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.

Literacy-Rich Waiting Rooms

- Reach Out and Read begins in the waiting room! Children and parents can spend a fair amount of time in the waiting room, so it’s an ideal opportunity to reinforce the doctor’s message about the importance of early literacy.
- The Reach Out and Read model includes taking full advantage of this time by providing children with an opportunity to enjoy books, and offering important information to parents about how to read aloud to young children. The waiting room is also a great place to post information about the library and other community literacy resources.
- Many Reach Out and Read waiting rooms also feature volunteer readers, who engage children’s interest in books and demonstrate that reading can be fun for parents and children alike.

What Makes a Literacy-Rich Waiting Room?

- Designate a special reading area for children. It might include a colorful rug, child-friendly tables and chairs, and a bookshelf or basket for books.
- Obtain books for the waiting room through used book drives, donations from staff, local families, community groups, and businesses.
- Decorate the walls with Reach Out and Read milestones posters, photos of families reading together, copies of children’s book covers and children’s art.
- Recruit volunteers to read at peak hours. Volunteer readers engage children and model read-aloud skills for parents.
- Provide oversized read-aloud books, including bilingual books, for volunteer readers.
- Post information about the local library (location, story hours, special events, library card applications) and adult literacy programs.
- Provide children’s magazines and parenting magazines.
- Invite a local celebrity reader or storybook characters to visit your clinic.

Create a Literacy-Rich Waiting Room on a Limited Budget

- Community groups, senior citizens, hospital volunteers, friends and family, high school and college students and more can all become volunteer readers or donate used books. Spread the news about volunteer opportunities at local libraries, online volunteer networks and the clinic website.
- Have art students create murals with literary themes or characters.
- Ask a local photographer to donate pictures of children and families reading together.
- Community organizations can host gently used book drives.
- Scouting groups or other community service groups can build bookshelves, paint walls and create reading nooks.

For more information on recruiting and training volunteers, waiting room improvements on any budget, or links to vendors of waiting room furniture, visit the Literacy-Rich Waiting Room Resource Center on my ROR.org.