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REACH OUT AND READ RECEIVES FUNDING FROM THE LOUIS CALDER FOUNDATION TO SUPPORT SHARED READING FROM BIRTH

Two-year grant will support 40,000 well-child visits and provide thousands of books for families across seven states.

BOSTON (Sept. 22, 2026) – National nonprofit Reach Out and Read is using a two-year grant from The Louis Calder Foundation to support Building Connections Begins at Birth, an initiative that equips clinicians with books and training to help families use shared reading to support their children's development and strengthen their relationships from the earliest months of life.

Across five Reach Out and Read Affiliates serving seven states, the grant will provide 40,000 books and support 40,000 well-child visits for children from birth through five months. During appointments, clinicians show caregivers how to share books with their children and respond to their cues. Families take the books home to continue reading together, making these moments of connection part of everyday life.

A newborn can't follow a plot or anticipate what happens on the next page, but their brain forms more than a million neural connections every second. When a parent reads with their baby, the child hears a familiar voice, studies a face held close, focuses their attention, and receives a response. These simple, responsive interactions support healthy brain development while strengthening the bond between babies and those who love them most.

"The earliest months of life are full of moments that shape how children learn, connect, and grow. Reach Out and Read helps families recognize the power of those moments from the very start — and gives clinicians a simple, tangible way to nurture the relationships at the heart of healthy development," said Dr. Lynette Fraga, Chief Executive Officer of Reach Out and Read.

The grant builds on The Louis Calder Foundation's earlier support, bringing the effort to more pediatric practices across Delaware, Florida, Georgia, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Washington. It is part of Reach Out and Read's broader work with more than 41,000 clinicians who serve 4.8 million children annually nationwide.

"Pediatric checkups give clinicians a trusted opportunity to show families that shared reading can begin long before a child understands the words," Dr. Fraga said. "By introducing a book during these earliest visits, clinicians help parents build reading into family life from the beginning — creating more opportunities for conversation, responsiveness, and connection."

For The Louis Calder Foundation, the initiative's strength lies in translating evidence-based care into something families can make part of everyday life.

“What we value about Building Connections Begins at Birth is that it meets families at a moment of enormous possibility and gives them something practical they can use right away. The work is grounded in evidence, but its power is also very human. The real promise is that something as ordinary as sharing a book can become part of how a family comes to understand what their child is capable of,” said Alex Calder, Executive Director of The Louis Calder Foundation.

The grant's impact will also extend to the next generation of clinicians through training for residents, helping them make shared reading part of their care for children throughout their careers.

To learn more about Reach Out and Read, visit ReachOutandRead.org.

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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. In FY25, Reach Out and Read served more than 4.8 million children and provided 9 million free books across 11.2 million well-child visits. Around 70 percent of the children Reach Out and Read serves are from low income families. 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.