

Early Literacy Promotion in Pediatric Primary Care: Advocating for Policies to Support Reach Out and Read Across PA

Statement of Problem

Reading aloud together during the earliest years is a daily experience with lifelong benefits. Birth to age five is a critical window when our [brains grow](#) more than at any other time. By establishing routines that include nurturing, language-rich interactions, we can further a child's language acquisition, promote healthy brain development, and provide opportunities for families to build powerful, lasting bonds.

Despite these benefits, an annual national survey found that less than [46% of Pennsylvania parents](#) report reading aloud with their young children each day. Projecting forward, [38% of Pennsylvania students](#) tested below proficient in English and Language Arts in third grade in 2019. Once students begin fourth grade, they transition from learning to read to reading to learn, which can cause students who are struggling to fall behind in other subjects. Finally, if we look at the broader context, approximately [21% of U.S. adults](#) have low literacy skills, which impacts daily life. While there are programs that exist to support early literacy, more funding is needed to advance evidence-based models that support caregivers and children reading together.

Description

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dence-based, three-part



a prescription to
read

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Our team aims to strengthen the Reach Out and Read (ROR) network across the state by collaborating with ROR clinic-champions, identifying policy mechanisms to link early learning and pediatric care, and developing materials to present the evidence base for early literacy promotion.

One critical venue for encouraging shared reading is in routine pediatric check-ups (or well-child visits). Pediatric medical providers are a trusted source of information and most children attend these medical check-ups before entering child care, Head Start or preschool. A 2014 American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) policy statement, titled "[Literacy Promotion: An Essential Component of Primary Care Pediatric Practice](#)," elevated [Reach Out and Read](#) (ROR) as "...the most widely studied and disseminated model of literacy promotion in the child's medical home." Furthermore, an [AAP Policy Statement on Poverty and Child Health in the U.S.](#) included ROR as one of a series of programs recommended to improve the quality of life and health outcomes for children and families living in poverty.

ROR is a nonprofit that supports a national network of 33,000 pediatric clinicians trained in the [evidence-based](#) model now delivering high-quality care to 4.5 million children.

ROR's three-part model includes:

- **Books Incorporated into Routine Well-Child Visits as a Tool for Offering Anticipatory Guidance and Evaluating Child Development:** Participating medical providers are trained to utilize a new, culturally and developmentally appropriate book in well-child visits. The book helps survey the child's gross and fine motor skills, cognitive and speech milestones and to observe parent/child interactions. Clinicians also offer reassurance and guidance to caregivers on shared reading behaviors that help foster strong relationships and optimize everyday brain-building activities with the child. *Watch an example of a ROR 12-month well-child visit [here](#).*
- **A Prescription to Read:** Each child is given the new book used during the visit to take home supporting the prescription for reading, building a collection of 10-15 books in the home before kindergarten.
- **Literacy-rich Clinic Environments:** Throughout the clinic, displays of information, gently used books, artwork and community resources all help promote a literacy-rich environment that reinforces the messages given to families in the exam room.

In Pennsylvania, the ROR program is primarily donor-driven, requiring the 200+ participating clinics that serve over 150,000 children to fundraise in order to support implementation. The lack of access to sustainable funding is often the reason clinics opt to discontinue or not participate in ROR.

This three-year policy-focused project aims to secure sustainable public funding to support and expand ROR in Pennsylvania. The project will build on the successes of ROR regional affiliates in 15 other states who have received public investment from federal, state, county, and municipal sources linking pediatric care and early learning. More broadly, by focusing on incremental policy and systematic change, we can move towards a future where literacy promotion is a standard component of pediatric primary care. This is one piece to the puzzle when considering transforming the pediatric medical home to better address social drivers of health, promote early learning and nurture the foundational relationships that are critical to child development.

Currently, our team is working to build relationships and align with like-minded partners. One specific way we will do this is by strengthening the ROR network across Pennsylvania. The ROR team based at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) works closely with over 80 participating clinics in the Greater Philadelphia region providing program support and technical assistance. An integral component of this project includes both meeting and collaborating with the other ROR clinic-champions that currently span 34 counties in Pennsylvania—bolstering ROR connections across the state and activating potential early literacy advocates.

Next Steps

As part of this exciting project, the team will undertake:

- Identifying possible policy mechanisms to link early learning and pediatric care through public investment in ROR by evaluating the existing policy landscape in Pennsylvania and learning from others in the ROR nationwide network about policy and advocacy best practices.
- Developing materials that frame the evidence base for early literacy promotion paired with the identified possible policy approaches to disseminate and discuss viability with stakeholders.
- Executing the ROR Pennsylvania policy strategy and associated advocacy campaign.
 - If public funding becomes available, this will be followed by program support and technical assistance for successful implementation and expansion with fidelity to the ROR model across Pennsylvania.

It is hard to understate the value of literacy—or the ability to read, write, speak, think and respond critically. These skills can open the door to many possibilities across the lifespan both in school and beyond, affecting how we interact with our communities, engage as citizens, consume health care, express ourselves and more. If we help give every young child a foundation for success through the power of reading regardless of background or economic means, we can contribute to brighter futures.

