



ILLINOIS  
An ICAAP Program

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This document addresses commonly asked questions about our work and reflects the latest Reach Out and Read organizational messaging. It also includes questions about topics that can be challenging to discuss. While not every issue is included, the suggested responses demonstrate how to navigate tough topics, while reinforcing our mission and values.

### About Reach Out and Read

#### What is Reach Out and Read and how did it start?

Reach Out and Read is a national nonprofit that champions the positive effects of reading daily and engaging in other language-rich activities with young children. Reading together promotes healthy brain development, furthers language acquisition, and helps families build meaningful bonds. The 501c(3) nonprofit, which incorporates books into pediatric care, was founded at a Boston hospital in 1989 to help families add reading into daily routines with their children and to supply the books they need to get started.

#### How does Reach Out and Read work?

Reach Out and Read National provides training, resources, and support to its Affiliates (regional offices that work with 6,500 clinical sites nationwide) to ensure Reach Out and Read's model is delivered with fidelity. Clinicians provide age- and culturally appropriate books during each well-child visits from birth to age 5. During these visits, clinicians talk with parents about the benefits of reading aloud and provide advice for engaging infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in the stories. This means Reach Out and Read has unmatched access to families during the years from birth to age 5 — a period of critical brain development.

Families place deep trust in Reach Out and Read's pediatric teams, who teach them about the importance of reading together. In the same way, those clinical teams look to Reach Out and Read for guidance and support regarding how best to make reading a part of their practice. Reach Out and Read implements the latest research with fidelity across tens of thousands of teams, ensuring that each program site benefits from the latest information and the strength of a shared network.

#### What is your scientific evidence?

Dozens of [independent, peer-reviewed studies](#) show that Reach Out and Read has strong benefits for children, families, and clinicians. Parents participating in Reach Out and Read

are more likely to read with their children daily and to report that reading is one of their children's favorite activities, children's language development is improved by 3-6 months, and language ability improves with increased exposure to Reach Out and Read. Our positive impact has been documented in ethnically and economically diverse families across the United States. Based on this evidence, the American Academy of Pediatrics has twice endorsed Reach Out and Read as an essential component of pediatric care.

### **What is Reach Out and Read's impact across the country?**

Our program has the greatest reach of all early literacy programs serving families with young children:

- Reach Out and Read has near universal scale — we serve 4.6 million children annually.
- More than 60 percent of the children we serve are Black, Indigenous, and people of color, and nearly 70 percent are from low-income families.
- Our model has the potential to reach 90 percent of all children in the United States through well-child visits, beginning at birth.
- We have a growing network of clinicians, with more than 39,000 clinicians trained to deliver our model today.
- We are a trusted partner in care of the whole child.

### **How is Reach Out and Read different from other early literacy programs?**

Reach Out and Read is the largest early literacy program in the U.S. with more than 39,000 medical providers and 6,500 participating sites in all 50 states. Dozens of [independent, peer-reviewed studies](#) shows that Reach Out and Read has strong benefits for children, families, and clinicians. Based on this evidence, the American Academy of Pediatrics has twice endorsed Reach Out and Read as an essential component of pediatric care.

### **How do you choose your clinics?**

In 2014, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a [landmark policy statement](#) declaring literacy promotion to be an “essential component of pediatric care” for all children, referencing Reach Out and Read as an effective intervention to engage parents and caregivers and prepare children to achieve their potential in school and beyond. In 2024, the AAP issued another [policy statement](#) reinforcing the importance of shared reading as a critical component of young children's healthy cognitive, social, and emotional development, starting at birth — continuing to recommend Reach Out and Read as “a universal primary prevention strategy to support ... the safe, stable and nurturing relationships young children need to thrive.”

The Reach Out and Read model is designed to be implemented by clinicians who provide primary care to children, from infancy through 5 years, as part of the well-child checkup. Pediatric and family practices that deliver pediatric care may participate in Reach Out and Read. Clinicians (doctors, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and others) can explore becoming a site [here](#) or contact their local Reach Out and Read Affiliate or Reach Out and Read National.

## **What is a well-child visit?**

The Reach Out and Read model is implemented in a well-child visit, a medical exam for children under 18 that assesses health and development. The American Academy of Pediatrics' [schedule](#) of screenings and assessments, often called checkups, helps prevent illness through scheduled immunizations, tracks a child's growth and development, and allows pediatricians to provide physical and mental health education and address caregivers' concerns. The well-child visit provides time for a comprehensive assessment of a child and the opportunity for further evaluation if abnormalities are detected. These visits also allow the family physician to establish a relationship with parents or caregivers.

## **How do you distribute the books?**

Reach Out and Read clinicians provide families with a new, developmentally appropriate book during each well-child checkup from birth to age 5. By the time a child reaches their fifth birthday, they will have more than a dozen books. In FY24, we distributed 7.7 million books at 9.3 million well-child visits.

## **How much does it cost?**

At \$8-10 per well-child visit, Reach Out and Read's intervention is cost efficient and highly effective. Leveraging the pediatric health care infrastructure provides us with near-universal access to all children and their parents, maximizing the reach and impact of our program.

