

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:* All districts in SC

Research and Evaluation

What national or other research was considered during the development of this program/initiative? Describe the evidence that shows the program or initiative is relevant and effective.

What distinguishes Reach Out and Read Carolinas from other interventions is its large and growing evidence base. The body of published research supporting the efficacy of the Reach Out and Read model is more extensive than for any other psychosocial intervention in general pediatrics. Since 1991, this model has been studied by academic investigators in a variety of settings, culminating in 15 independent evaluations that affirm the impact of our program. Additional studies that address language outcomes in children are in progress. The most recent evaluation of our program was published in the *Journal of Community Medicine and Health Education* in March 2012. In this longitudinal study, researchers examined the home literacy environments, teacher evaluations, and reading readiness of low-income Latino kindergarteners (ages 4-6 years) who had participated in Reach Out and Read from age 6 months. By the end of kindergarten, 77% of these children had average, above average, or far above average literacy skills when compared to all students in the same grade. Key Research Findings:

- Parents served by Reach Out and Read are up to four times more likely to read aloud to their children.
- Reach Out and Read reaches the child through effectively teaching the parent to start lifelong learning in the home.
- During the preschool years, children served by Reach Out and Read score three to six months ahead of their non-Reach Out and Read peers on vocabulary tests. These early foundational language skills help start children on a path of success when they enter school.

Reach Out and Read, though there is a book involved, is truly about the developing architecture of the young brain and body. Through our evidence-based intervention, the ROR program is really about teaching and training parents how to engage with children around literacy to build better brains. Parents are a child's first and most important teachers, and Reach Out and Read trains parents to play this role.

Reach Out and Read Carolinas is leading the Nation in local outcomes and evaluation work on Reach Out and Read impact. Local evaluation work in the Carolinas focuses predominantly on model fidelity and quality implementation of this evidence-based program model. We have been working with the NC Partnership for Children over the last 3 years on a project in 45 counties which has led to a comprehensive parent survey utilized in Reach Out and Read clinics across South Carolina. This tool has allowed staff to track changes in parental behavior. Evaluation work has been done with the programs participating in this project, and the results have been exciting. The most recent LOCAL research has shown significant changes in parent behavior (see graphics at end). The local evaluation work is mirroring the fantastic results that we see from our national studies. We will continue to focus on model fidelity and quality implementation of our evidence-based model in South Carolina.

At the local level, we have also implemented a comprehensive data management system for all qualitative and quantitative data as well as a matrix for the evaluation of a program's model fidelity and quality implementation of the evidence-based model. This extensive quality matrix has been designed and implemented over the past 2 years, allowing for more consistent and rigorous evaluations of model fidelity in the field. In addition, this component allows Reach Out and Read staff to support programs at the implementation level, and track how quality implementation relates to better outcomes for children and families.

In evaluating the success of a Reach Out and Read program, outcomes are measured in three, specific areas: 1) improved literacy-related skills, attitudes, and behaviors in parents; 2) program and pediatrician compliance with the Reach Out and Read model; and 3) increased number of children and families living in poverty provided literacy services by pediatricians. The body of published evidence supporting the efficacy of Reach Out and Read's literacy model is more extensive than for any other psychosocial intervention in general pediatrics. Since our facilities are existing health clinics and hospitals, we are able to keep our overhead costs low. Our presence in health facilities also positions us to have an immediate, regular influence on children's literacy skills from their first months of life. The 2007 National Survey of Child Health states that 96% of children ages 6 months through 5 years visit their pediatric care provider regularly, but less than one-third of these children are enrolled in a child-care setting.

Twice annually, doctors at each of our sites will complete an online Progress Report. This report details the number of children participating in our program and number of books distributed. It will also indicate the economic demographics of the patient population served. On a quarterly basis, our program staff conducts formal and informal site observations, using our standard Site Assessment Scale to note each site's best practices and areas for improvement. Annually, our pediatricians submit a Medical Provider Report, which indicates the frequency and effectiveness of Reach Out and Read training and book distribution.

