



# Starting a New Reach Out and Read Program

[www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org)



# OUR MISSION

**Reach Out and Read** makes literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric primary care, so that children grow up with books and a love of reading. Reach Out and Read trains doctors and nurses to advise parents about the importance of reading aloud and to give books to children at pediatric checkups from 6 months through 5 years of age, with a special focus on children growing up in poverty. By building on the unique relationship between parents and medical providers, Reach Out and Read helps families and communities encourage early literacy skills so children enter school prepared for success in reading.

## **Thank you so much for your interest in Reach Out and Read!**

We are a national, nonprofit organization that promotes early literacy by making books and reading aloud part of pediatric primary care. We believe that every healthy childhood should include books and reading, and we believe that doctors and nurses who provide children's primary health care have a unique opportunity to get that message to families. Founded in 1989 at Boston Medical Center, Reach Out and Read has trained more than 52,000 doctors and nurses to provide guidance to parents about reading aloud and to give developmentally- appropriate books to their young children, all as part of the well-child visit. There are currently more than 4,500 Reach Out and Read Programs at health centers, hospitals, and pediatric practices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. More than 3.8 million children participate in Reach Out and Read annually. This year, more than 6 million new books will be given to families through Reach Out and Read.

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**[www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org)**



## Frequently Asked Questions

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### How will our clinic benefit from becoming an Reach Out and Read Program?

Thousands of doctors and nurses across the country, in large urban hospitals and small rural clinics, tell us that Reach Out and Read has become an essential part of their pediatric practices. By introducing a beautiful new book at the beginning of a well-child visit, providers find they can better engage and calm the child, provide meaningful, positive messages to the parent, and build connections with the family. Using the book in the exam room opens up the opportunity to talk about other issues – healthy routines, sleep issues, and even school readiness, and also offers providers a new and valuable tool for assessing the child's development. Becoming an Reach Out and Read Program will mean that your clinic offers new and valuable benefits to your patients and their families – important developmental guidance, beautiful age-appropriate books, enrichment in the waiting room – and also gives your providers new ways to strengthen their relationships with the families of young children.

### What is the Reach Out and Read model for pediatric literacy intervention?

The Reach Out and Read model for pediatric literacy intervention has three key elements:

- Primary care providers (doctors and nurses) are trained to deliver early literacy guidance to parents of children 6 months through 5 years of age during each well-child visit. This guidance centers on age-appropriate strategies, including: how to enjoy looking at board books and naming pictures with infants, the importance of rhyme and repetition to toddlers, and open-ended questions to ask when reading with preschoolers.
- During the well-child visit, in the exam room, the provider gives the child a new, developmentally-appropriate children's book to take home, building a collection of 10 new books in the home before the child goes to kindergarten.
- Many Reach Out and Read Programs also choose to create literacy-rich waiting rooms, including gently-used books for waiting room use or for siblings to take home. In many of these waiting rooms, Reach Out and Read volunteers model for parents the pleasures and techniques of reading aloud to very young children.

**“The other day in the waiting room I heard a voice. This little girl was 3 or 4 years old and she couldn’t read, but she was telling the story in a book, turning the pages and pointing to the pictures. And when she was finished, she said, ‘The end.’ It was fantastic.”**

*– A Reach Out and Read volunteer*

## How many books do we need, and how much do they cost?

The number of new books you need depends on your Annual Book Commitment (ABC), which is equivalent to the annual number of well-child visits for children ages 6 months through 5 years. On average, Reach Out and Read Programs' books cost approximately \$2.75 each. To determine your estimated Annual Book Budget, multiply your annual number of well-child visits for children aged 6 months through 5 years old (we used 620 in the below example) by \$2.75. Some of the books for your Program may be provided by an Reach Out and Read

### Calculating a Reach Out and Read Annual Book Budget

620 visits x \$2.75 per book =  
\$1,705 annual book budget

Coalition and/or other sources, thus lowering the number of books you will need to purchase each year. After a Program has completed two brief Reach Out and Read biannual Progress Reports, it may be eligible for books from the Reach Out and Read National Center.

## Is this program for everyone?

We at the Reach Out and Read National Center feel strongly that this message about the importance of reading aloud is important for every young child and every family – and, of course, that books are important for every child. We are eager to work with any clinic or practice which wants to implement the program.

