

## REACH OUT AND READ - A NATIONAL SCHOOL READINESS INITIATIVE

### **Summary**

Pediatric healthcare providers (including pediatricians, family physicians, and nurse practitioners) are trained in the three-part Reach Out and Read model to promote early literacy and school readiness:

1. In the exam room, doctors and nurses speak with parents about the importance of reading aloud to their young children every day and offer age-appropriate tips.
2. The pediatric primary care provider gives every child ages six months to five years new, developmentally-appropriate children's book to take home and keep.
3. In the waiting room, displays, information, and books create a literacy-rich environment. Where possible, volunteer readers engage the children, modeling for parents the pleasures and techniques of reading aloud. In addition, parents incorporate advice received during pediatric visits and make reading aloud part of their daily routine.

Reach Out and Read has expanded from a single program in 1989 to more than 4,600 programs in hospitals, health centers, and pediatric practices in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and U.S. military bases, serving more than one-third of children in poverty. This year, Reach Out and Read will serve more than 3.9 million children and families nationwide. In South Carolina, Reach Out and Read serves over 115,000 children at 120+ clinics per year. Over 60% of the South Carolina Medicaid population is currently served by a Reach Out and Read Program and we are partnered with more than 700 trained providers across the state.

### **Demographics**

- *Target Settings:* Rural, Urban, Suburban
- *Target Groups Served:* Children in poverty
- *Districts Served:* Various

### **Research and Evaluation**

*What national or other research was considered during the development of this program/initiative? Describe the evidence that shows the program/initiative works.*

Research shows that 34% of American children entering kindergarten lack the basic language skills they need to read. Studies also show that only 48% of parents in the U.S. read to their young children daily. Families in poverty often lack the money to buy new books and may not have access to libraries. Reach Out and Read leverages the unparalleled close, consistent, and trusting relationship that healthcare providers have with families in the early years to reach parents early and often with guidance about language, reading, and their child's overall healthy development. The evidence-based program model empowers and activates parents in their role as their child's first and most important teacher.

Research also indicates that Reach Out and Read improves the home literacy environment and developmental outcomes for children growing up in poverty. The children served by Reach Out and Read enter kindergarten better prepared to succeed, with a home library of ten brand-new children's books and highly-engaged parents. Fourteen published research studies indicate that when families participate in Reach Out and Read,

1. Parents are four times more likely to read to their children, and non-English-speaking families are 10 times more likely to read together every day.
2. Children show a six-month developmental edge over their peers in the preschool years.
3. Children score higher on vocabulary tests and school readiness assessments.

### **Program Resources**

- *Annual Cost:* \$10/child/year (plus training, overhead)
- *Funding Sources:* limited Public dollars, public-private partnerships, foundation, corporate, and individual support
- *Staffing Needs:* Program support staff to train programs and assist with model fidelity and high-quality implementation of the program model.
- *Infrastructure/Equipment Needs:* Books for our programs – We need 220,000 new age and language appropriate books each year, and this number does not include expansion to reach new children.
- *Partner Organizations:* American Academy of Pediatrics, National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, American Booksellers Association, Nurse-Family Partnership, many more locally and nationally. A full list of local donors available at [http://www.reachoutandread.org/whereweare/site\\_list.aspx?state=sc](http://www.reachoutandread.org/whereweare/site_list.aspx?state=sc).

### **Contact Information**

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