

NEW, PEER-REVIEWED STUDY SHOWS TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT OF REACH OUT AND READ

Research focused on more than 100,000 responses from families in Reach Out and Read clinics

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(August 8, 2023) – A new, peer-reviewed study in Academic Pediatrics demonstrates the impact of [Reach Out and Read](#), a program leading the way in supporting healthy early parent-child relationships through shared reading.

The research, which includes more than 100,000 survey responses, shows that parents/caregivers exposed to the Reach Out and Read program are significantly more likely to read with their infants and young children every day and to use books to better engage with their young children, starting at infancy.



'Reach Out and Read' Logo

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Dr. Elizabeth Erickson, Reach Out and Read Clinician, Duke University

[The Effect of Exposure to Reach Out and Read](#) on Shared Reading Behaviors, a multi-year study, demonstrates that the delivery of the national nonprofit’s model effectively encourages parents/caregivers to read with their young children using strategies that promote parent-child bonding and connection. This study builds upon [earlier evidence](#) that shows families who participate in the Reach Out and Read program are more likely to have books in the household and read them to their infants, toddlers, and preschoolers multiple times each week. In addition, those young children have improved language development by

three to six months.

"This integrated, early literacy intervention by a care provider in a medical setting can make a

lifelong impact on the child receiving the added care," said Duke University's Dr. Elizabeth Erickson, one of Reach Out and Read's 33,000 clinician partners. "This new research provides additional evidence that Reach Out and Read's methods can change parent and caregiver behavior and increase high-frequency reading, which helps build safe, stable, and nurturing relationships."

Reach Out and Read is a national, family-centric program in which medical providers caring for children offer guidance to parents/caregivers about the importance of reading aloud. During routine well-child visits, Reach Out and Read providers discuss with parents and caregivers how to use books to engage with their infants and young children. They also give the child age-appropriate books to take home and read together with their family. This approach helps improve children's language and literacy skills while also strengthening parent-child relationships. The Reach Out and Read program, which already serves 4.2 million children annually, has the potential for near-universal and equitable access to families with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers and provides a foundation for early childhood development and long-term health and well-being.

The new research includes more than 100,000 responses from caregivers of children ages six months to five years across 427 primary-care clinics in North and South Carolina.

Parents/caregivers completed the Reach Out and Read Parent Feedback Survey during well-child visits. The results revealed a significant association between caregivers' exposure to Reach Out and Read, high-frequency reading, and positive reading behaviors, consistent across all six years studied. The results include:

1. Returning caregivers, those who had previously been exposed to Reach Out and Read's program, were 27 percent more likely to report reading or looking at books with their child every day, compared to parents/caregivers who had no previous exposure to the program.
2. Returning caregivers were significantly more likely to engage in positive shared reading behaviors that support parent engagement and bonding. Those behaviors include letting the child turn pages, making up stories about the pictures, asking the child about the pictures, helping identify things in the pictures, and reading for at least 30 minutes every day.

"Reach Out and Read is changing the way parents and caregivers build everyday moments centered around books and stories with their children, and this important work couldn't be done without the partnership we share with our clinicians," said Callee Boulware, Regional Director supporting Reach Out and Read Virginia, Washington, D.C., and the Carolinas, where the research originated. "Our medical providers are helping parents/caregivers learn effective and engaging ways to share books and stories with their children, which is so significant for development, relationships, and language skills."

Reach Out and Read CEO Marty Martinez said the new study provides vital evidence supporting Reach Out and Read's methods.

"These important findings further validate the effectiveness of the Reach Out and Read program in encouraging caregivers to read regularly with their children and fostering positive interactions during shared reading experiences," Martinez said. "This new study shows how these real-world interactions positively impact families and promote early childhood development by creating moments that matter for the millions of children nationwide served by Reach Out and Read."

The importance of the study's findings is supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics' (AAP) 2021 policy statement that shows that positive childhood experiences, like reading with a parent/caregiver, can mitigate adverse childhood experiences that lead to long-term chronic poor health and well-being. The AAP statement also advocates for a public health approach to the promotion of these positive childhood experiences — and cites Reach Out and Read as a model that can be a valuable part of that approach. The data from North and South Carolina provides more evidence that Reach Out and Read's program is a primary universal prevention intervention.

The study, supported by local partners and funders in the Carolinas, was conducted by M. Connor Garbe, Sally L. Bond, Callee Boulware, Carolyn Merrifield, Teandra Ramos-Hardy, Marny Dunlap, Alexandria Caldwell, Nikki Shearman, and Anna Miller-Fitzwater.

About Reach Out and Read: Reach Out and Read is 501(c)3 nonprofit that gives young children a foundation for success by incorporating books into pediatric care and encouraging families to read aloud together. As the only evidence-based national pediatric model focused on emotional connections endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, Reach Out and Read serves children in all 50 of the United States through 6,000 clinics and 33,000 clinicians. For more information, visit reachoutandread.org.

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