

# # FIRST THINGS FIRST

Navajo/Apache Region

# IMPACT REPORT 2021



[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Navajo-Apache](https://www.FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Navajo-Apache)

90%

of a child's brain growth happens before kindergarten.

## Early childhood matters.

First Things First partners with families and communities to help our state's youngest children prepare for kindergarten and beyond.

Many young children in Arizona face challenges that threaten their healthy development and learning. In the FTF Navajo/Apache Region, there are **6,166 children** (under age 6) with **30% living in poverty**.

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

“ We are all products of our childhood, making the beginning stages of a little person's life critical in their development as a person. It is quality child care that develops the ability to be resilient to our surroundings as children, young adults and into adulthood.”

**Allison Hephner**

*2021 FTF Navajo/Apache Region Champion for Young Children*

## FTF Navajo/Apache Region Strategic Priorities



### Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

Families are a child's first and best teachers. FTF programs in the Navajo/Apache region give parents choices for how they want to support their child's health and learning. Parents can attend educational **family activities** to help support their child's healthy development and improve their parenting skills. The region also **distributes books** to families with children from birth to age 5 to encourage parent-child interaction and reading. And families of newborns throughout the region and across the state can receive the **Arizona Parent Kit**, with helpful information and resources for new parents. The region also supports work with infants and toddlers involved with the child welfare system by **coordinating efforts** to meet their unique developmental needs.



### Quality Preschool and Child Care

Children who attend high-quality early learning programs go on to do better in school and are more likely to graduate. The Navajo/Apache region provides funding for child care providers and preschool programs to participate in FTF's **Quality First**. Providers benefit from training, coaching and a wide range of evidence-based supports to improve the quality of their early learning programs in ways that help children learn, grow and thrive. The region also funds **Quality First Scholarships** to help low-income families afford quality early learning for their young children.



### Preventive Health

Undetected or untreated health issues can impact learning later on. Left unaddressed, developmental delays and chronic medical conditions can contribute to serious learning problems. FTF works to support the health and development of young children in the Navajo/Apache region by funding **developmental and sensory screenings** to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues and help prevent later learning challenges.



## HealthySteps helps Taylor, Ariz. mom foster healthy development of her premature baby

Amber Diefenbach gave birth to her son, Daxtyn, four months early in Taylor, Ariz. When she was finally able to bring him home, she knew she needed help.

"He had to be on oxygen for five months," said Diefenbach. "He also had a hole in his heart."

Diefenbach, who has three other children, connected to a local program to get support for her son.

North Country Healthcare's HealthySteps program is for parents with children from birth to age 5. The program provides specialists trained in child development, connects families with resources, and offers developmental, behavioral, social and emotional screenings.

The First Things First Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council funds the program, which also gives parents guidance with feeding, behavior, sleep and other challenges.

"HealthySteps provided assessments that encouraged and showed me how he's growing and reaching goals," Diefenbach said.

Deborah Lewis, program manager and HealthySteps specialist, said the program provides in-home or clinic visits to parents to give them support to enhance the care they receive from medical professionals.

"We try to meet some of the other needs that their provider can't," said Lewis. "We spend more time with the family to learn about them and where they may need support."

After spending that initial visit with a family, a specialist will stay in touch with a family about immunizations, well-visit reminders or addressing other issues.

"We try to reach out to them to make an appointment to come into our office. If the issue was breastfeeding or not knowing how to bathe their baby, we'd schedule a home visit," said Lewis. "We help educate parents on why their child needs to see the dentist and let them know our clinic is a one-stop shop. We have dental services and other supports for finances, domestic violence or postpartum depression."

"HealthySteps provided assessments that encouraged and showed me how he's growing and reaching goals."

—Amber Diefenbach, parent

For Diefenbach, they helped her get organized and keep Daxtyn's appointments with cardiologists and other specialists.

"They helped me keep everything in order by giving me reminders for appointments as well as helping me to understand and keep track of information," said Diefenbach.

They also provided a car seat, baby gates, a pack-and-play and different types of formula.

"Daxtyn is allergic to milk and has a sensitive stomach. They helped me to figure out how to help him eat," said Diefenbach. "They directed me to reach out to my doctor and gave me different formula samples to try with him. They also helped me to reach out to the Arizona Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) to discuss my options."

As an experienced mother, Diefenbach found it difficult to know how to parent Daxtyn because he was born premature.

"I tried to base my parenting on my other kids, but it wasn't working," said Diefenbach. "He's just now walking at 15 months. His developmental screens are teaching me where to engage him. They got him little toys to put in a cup to help his fine motor skills. They've been really supportive and encouraging that he'll catch up."

Diefenbach said the program has helped her have peace of mind and stay on track to help her son. She's seeing the benefits as Daxtyn continues to develop in a healthy way.

"I want more people to take advantage of the program," said Diefenbach. "They are so helpful and find you the right resources."

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



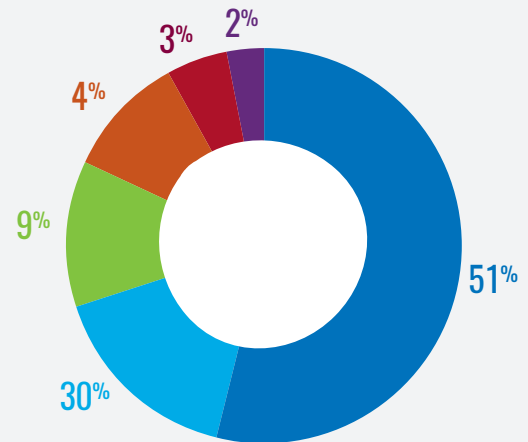
## FTF Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council

The FTF Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council is made up of volunteers who study the unique needs of the local community and decide how funds should be used to best support the healthy development and early learning of young children birth to age 5. FTF invests in proven

programs and innovative strategies through grants to community organizations that provide services to children and families. Some of the programs in this region include HealthySteps, oral health and parenting outreach and awareness.

### FTF Navajo/Apache SFY21 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Preventive Health	\$873,651
Quality Child Care and Preschool	\$222,432
Workforce Development and Training	\$203,413
Strengthening Families	\$173,356
Parent and Community Awareness	\$87,904
Research and Evaluation	\$51,520
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,612,276</b>



### FTF Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council and Staff

*Chair*  
**Byron Lewis**

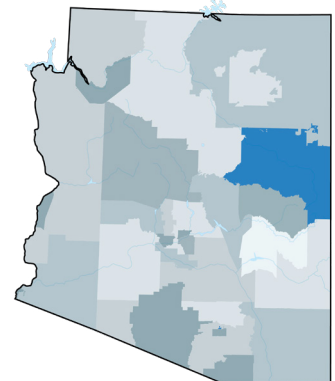
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*The FTF Navajo/Apache Region encompasses the central areas of Navajo and Apache counties, excluding the lands belonging to the Navajo Nation and the Hopi Tribe in the north and the land belonging to the White Mountain Apache Tribe in the south. The region also includes the Forest Lakes community in Coconino County, east of Heber-Overgaard. The region does not include the city of Winslow, which is in Navajo County but is assigned to the FTF Coconino Region. The FTF Navajo/Apache Region includes Legislative Districts 6 and 7. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)*

Learn more at  
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