



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Bethany Rhodes | National Strategies Public Relations

Phone: 813-865-3093 | Email: brhodes@nspublicrelations.com

REACH OUT AND READ ANNOUNCES PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA TO STRENGTHEN PUBLIC HEALTH, REDUCE SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES

Nonprofit will work with policymakers and program administrators to improve health care for all children by expanding and sustaining the Reach Out and Read model

BOSTON (Feb. 13, 2024) – A new public policy agenda from [Reach Out and Read](#), a national nonprofit that fosters parent/caregiver relationships through shared reading, focuses on strengthening health care for and early literacy in young children. The 35-year-old nonprofit, which reached 4.4 million children in FY23, says robust cross-sector investments are needed to connect the worlds of primary health care, early literacy, and public health. The policy agenda advocates for young children and their families and recommends that policymakers and partners create and/or improve systems crucial to public health and early literacy, including widespread support of Reach Out and Read’s transformative model.

Reach Out and Read’s proven primary health care model supports both early childhood development and fosters the bonds critical for the well-being of children, families, and communities. The policy agenda says the nation must address three social drivers that impact children starting at birth: persistent poverty, barriers to quality health care, and access to important educational opportunities.

In deep partnership with 36,000 clinicians nationwide, Reach Out and Read uses pediatric well-child visits from birth through age 5 to give caregivers guidance about how shared reading fosters healthy early relationships, development, and literacy, and to distribute free, age-appropriate and culturally relevant books.

“Evidence shows Reach Out and Read’s model strengthens both positive connections between parents and their young children and early language and literacy. Studies also suggest that Reach Out and Read increases attendance at well-child visits, boosting health outcomes for children,” said Reach Out and Read CEO Marty Martinez.

“By making the promotion of healthy early relationships and early literacy the standard of care in pediatrics, we will drive better outcomes, not only for individual children and families but for the entire community. This policy agenda calls for investment not in Reach Out and Read alone, but as part of a bigger ecosystem that supports families and enhances health, literacy, and education.”

The public policy priorities outlined in the agenda include:

- **Promote universal reach** by integrating the Reach Out and Read model into pediatric primary care for every child, birth through age 5.
- **Advocate for a family-focused approach** (sometimes called a “two-generation” approach) to improve the overall health of the family, including maternal and child health, to support early relationships and literacy, using Reach Out and Read’s shared reading model to address the physical, developmental and behavioral health needs of parents and caregivers and their young children.
- **Establish consistent, holistic well-child support** through early childhood care teams in family-centered medical homes that extend Reach Out and Read beyond the clinic to enhance care for and impact on young children and their families, support workforce development, and strengthen community connections.
- **Advance equity** as a key force inherent in supporting the healthy development of all children, including efforts to ensure access to the advantages of pediatric primary care and early childhood best practices, transcending barriers some families face because of race, ethnicity, language, and income.

“For 35 years, Reach Out and Read has been a beacon of family support through pediatric well-child health care, nurturing caregiver-child bonds and early literacy through the life-changing impact of children’s books and shared reading,” said Dr. Trude Haecker, Chair of Reach Out and Read’s Board of Directors and Medical Director of Global Patient Services at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. “We are excited to use this expertise to champion policies that support the development, education, and health of young children and the reduction of structural inequities.”

Though the current political and social environment can make it hard to find common ground, the Reach Out and Read model offers an opportunity to embrace the shared goal of ensuring all children a strong start in life. The nonprofit challenges policymakers, clinicians, and early childhood champions of all kinds to use the new public policy agenda to focus investment, advocacy, program development, and resources.

To learn more about Reach Out and Read and to download the full agenda, go to reachoutandread.org/public-policy-agenda.

###

About Reach Out and Read: As a 501(c)3 nonprofit, Reach Out and Read leverages the near-universal reach of the pediatric well-child visit to support caregivers in fostering healthy relationships with their young children through shared reading. The only national pediatric literacy model endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, Reach Out and Read serves children in every state across the U.S., through 6,200 clinics and the expertise of 36,000 clinicians. Discover more at reachoutandread.org.