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CHAPTER**

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UNITED WAY

Rock River Valley

Checkups and Children's Books: Partnering for Early Literacy

A Partnership Between Reach Out & Read Illinois
and United Way of Rock River Valley



Goals of Today's Session

- Understand the strategic value of establishing a partnership between new and existing Reach Out & Read Illinois clinic sites and their respective local United Way groups
- Understand the respective roles of Reach Out & Read Illinois and United Way staff and ways in which they can/cannot help
- Identify key strategies for potential replication of the established Reach Out & Read Illinois and United Way of Rock River Valley partnership



Overview of United for Literacy

- United For Literacy began in September of 2023
- Formed through Collective Impact process and involved over 30 community stakeholders who identified low literacy as the County's most pressing issue
- Less than $\frac{1}{3}$ of our Community 3rd graders reading proficiently
- Low literacy at 3rd grade has many negative consequences
 - 4x more likely not to graduate from high school
 - More likely to be un/underemployed as an adult
 - More likely to need to use federal or state assistance
 - 85% of adolescents in criminal justice system read below 3rd grade level
 - 70% of adult inmates are functionally illiterate

Looking to the Past - An Overview of Our Partnership

- 2023 – Pre-Partnership
 - Only 3 active Reach Out & Read clinic sites established in Winnebago County
 - The current estimated reach of the program in Winnebago County is ~3,152 children annually
 - The current estimated impact of the program in Winnebago County is ~2,486 books distributed
- 2024 – Partnership Begins
 - 5 active Reach Out & Read clinic sites are established in Winnebago County at the end of 2024
 - Current estimated reach of the program is ~11,176 children annually
 - Current estimated impact of the program is ~5,425 books distributed
- 2025 – Partnership Continues
 - 15 active Reach Out & Read clinic sites are established in Winnebago County at end of 2025
 - Current estimated reach of the program is ~16,827 children annually
 - Current estimated impact of the program is ~7,285 books distributed
- As of January 2026
 - 16 active Reach Out & Read clinic sites are established in Winnebago County
 - Current estimated reach of the program is ~17,577 children annually
 - Current estimated impact of the program is ~8,785 books distributed

Who is doing this work successfully in the State and Country?

United Way researched successful literacy interventions throughout the United States.

Feasibility for United Way

- Who do we need to partner with?
- Cost
- Sustainability

We found Reach Out and Read!

- ROR works!
- Very small presence in Winnebago County
 - Mile Square- based in Chicago
 - One United Way clinic

Reach Out and Read provided United Way with:

- Evidence based, data driven and proven Literacy Intervention
- Cost efficient process

How Does Your Clinic Find a Community Partner?

Look for organizations that are involved in literacy in your community

- United Way
- Community Foundation
- Kiwanis
- Rotary
- Junior League
- Medical alliances





What can a partnership look like?

- What does your clinic need?
- Determine:
 - Your ask of them
 - How long you would like them to be involved
 - How you can show impact to your partner
 - Data from WCV
 - Testimonials from Providers
 - Testimonials from Parents/Caregivers

What United Way Provides to our Partners

- Assistance with Site Approval through ROR Illinois-or help with satellite site approval
- Provide orientation to providers and staff before books are stocked
- Order, finance, inventory and deliver books to all clinics
- Record keep on books delivered/ bookmarks back - report to clinic leader
- Provide information about ROR events and initiatives



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Reach Out and Read Improves Well-Child Visit Attendance

“We found a 2-fold increase in the odds of parents reporting having attended at least the recommended number of WCVs [after implementing ROR]...

Parents rank information about how to promote their children’s learning near the top of their list of priorities for preventive pediatric care. The ROR intervention, which is aimed at increasing reading aloud by parents, **appeals to parents’ desire for concrete suggestions to improve their children’s educational prospects.”**





Reach Out and Read Addresses Social Drivers of Health

“A theme that emerged from [Reach Out and Read] participants was **clinicians’ recognition of the direct impact of Social Determinants of Health on their patients and the potential for Reach Out and Read to reduce some of the resource gaps noted in patients affected by social and economic disparities.** This impact is at the core of Reach Out and Read’s founding mission and clearly resonated with clinicians’ experience of the program.”

Reach Out and Read Enhances Developmental Surveillance

Reach Out and Read provides a dynamic way for providers to conduct developmental surveillance, evaluating Bright Futures milestones at all visits from birth through 5 years. Giving a book early in the visit allows providers to observe fine and gross motor, cognitive, language, literacy, relational, and social-emotional development, helping to streamline the visit.

“I learned how to use the books to assess developmental status. **I’ve gotten better exams with books than the questionnaires that we have parents fill out.**”





Reach Out and Read Increases Clinic Morale and Provider Satisfaction

“The study group specifically stated that Reach Out and Read had positively affected clinic morale, coworker interactions, and the overall work environment... Importantly, many study clinics mentioned the positive impact on satisfaction for all clinic employees, including clinical staff, providers, front desk staff, and residents. One provider said, **“Everyone’s having a ton of fun with this, [the providers] are loving it, the patients are loving it, the staff is loving it.”**”

Reach Out and Read Improves Patient-Clinician Relationships

“In addition to boosting clinic morale, most clinics indicated that **Reach Out and Read has had a positive effect on well-child care and patient-clinician relationships.**”

One physician who participated in the study said, “It’s kind of a win-win. I mean, they **(the parents and kids) are happy, we’re happy.** And we’re talking about how important (literacy) is for kids.”





Reach Out and Read Supports Early Language and Literacy

In participating families, more than 20 studies show:

- Parents are 2.5X more likely to read with their infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
- Children's language development is improved by 3-6 months.
- Children's language ability improves with increased exposure to Reach Out and Read.



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