likes watering his little garden that he has, as well as jumping on the trampoline, riding his bike, or playing on his swing."



Adopting physical activity and a healthy diet early in life means that her son will have the tools he needs for continued healthy development, Aspa said.

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

FTF Colorado River Indian Tribes 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.

Some of the programs in this region include Early Steps Program, Quality First and Professional Development for Early Childhood Professionals Colorado River Indian Tribes Early Literacy, Transition to Kindergarten and Start-up, Expansion and Learning Lab (Early Learning Academy).

FTF Colorado River Indian Tribes SFY22 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool

\$69,315

Preventive Health

\$57,396

Strengthening Families

\$28,382

Coordination

\$12,096

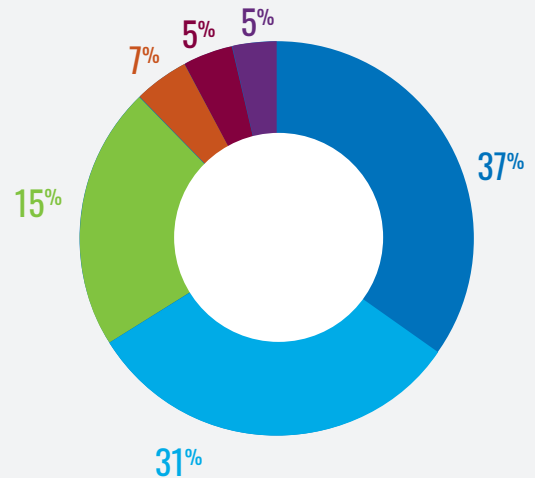
Parent and Community Awareness

\$10,000

Research and Evaluation

\$8,196

Total \$185,385



FTF Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Partnership Council and Staff

Chair
Norma Ray

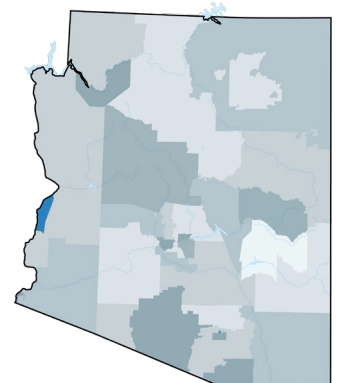
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The **FTF Colorado River Indian Tribes Region** is defined as the Arizona part of the Colorado River Reservation, including the town of Parker. The region lies entirely in La Paz County.

Learn more at
[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Colorado-River-Indian-Tribes](https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/Regions/Colorado-River-Indian-Tribes)