



LEADERSHIP AND MOMENTUM FOR 2GEN APPROACHES TO MULTI-GENERATIONAL POVERTY IN THE WESTERN STATES

Nikki Hatch, Administration for Children and Families, Region 8

Persistent, multigenerational poverty is the greatest social challenge of our time, and the growing chasm between classes from systemic racism and sexism exacerbates it. At the same time, there is an inadequate evidence base of what truly works on a broad scale to improve it. Burgeoning leadership throughout the country is embracing 2Gen thinking. Behemoth government programs often inadvertently work at cross-purposes, even aggravating the very problems they are intended to solve. As well, the entire infrastructure of government programs (workforce, policies, administrative requirements, budgets, and often leadership) exists to perpetuate an unsatisfying status quo. However, meaningful results absolutely can be achieved within this giant governmental machinery, sometimes with grand vision and sometimes with minor, behind-the-scenes tweaks.

Leveraging the role of the regional administrator for the Administration for Children and Families, we held a 2Gen Summit for 10 states from the western region.

THE SUMMIT BROUGHT TOGETHER POLICY LEADERS WHO ARE ADVANCED, NASCENT, AND NEW-BUT-RECEPTIVE WITH RESPECT TO 2GEN APPROACHES TO ACHIEVE THE FOLLOWING:

- Catalyzed action across multiple states in common directions;
- More states undertaking 2Gen approaches deliberately, connected to peers and national thought leadership in the field;
- Western states identified as leaders in their realms; and
- Identifying and taking actions to broaden 2Gen approaches in rural areas.

The summit highlighted the stories of two states that had seen significant payoff in using a statewide 2Gen approach, Colorado and Utah. It also demonstrated the experience, innovation, and lessons from all participating states through a series of breakout conversations divided into three areas. The three focus areas — leadership and management culture; aligned policies, programs, and funding streams; research and data — reflect the main bodies of work that systems undertake in leading 2Gen change to achieve better outcomes for children and families.

Ten of the 11 states in the western region participated, sending cabinet-level representation and robust cross-sector teams. In addition, senior federal leadership from the Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and

Human Services, and US Department of Labor participated actively throughout the summit as did select research experts from Mathematica and the Urban Institute and leading nonprofits, including Climb Wyoming. Results from the evaluation were overwhelmingly positive, with states noting their appreciation for the peer-to-peer learning opportunities and identifying concrete connections and next steps they would be taking as the result of the summit.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF THOSE FOLLOW-UP STEPS INCLUDE:

- Including parents more formally in policymaking;
- Following up with colleagues about new collaboration opportunities;
- Identifying shared action steps with state colleagues;
- Revising all staff position descriptions to include explicit 2Gen framing;
- Incorporating a 2Gen approach to working with families struggling with addiction;
- Using the Colorado and Utah models to inform the legislative poverty agenda; and
- Identifying ways to align children's programming that is currently siloed across agencies.

Senior-level participants from all 10 states made a significant investment of expertise and thought, taking the time to build relationships, which led to strong participation.

The summit was a worthwhile investment of staff, financial, and intellectual resources. It provided a regional kickstart for incorporating whole family or 2Gen approaches into policy and programs more intentionally to serve children and families more effectively. The lessons and work identified and accelerated through the summit will form the basis of the Administration for Children and Families' regional strategy for the western states.



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Nikki Hatch is the Regional Administrator for the Administration for Children and Families, Region 8, which serves Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. In this capacity, Hatch partners with state, local, community-based organizations, and tribes to promote the economic and social well-being of children, families, individuals, and communities in the region.

“Participating in the Fellowship enabled me in a very direct way to catalyze my work at the Federal level. It was with the brainstorming, wrestling with ideas, engagement and challenge with my colleagues, and with the active encouragement into braver leadership, that I took a little idea (a small convening to explore 2Gen possibilities) and took it to a much bolder reality (ten-state, multi-sector, state/fed/non-profit/ research convening to grow 2Gen in all the states I serve). For some of my states, this

has been additional encouragement in work they're already undertaking; for others, this was the very first step on a path to bringing 2Gen strategies to families they support. This Fellowship was an important part of helping spread 2Gen ideas and actions from Colorado throughout the Frontier states and West!

For me personally, I can say that it was in the context of this Fellowship, and in the context of the 2Gen convening that I hosted that I become much more confident in my own leadership, both in the 2Gen space and more broadly. I feel not only ready to take on the big issues, but eager, sleeves-rolled-up! I also feel steeled by a strong network, both of my own cohort of Fellows, but of the larger Ascend Fellows, who I've grown to reach out to and rely on. I can sincerely say this Fellowship has been career and life changing!"