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Project Leads

Ahaviah Glaser JD

Senior Policy Advisor

Ahaviah (“Havi”) Glaser is the senior policy advisor at PolicyLab and the associate vice president of government affairs and advocacy at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). Ms. Glaser comes to CHOP with more than two decades of health law and policy experience. She is a seasoned public policy advisor, who recently served on Capitol Hill as Senator Rockefeller’s Senior Health Counsel as well as the Staff Director for the Senate Finance Committee’s Subcommittee on Health Care. Ms. Glaser is known for her expertise across public health insurance programs with a particular focus on the intersection of these programs, such as Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) or Medicaid and Medicare.

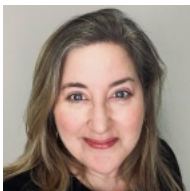
With a background in intellectual property and antitrust litigation, Ms. Glaser has been active on private market insurance reform as well as pharmaceutical pricing issues. On and off the Hill, Ms. Glaser has

worked to identify concerns raised by health information technology, including challenges related to interoperability and privacy. She also worked closely with the Senate Commerce Committee to raise concerns regarding e-cigarettes and the ongoing challenge of finding a way to stop the marketing of tobacco to children. The very first health care issue Ms. Glaser worked on was health disparities, and the issue remains a central one in her work to this day.

As an attorney, Ms. Glaser has represented companies ranging from new startups to industry-defining giants in the pharmaceutical, biotechnology and high technology fields both in court and before federal agencies, most commonly Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). She has also navigated the legislative landscape, not only in her Congressional staff roles but also on behalf of nonprofit groups, big and small, from state-based health care advocacy groups to the nation's largest consumer groups, unions and non-profit insurers.

Ms. Glaser believes strongly that there are policy solutions for nearly every problem. It is simply a matter of taking the time to develop a full understanding of the problem at hand and then identifying appropriate opportunities to work with partners and across party lines in a thoughtful way. With this in mind, much of her policy experience, both on and off the Hill, has been in helping to assemble diverse coalitions to tackle nuanced health policy challenges.

Ms. Glaser has been a frequent public speaker, and she served for nearly a decade as an adjunct professor of health law at American University's Washington College of Law. She earned her J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School and her B.S., with honors, from the University of California at Berkeley. She is admitted to practice in Washington, DC, California, Massachusetts and numerous federal courts across the country.



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Danielle Erkoboni is a faculty member at PolicyLab at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), an Assistant Professor at the University of Pennsylvania, and a general pediatrician at CHOP Pediatric Primary Care Norristown. Dr. Erkoboni leads efforts to promote early literacy and relational health through parent-child interaction in an increasingly digital age. Much of her work focuses on initiatives that support these interactions through talking, singing, reading, and playing in the pediatric primary care office. She currently serves as the principal investigator of the Literacy Lab and the Associate Medical Director of Reach Out and Read Pennsylvania. Through this work and other diverse research initiatives, Dr. Erkoboni has partnered with multiple community-based organizations and stakeholders, including the Institute for Child Success, Playful Learning Landscapes Action Network (PLLAN), the Free Library of Philadelphia, Reach Out and Read, Inc., and Read by 4th (Philadelphia’s grade-level reading campaign).

Dr. Erkoboni completed her undergraduate medical education at Chicago Medical School, pediatric residency at St. Christopher’s Hospital for Children, and academic fellowship in the National Clinician Scholar Program at the University of Pennsylvania, where she received a Master’s in Health Policy and Research. Dr. Erkoboni is the co-chair of LitNet, Reach Out and Read’s National Research Network, and participates on many local and national committees, including leadership roles in the Pennsylvania American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Early Childhood Committee, Read by 4th’s Leadership Council, and the Council on Early Childhood (COEC) of the AAP. At home, she is a mother to two girls, and her favorite children’s book is “Click Clack Moo” by Doreen Cronin.



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Funders of Project

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[Supporting Early Literacy for Babies and Toddlers in Military Families With Recent Federal Action in 200 Words](#)
[Blog Post](#)
Jul 06, 2022

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[Promoting Early Literacy Using Digital Devices: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial Article](#)

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[Effects of Early Literacy Promotion on Language Development and Home Reading Environment: A Randomized Controlled Trial Article](#)

Article

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[Opportunities for Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program to Support Early Literacy Promotion in Pediatric Primary Care: A Spotlight on Reach Out and Read Policy Briefs](#)

Policy Briefs

Mar 2023

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[Supporting Early Literacy by Reaching Families Beyond the Exam Room Walls in 200 Words Blog Post](#)

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[Breaking Down Silos: Developing Effective Coordination of Early Childhood Development Resources and Systems Blog Post](#)

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[Turning the Page: How Shared Reading and Pediatric Partnerships Can Strengthen Early Literacy and Child Well-Being Blog Post](#)

Blog Post

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