## What kind of staff do we need to run an Reach Out and Read Program?

Each Reach Out and Read Program has a Reach Out and Read Medical Director – a doctor or nurse who is responsible for the job of training medical colleagues, connecting with the executive leadership of the clinic, and generally serving as the medical “face” of the Program. The Medical Director is supported by a Program Coordinator who is responsible for the administrative aspects of running the Reach Out and Read Program (i.e. ordering books, stocking exam rooms, coordinating volunteer readers). The Reach Out and Read Coordinator

can be any interested staff member familiar with the clinic, the staff, and the patient population. Both roles are most often voluntary in nature and take very little time each month.

**As a pediatrician, I know that at every checkup, I'm helping parents understand how reading aloud will help their children learn and love books and eventually succeed in school. Reach Out and Read is changing children's lives."**

*– Perri Klass, M.D.,  
Reach Out and Read National Medical Director*

# What are the **BASICS** we need to get started?

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## **We want to become a Reach Out and Read Program – what steps should we take now?**

- Review information about the Reach Out and Read model at [www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org)
- Identify an on-site Reach Out and Read Medical Director.
- Speak with your clinic's administration and pediatric staff to engage their support.
- Begin to gather demographic information on your clinic population – ages 6 months through 5 years. (You will also need to determine a rough approximation of the percent of families living at or near 200% of the poverty level, or give us other demographic information to indicate whether you serve a substantial number of children who should be considered at-risk.)
- Develop and begin implementing a fundraising plan to generate support for your Reach Out and Read Program.

## **How will our doctors and nurses get trained in the Reach Out and Read model?**

Reach Out and Read training for pediatric primary care providers offers practical, concrete, and effective strategies for talking to parents about books and for using books in the well-child visit. All participating Reach Out and Read providers need to complete the Reach Out and Read training before they begin implementing the program. For new Programs with more than eight providers, the Reach Out and Read National Center or an Reach Out and Read Coalition can arrange an on-site training session shortly after the application is approved. A training video and a one-hour online CME course on pediatric literacy promotion are also available as training options.

## **What books are best for participating Reach Out and Read families?**

The Reach Out and Read model calls for the provider to give a new, age- and culturally-appropriate book in the exam room at each well child visit. There are a number of ways that you can purchase books for your Program.

Reach Out and Read publishes a book catalog available exclusively to approved Reach Out and Read Programs, with hundreds of carefully

**“A couple of weeks ago I had a dad with a 6-month-old, and it was a brand new message for him. But as we talked, I could see the light bulb go on because there in front of him the baby was getting so interested in the book, mouthing it and squealing.”**

*– Holly Oh, M.D.  
Dimock Community Health Center, MA*

selected children's books from more than 25 publishers, at substantially discounted prices. The catalog is organized by child's age, to make the book selection process easy. Many Reach Out and Read Programs also choose to purchase high quality children's books from other local or national sources that offer discounts to literacy programs. You can also solicit new book donations from individuals or businesses in your area.

The Reach Out and Read Program Manual, available on [ww.myROR.org](http://ww.myROR.org), has a chapter devoted to identifying good children's books for use in the Program, as well as suggestions for ordering, tracking, and storing your book supply.

Many Reach Out and Read Programs also like to have "gently-used" donated books available in the waiting areas for siblings, for sick visits, or for long waiting periods.

### **How do we create literacy-rich waiting rooms and recruit volunteers?**

Reach Out and Read recognizes that children and parents often spend a fair amount of time in the waiting room. To take advantage of this time, the Reach Out and Read model recommends using the waiting room to promote the joy of reading aloud and to provide information for parents about how to read to their young children. In many Reach Out and Read waiting rooms:

- Volunteers provide children with positive reading experiences and help parents understand that a picture or storybook is an easy, portable way to keep a young child engaged in almost any situation.
- Volunteers can model read-aloud techniques that show parents by example that reading with children is a vigorous, enjoyable process.

Not all clinics have waiting rooms or wait times suitable for volunteer reader programs. However, all Reach Out and Read Programs can develop a waiting room component of the program. For example, Reach Out and Read Programs can:

- Ask volunteers to collect gently-used books, sort them, and put them out on shelves in the waiting room so children of all ages can read them in the waiting room and take them home if they choose.
- Develop displays of short poems, stories, and laminated posters to display in the waiting area.

**"The program has inspired me to get more books for him."**

*– Reach Out and Read mother  
of a 9-month-old*

- Provide posters and pamphlets about health literacy and family literacy opportunities available in the community.