Finally, programs in South Carolina participate in the parent survey tool, providing strong data around the parent's reaction and behavior changes due to the advice given by the provider during the well-visit. This works allows programs and staff to track how successfully Reach Out and Read provider's intervention within the child's check-up resonates with the family in their home environment.

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.

Contact Information

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Families participating in Reach Out and Read are:

61% more likely to be reading to their children every day than families new to the program.

92% more likely to be using recommended reading strategies with their children.

Learn more at: www.reachoutandread.org & www.smartstart.org

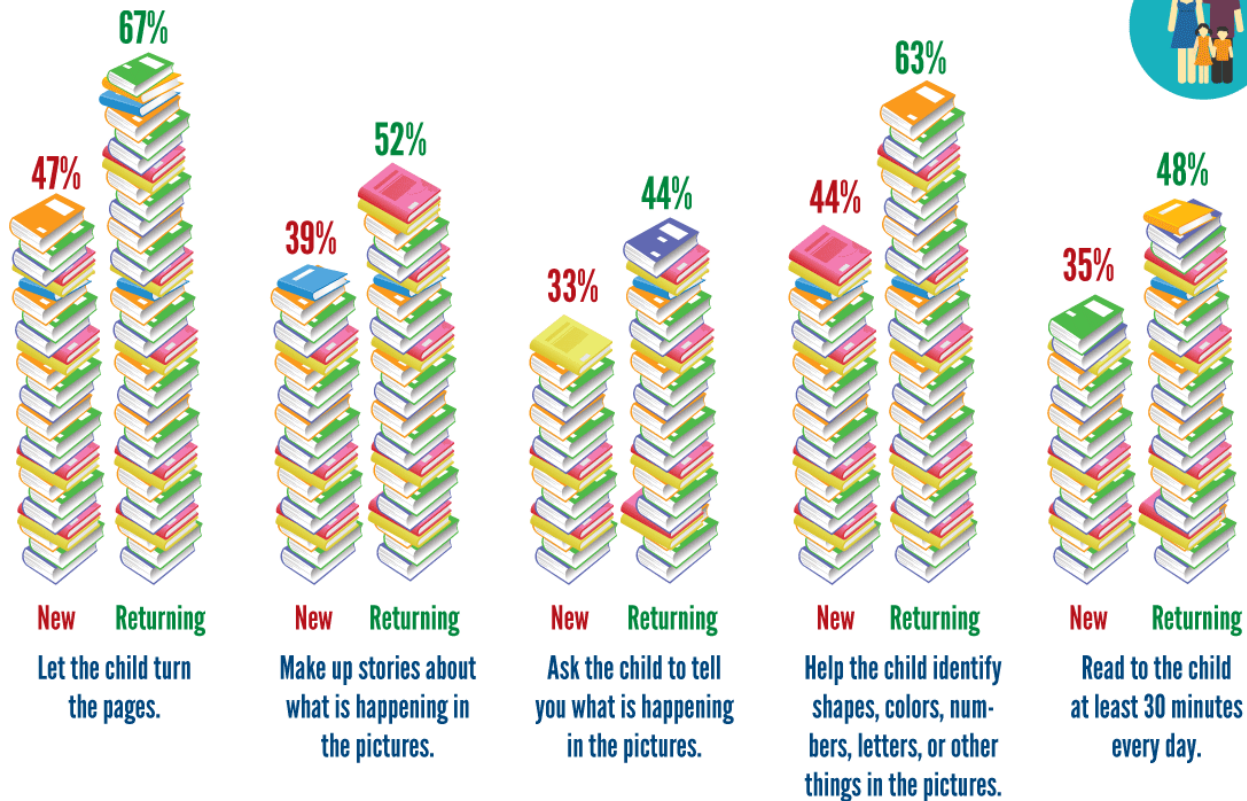


Percentage of families participating in specific reading activities



New = Families on their first well-child visit

Returning = Families returning to the doctor participating in ROR



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