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REACH OUT AND READ TO BRING EARLY LITERACY, LIFE-CHANGING PROGRAM TO FAMILIES IN IOWA AND NEBRASKA

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 in a two-state regional effort

DES MOINES, Iowa (Nov. 7, 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 Iowa and Nebraska families build a foundation of success for the more than 360,000 children under the age of 5 across the two states.

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 expansion in Nebraska and Iowa, who combined currently reach ~100,000 children, is part of the organization's goal to serve 10 million children nationwide by 2030. Reach Out and Read's 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.

Nebraska is joining with Reach Out and Read Iowa to become Reach Out and Read Midwest. The new regional Affiliate is leveraging an investment from Reach Out and Read National to reach more children in both states, with an emphasis on children in low-income households and children of color.

"Reach Out and Read Midwest will provide new support for children and families in Iowa and Nebraska," said Kristin Christensen, Midwest Program Manager. "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,"

The community has also invested in the new Affiliate. Initial funding comes from a variety of diverse sources, including Anonymous, Better World Books, Buffett Early Childhood Fund, Elevance, Janet Kahler, Lozier Foundation, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation/Nebraska Growing Readers Initiative, and Nomi Health.

Reach Out and Read Iowa launched in 1998, with Blank Children's Hospital serving as its flagship site. The Affiliate now serves about 75,000 children across nearly 100 sites.

In 2000, Reach Out and Read began work in Nebraska at the OneWorld Community Health Center in Omaha. Through grassroots advocacy from an ever-growing network of clinicians, it has expanded to 35 sites. Creating a regional Affiliate that unites Iowa and Nebraska will build a strong infrastructure across both states, giving families more access to Reach Out and Read's support, guidance, and resources.

"Reach Out and Read Midwest will help us reach more children under 5 and empower the Iowa and Nebraska families who need us the most," said Dr. Ruth Coleman, National Senior Director of Growth at Reach Out and Read. "This new regional Affiliate will allow us to provide centralized oversight, targeted expansion, and sustainable funding, ultimately amplifying our impact on early literacy and school readiness for all children in this two-state effort."

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.

"As someone born and raised in Omaha, I know firsthand the challenges and joys of family life in this region," said Marty Martinez, CEO of Reach Out and Read. "The transformative power of shared reading will literally change lives — and create better futures — for hundreds of thousands of children across Nebraska and Iowa. Reach Out and Read Midwest can help families foster a culture of literacy that transcends generations, ensuring that every child has the relationships and resources to learn and thrive."

In FY23, Reach Out and Read reached 73,236 young children in Iowa and 27,226 in Nebraska, distributing a total of 136,439 books during over 146,471 well-child visits.

To learn more about the new Affiliate, visit ReachOutandRead.org/Midwest.

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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.