# How Does a Reach Out and Read Program find external support?

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## How do we find Financial Support?

There are lots of ways to raise money for your Reach Out and Read Program. Many Programs hold an annual fundraiser, such as a bake sale or a pancake breakfast. Still others seek funding from individuals in their communities or from small businesses, large corporations, or charitable foundations that support local causes. The kind of fundraising plan that you need will depend on the size of your population and your budget. Once your application is approved, [www.myROR.org](http://www.myROR.org) provides templates for fundraising letters and grant applications that you can personalize for your own Program.

## How do we find Community Support?

Collaborations can help your Program with local fundraising for books, volunteer recruitment, community visibility, and publicity. There are other people in your community working to promote literacy, and there are many service organizations that might want to link up with you locally. Reach Out and Read Programs often work with the following groups:

- Libraries
- Faith-based organizations
- High school and college community service leaders
- Civic groups (e.g., Rotary Club, Kiwanis, Junior League)
- Municipal literacy initiatives

There may also be a regional or citywide Reach Out and Read initiative in your area or an Reach Out and Read Coalition in your state. Call the National Center or visit [www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org) to learn if there is such a group near you; they can offer valuable guidance and support as you begin to raise funds and advocate for pediatric literacy intervention in your community.

**“Next to the immunizations we give, Reach Out and Read is the most important intervention we accomplish during the well-child visit.”**

*– Daniel Webster Hudgings, M.D.  
Sage Memorial Hospital, AZ*

## How do Programs interact with the National Center?

The staff at the Reach Out and Read National Center are available to provide ongoing technical assistance to our programs. We like to keep in touch, often through our regular e-newsletter. In addition, if your Program is in a region with a Reach Out and Read Coalition, you will benefit from their assistance and support as well.

Each Reach Out and Read Program submits a brief online Progress Report with the National Center twice a year, usually in February/March and again in August/September. The forms can be completed in about 20 minutes and are crucial for us to understand the size and scope of Reach Out and Read nationwide, as well as to help us identify our strengths and also the problems that need attention at a local or national level. The Progress Reports also provide the data we need in order to make our semi-annual book awards from the National Center to high-quality active Reach Out and Read Programs. This online report typically includes contact updates and brief questions pertaining to program activity: how many books were distributed and children served in the previous six-month period; how many providers are actively participating in the Program; and how many volunteer hours have been donated.

## How do we submit an application to the National Center?

The easiest, most efficient way to become an Reach Out and Read Program is by completing an online application, which can be found on our website. You may also request an application by mail or email. The Reach Out and Read website is a comprehensive source of information about Reach Out and Read. When you begin an online Reach Out and Read application you will be offered a password for access to information about how to begin and sustain a Program. The Reach Out and Read website home page is [www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org), and you will find additional information in the "Starting a Program" section inside the Providers Gateway.

Once again, thank you for your interest in Reach Out and Read. We hope to help you provide this intervention, with all its benefits, to the children and families for whom you care. The

Reach Out and Read Program support staff is eager to help. Contact us:

**By phone:** at 617-455-0600 or fax at 617-455-0601

**By mail:** at Reach Out and Read, 56 Roland Street, Suite 100D, Boston, MA 02129

**By email:** at [startup@reachoutandread.org](mailto:startup@reachoutandread.org)

**"Giving a book to a child when you first enter the exam room, changes the dynamics of the entire clinic and the well-child visit. Kids look forward to the books and parents show pride in the fact that their children are so interested in them."**

*– Kyu Rhee, M.D., MPP  
Unity Health Care, Washington D.C.*

## Resources

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You will find some very useful resources on the Reach Out and Read website as you consider implementing an Reach Out and Read program in your clinic or hospital, either to begin a new program application, or to access current resources available. You could begin by looking at these pages:

- Begin a new Program Application online and view a sample of the Reach Out and Read Program Application at: <http://www.reachoutandread.org/providers/startingaprogram/>
- Download a one page summary of the peer-reviewed research on Reach Out and Read at: <http://www.reachoutandread.org/impact/evidencebase.aspx>

**In a comparison study, children at an urban clinic with Reach Out and Read scored significantly higher on standardized vocabulary tests – 8.6 points higher for receptive language and 4.3 points higher for expressive, both large, meaningful effects.**

*– Mendelsohn, A., et al, Pediatrics, 2001*



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