



WHY A LITERACY-RICH ENVIRONMENT?

Reach Out and Read program sites recognize that literacy awareness and encouragement starts even before the appointment begins, in the waiting areas and exam rooms. When families are surrounded by an environment that fosters reading, and makes literacy resources available, it reinforces the anticipatory guidance provided during the well-child visit. Since children and parents sometimes spend time waiting, many spaces can help promote literacy.

How to Enhance a Waiting Area

- Have available gently-used children's books/magazines for shared reading while waiting
- Hang laminated posters on the walls that show the pleasures of reading together
- Tack up information about family literacy programs and the local library -- location, story hour times
- Hang resource packets that include handouts: What Children Like in Books, Reading Tips, Developmental Milestones, information on adult literacy resources in the community, etc.
- Lay out children's and parenting magazines
- Designate a special reading area for children; larger spaces might include child-sized table and chairs, colorful rug, book case or basket full of gently-used books, bulletin board with changing themes, etc.
- Hang photos of your providers (or local celebrities) reading aloud to children
- Recruit volunteer readers. This quiets the room and models for parents the techniques – and joys – of reading aloud
- Art students or artists can create wall murals with themes or characters from children's literature
- Turn off the TV

How to Enhance the Exam Room

- Affix wall decals of books, or characters from books, to the walls/ceiling (or have an artist paint them)
- Hang posters on the walls or the back of the exam room door (Reading Tips, Developmental Milestones)
- Have a basket of used books and/or child-friendly word puzzles for literacy enrichment while waiting
- Put corresponding Developmental Milestone Bookmarks with each Reach Out and Read book
- Offer a Prescription for Reading (see template for Rx pads at www.myROR.org Document Library)
- Include age-specific tips in the existing post-visit summary that the parent takes home

How to Use Volunteers to Promote Literacy

- Volunteers can read books to children and model appropriate reading techniques to parents and/or offer other literacy rich activities such as puzzles, simple board games, puppet activities, etc.
- Volunteers from community organizations (and/or clinic staff) can hold used children's book drives
 - Junior League members, senior citizens, hospital volunteers, medical students and residents, high school and college students can all become volunteer readers or donate used books.
- Scouting groups, Rotary Clubs, and faith-based youth groups can build bookshelves, paint walls, etc.