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**REACH OUT AND READ TO BRING EARLY LITERACY,
LIFE-CHANGING PROGRAM TO MORE FAMILIES IN OHIO**

The nonprofit's work to increase shared reading and foster healthy early relationships targets families with young children of color and in low-income households

CLEVELAND, Ohio (Oct. 23, 2024) – [Reach Out and Read](#)— a national nonprofit dedicated to promoting early literacy, school readiness, and healthy early relationships —announced today a plan to help Ohio families build a foundation of success for the state’s more than 670,000 children under the age of 5.

In partnership with a network of clinicians, Reach Out and Read leverages the near-universal reach of the pediatric well-child visit, using children’s books and shared reading to support parents and caregivers in strengthening healthy relationships and building language and literacy skills with their children, from birth through 5 years old.

The Ohio Affiliate expansion is part of the organization’s goal to serve 10 million children nationwide by 2030. Its new strategic plan, a roadmap for this dramatic impact, demonstrates the 35-year-old nonprofit’s continued commitment to providing resources and nurturing relationships that enable every child to learn and thrive.

Reach Out and Read Ohio, which currently reaches ~165,000 children, is leveraging an investment from Reach Out and Read National to reach more children statewide, with an emphasis on children in low-income households and children of color.

“This marks a new chapter in Ohio’s Reach Out and Read story. The program paves the way for all children, regardless of background, to develop foundational literacy skills and strengthen the essential relationships needed for a successful future,” said Lori LeGendre, Program Director of Reach Out and Read Ohio. “More than 60 percent of Ohio kids aren’t ready for kindergarten. Bringing Reach Out and Read to more families better prepares young children for school and beyond.”

Reach Out and Read Ohio, which launched a flagship site at Dayton Children’s Pediatrics in 1996, serves children at 202 sites throughout the state, from small community clinics to large health systems, primarily targeting high-need areas. Medical champions in Toledo, Cincinnati, Columbus, and Akron — and a strong partnership with Reach Out and Read Greater Cleveland — have been instrumental in expanding Reach Out and Read’s presence in the state. In FY23,

Reach Out and Read served 165,326 young children in Ohio, distributing 270,155 books at more than 330,000 well-child visits.

“Creating a strong, statewide Affiliate will help us reach more children under 5 and empower the Ohio families who need us the most,” said Dr. Ruth Coleman, National Senior Director of Growth at Reach Out and Read. “We’ve prioritized Ohio’s major metro areas and rural Appalachian communities. This approach will allow us to provide centralized oversight, targeted expansion, and sustainable funding, ultimately amplifying our impact on early literacy and school readiness for Ohio’s children.”

Reach Out and Read will partner with local, state, and regional leaders who know that Ohio must create more high-quality language and literacy opportunities for all young children. Data compiled by Groundwork Ohio highlights concerning trends, including:

- Only 42.7 percent of Ohio parents read to their babies daily.
- 62.1 percent of Ohio’s children do not demonstrate kindergarten readiness.

Reach Out and Read’s [evidence-based model](#) works. Parents exposed to Reach Out and Read are more likely to read with their children daily. And those children demonstrate significant improvements in language development. The organization also has unparalleled access to families via pediatric primary care: More than 90 percent of U.S. children under 5 visit a medical provider annually.

“Expanding Reach Out and Read in Ohio is a critical step in our goal to bring the transformative power of shared reading to 10 million children,” said Marty Martinez, CEO of Reach Out and Read. “As we grow across the country, we help to foster a culture of literacy that transcends generations, ensuring that every child has the relationships and resources to learn and thrive.”

To learn more about Reach Out and Read, visit ReachOutAndRead.org/Ohio.

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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.