



where great stories begin™

Doctors partnering with families to build language, literacy, and social-emotional skills that prepare children for kindergarten

The Power of Relationships

Parent-child relationships at home provide the foundation for children's healthy development. It is critical for parents to have the knowledge, skills, and books to nurture their child's language and literacy development from birth. Partnering with medical providers has provided a dramatic increase in evidence-based parent engagement and early literacy support in Washington State.



“Reach Out and Read not only provides books to parents, but trains physicians and other health care providers on how to encourage and teach parents to use books around their children, even well before their kids can speak. As a primary care physician, it's been an important tool to support early childhood development.”

DR. RICHARD WATERS
(Harborview Family Medicine)

THE REACH OUT AND READ PROGRAM

Promoting literacy through the healthcare system enables rapid, economical, and sustainable growth of a system that serves families “where they are.” Reach Out and Read doctors give young children new books and inspire families to read together, starting when children are babies. At each well-child checkup from ages 6 months through 5 years, medical providers teach parents how cuddling together and sharing books builds language and literacy skills that will help children be ready for school. Reach Out and Read is a national program with 15 published research studies demonstrating efficacy. When families participate, parents read aloud more often and children have improved language and literacy skills.

REACH OUT AND READ IN WASHINGTON STATE

Implemented in diverse medical settings, including community health, public health, tribal, hospital-based, and private practices, Reach Out and Read has served families in Washington since 1997. Since 2007, when state funding supported the creation of Reach Out and Read Washington State, the program has grown from 52 clinics serving 28,405 children to 179 serving more than 100,000 children and their families. Since the release of the Washington State Early Learning Plan in 2010, Reach Out and Read has been a priority early learning strategy and a key vehicle for parent engagement and support. Embraced across cultures, the program is serving diverse children and their families; 69% low-income, 44% children of color, 26% with a home language other than English.

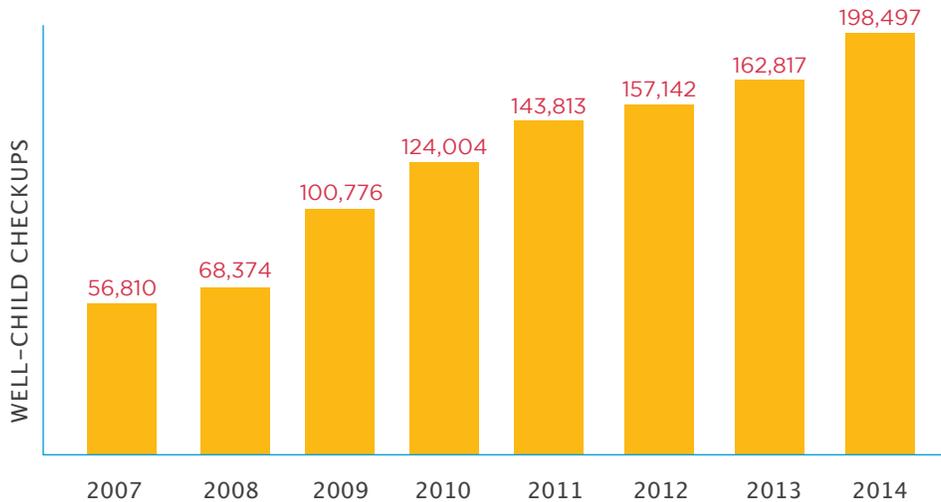
ACCESS AND TRUST MAKE DOCTORS KEY PARTNERS FOR FAMILIES

Doctors can reach virtually every young child and family because health insurance and access to care are nearly universal. A Washington State Department of Early Learning study found that parents trust their child's healthcare provider for early learning information more than any other source. Doctors see children for preventive “well-child checkups,” with more checkups in the earliest months and years. So the program supports parents and children early, regularly, and where they already are. A central part of a well-child checkup is “anticipatory guidance,” where doctors talk with parents about their child's development, what to expect, and how to nurture and support their child in the process. Reach Out and Read helps medical providers incorporate encouragement and guidance around language and literacy into their checkups.

“Reading regularly with young children stimulates optimal patterns of brain development and strengthens parent-child relationships at a critical time in child development, which, in turn, builds language, literacy, and social-emotional skills that last a lifetime.”

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

Reach Out and Read in Washington State



Leveraging the health care system enables rapid growth of services to support families.

THE IMPACT OF STRESS

“Tolerable stress” helps children learn and grow, especially when buffered by nurturing family relationships. “Toxic stress” occurs when children are under high levels of distress that don’t go away, and their bodies turn on a stress response that stays on, bathing their brains and bodies with stress hormones. Nurturing relationships with adults can help mitigate the effects of toxic stress. But when children are continually bombarded with negative events, or have Adverse Childhood Experiences, their brains and their bodies cannot develop optimally. But when families experience research-proven protective factors, children do much better.

A SOLUTION FOR FAMILIES

All parents want the best for their babies, and families are usually eager to learn what their child needs to learn, grow, and be healthy. Books at home, parents reading aloud, and early language skills have long been demonstrated to be vital precursors to later success in learning to read. If we start with babies, engaging parents to effectively support language and social-emotional development at home, we can change the trajectory of children’s lives. By partnering with families, doctors, and communities, we can help all children in Washington experience the early, nurturing, responsive relationships that are vital to child well-being.

ADDRESSING EQUITY AND THE OPPORTUNITY GAP

Reach Out and Read serves families starting when children are babies, and focuses on clinics where children are most at risk for poor educational outcomes based on factors such as income, race, and home language. These include community health centers and public health clinics, the “safety net” clinics; tribal, Indian Health Service, and urban Indian clinics where many Native American families receive care; military facilities where families are under significant stress related to deployment and military service; and clinics serving Medicaid populations.

SERVING DIVERSE FAMILIES IN CULTURALLY RELEVANT WAYS

Programs are in urban, rural, and suburban settings, serving families from many linguistic and cultural groups, including English language learners, bilingual populations, and immigrant and refugee families. Each clinic matches books to the developmental, cultural and linguistic needs of the families it serves.

NATIONAL ENDORSEMENTS

Reach Out and Read is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners. A 2014 American Academy of Pediatrics policy statement *Literacy Promotion: An Essential Component of Primary Care Pediatric Practice* highlights the importance of supporting language, literacy, and social-emotional development starting at birth.

To learn more visit : www.reachoutandreadwa.org
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