As a leading purchaser of children's books nationally, Reach Out and Read has unparalleled pricing with national publishers and distributors. The high-quality, new books we acquire at \$5 cost significantly more in the marketplace than the \$10 required to deliver Reach Out and Read with high fidelity at a well-child visit.

Reach Out and Read clinicians and clinics contribute their time and expertise. This in-kind contribution is invaluable and a testament to their commitment to Reach Out and Read, which offers them an affordable, time-efficient, and practical approach to child development.

## **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

### **How is diversity, equity, and inclusion a part of Reach Out and Read's work?**

Our mission is to strengthen families with young children through guidance from medical clinicians about nurturing relationships through shared reading. To provide the best possible support to clinicians and families, we work to ensure that our staff and leadership reflect the communities we serve, that our model is accessible for all families, that our books are engaging and inclusive, and that we focus on communities with the greatest needs as we grow.

### **Is Reach Out and Read abandoning its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion?**

No. We will continue working to ensure our model is accessible and effective for all families, and that our organization reflects the communities that we serve.

## **Book Selection**

### **How does Reach Out and Read select books?**

Reach Out and Read works with literacy experts, clinicians, and family representatives to curate a wide selection of high-quality books that are developmentally appropriate for children from birth to 5. These books are designed to be engaging for children and caregivers at every stage of development. For example, parents with infants will receive board or cloth books that may have pictures of babies, nursery rhymes, or colors and shapes that capture babies' attention. Parents with older children may receive counting and alphabet books or picture books with stories about children and families. Reach Out and Read programs do not distribute books that have commercial/media tie-ins or contain stereotypes.

### **Why does Reach Out and Read emphasize inclusive books?**

The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) recommends that early literacy-promotion programs include authors, images, and stories that reflect the cultural diversity of children served across pediatric practices. That's why Reach Out and Read offers books that represent a wide range of backgrounds and cultures — including bilingual books in 38 languages — with stories that are engaging for young children and parents and highlight shared values of belonging, love, and connection. These books are critical to the success of the Reach Out and Read model.

Inclusive, high-quality books help clinicians connect with families. When families see themselves in books, they feel valued, and that builds trust with health care providers. When books authentically mirror their lives, young children feel a sense of belonging, which is vital for healthy physical, social, and emotional development. Families are more likely to read regularly to their children when they have access to a collection of books at home that embrace their culture, language, and identity.

### **Why did Reach Out and Read develop the 35 for 35 collection?**

We believe in the power of inclusive books to inspire, educate, build bonds, and create lifelong learners. The [35 for 35 collection](#) celebrated the 35th anniversary of Reach Out and Read and the millions of families transformed by our work. 35 for 35's titles provide joyful, engaging stories filled with characters that all children can see themselves reflected in. When books authentically mirror their lives, young children feel a sense of belonging, which is vital for healthy physical, social, and emotional development. That's why we provide access to a selection of titles that reflects all communities a clinic may serve.

### **What happens if a clinic or family doesn't want a particular title?**

Reach Out and Read works with literacy experts, clinicians, and family representatives to curate a wide selection of high-quality books that are developmentally appropriate for children from birth to 5. Ultimately, clinicians decide what titles they offer each family, and those families decide what to take home to read with their children. We know that families are more likely to read regularly to their children when they have access to a collection of books at home that embrace their culture, language, and identity. That's why we provide access to a selection of titles that reflects all communities a clinic may serve.

### **Which publishers do you work with?**

Reach Out and Read has a longstanding relationship with Scholastic, the world's largest publisher and distributor of children's books, and All About Books, a family-owned and operated children's book company that specializes in distributing high-quality books to nonprofit literacy organizations. We've just launched a partnership with Barefoot Books, an independent, award-winning, women-founded children's publisher that produces high-quality, beautifully illustrated books.

We also work with Orca Book Publishers and book supplier Interstate Books4School.

### **Has Reach Out and Read stopped providing certain books because of federal requirements?**

Reach Out and Read abides by all grant and funding requirements. We have received a four-star rating from Charity Navigator and a Platinum Transparency certification from Candid. Reach Out and Read was also named a 2024 Honoree for the Holiday Impact Prize founded by New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof.

## **Funding**

### **How do you fund your programs?**

Generous corporate, foundation, and government funders, along with individual donors, make our work possible. Supporters can make a difference by making cash gifts, holding in-person or virtual book drives, sharing our story with their networks, or giving their time and talent.

### **Have you lost funding because of cuts to federal and state programs?**

Reach Out and Read National and Affiliates receive generous support from corporations, foundations, and government funders, along with individual donors. While most of our work is supported through non-governmental funding, some Affiliates and sites rely more heavily on public investment grants that could be at risk. Where needed, we are working to identify other funding sources and minimize disruption in local programs. We remain committed to supporting sites and the children and families we serve.

### **Are you concerned about potential cuts to Medicaid that could eliminate health care coverage for low-income families?**

We are closely monitoring changes to federal health care funding and eligibility. Our hope is that this essential funding, which provides coverage for more than 50 percent of children, remains intact. When families lose access to well-child visits, it can have far-reaching impacts on children's health, education, and well-being. Research shows that early literacy interventions reduce educational disparities, improve long-term academic success, and lead to stronger workforce outcomes.