



PRACTICE BRIEF

PUTTING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE: TWO GENERATION APPROACHES



PUTTING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE: TWO GENERATION APPROACHES. April 2016

This document is intended for use by Community Action Agencies and other CSBG Eligible Entities within the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Network.

Publication Contributors

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Community Action Partnership

The Community Action Partnership is the nonprofit, national membership organization representing the interests of the 1,000+ Community Action Agencies (CAAs) across the country that annually helps 17 million low-income Americans achieve economic security. Whether it's a Head Start program, weatherization, job training, housing, food bank, energy assistance, financial education, or any of the other 40 distinct programs, CAAs work to make America a better place to live.

Learning Community Resources Center (LCRC)

The purpose of the CSBG Learning Community is to analyze Community Action outcomes and identify effective, promising, and innovative practice models that alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty.

The Learning Community, a project of the LCRC, is an opportunity for Community Action Agencies to build capacity to increase impact by:

- Capitalizing on Peer Knowledge and Expertise;
- Creating Effective Strategies; and
- Promoting Promising Practices

The Learning Community is comprised of topical Learning Community Groups (LCGs) which consist of a cadre of agencies that are currently working on a program or service delivery strategy related to each of the LCG focus areas. Learning Community members meet bi-monthly, either virtually or in-person and assist each other by discussing “what works”, sharing data findings, solving problems, and offering support for implementing new ideas.

The **CSBG TTA Resource Center** is also a project of the LCRC and serves as a wonderful compliment to *The Learning Community* as it is the “clearinghouse” for a broad array of resources to assist Community Action with its important anti-poverty work. The Resource Center allows for electronic submission of requests for T/TA, ensures the coordination of resources, and allows experts to meet the T/TA needs of the CSBG Network. It hosts a consultant bank; a resource bank which provides a broad array of evidence-based, evidence-informed and exemplary program practice models; a shared calendar; and a discussion forum. A valuable tool, the Resource Bank includes information, toolkits, webinars, articles and other information focused on a full range of services to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities served by the CSBG Network.

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PUTTING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE TWO GENERATION APPROACHES

OVERVIEW

Two-generation approaches to alleviating poverty have existed since the 1980s, but a second wave of two-generation programs has recently come to the fore.¹ Two-generation approaches seek to address the needs of both impoverished parents and their children to break the cycle of generational poverty.

Recently, there has been an increased focus on combating poverty using two-generational approaches. Research demonstrates that children born into poor families are more likely to experience poverty as adults and, in turn, raise their own children in poverty. Programs have started serving parents and children through two-generation approaches designed to meet both the child development and parental economic security needs of a family to effectively mitigate challenges and support positive outcomes for all its members. Traditionally, the focus for alleviating generational poverty has been on either early childhood education or workforce education and training for parents, while two-generation approaches focus on both sets of needs.

Two-generation approaches to addressing the challenges facing these families are grounded in the premise that a holistic approach that meets both the child development and parental economic security needs of a family can effectively mitigate challenges and support positive outcomes for all its members. Research indicates that by investing in low-income children and parents, educational, financial, and social outcomes for both are improved. This approach has been implemented using existing programs and by creating new and innovative projects.

ICF has synthesized research and resources below from the field on two-generation approaches, organized into five categories: Intergenerational Poverty Data, Two-Generation Program Need, Program Implementation/Promising Practices, Two-Generation Program Types, and State Policy Information.

¹ Chase-Lansdale, P. L. and Brooks-Gunn, J. (2014). Two-generation programs in the twenty-first century. *The Future of Children*, 13-39.

RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Intergenerational Poverty Data

[Medicaid and Intergenerational Economic Mobility, April 2015](#)

This paper published by the Institute for Research on Poverty examines the effect of Medicaid expansions on intergenerational economic mobility. Using new data, the authors utilize the uneven Medicaid eligibility expansions across states to isolate the effect of this policy change on various mobility outcomes. The research led to the conclusion that Medicaid expansions increase the probability that children born to low-income parents experience absolute upward mobility. Furthermore, early exposure to health insurance may be influential in promoting intergenerational mobility and economic opportunity.

[Two Generations in Poverty: Status and Trends among Parents and Children in the United States, 2000-2010, November 2011](#)

This brief draws on data from the U.S. Census Bureau and presents a sharpened two-generation lens on the poverty and low-income status of children and families during the first decade of the 21st century. In addition, it presents data on differences in poverty and low-income status across race and ethnic origin, age, family structure, gender, education, full-time employment status, and geography (abbreviated author introduction).

[Child Poverty and Intergenerational Mobility, December 2009](#)

Economic mobility, the ability to move up or down the economic ladder during one's lifetime and across generations, is central to the ideal of the American Dream. But recent research finds that there are limitations to mobility in the United States. For example, one study of families across generations finds that one's economic position is strongly influenced by that of one's parents: 42 percent of children born to parents in the bottom fifth of the economic distribution remain in the bottom as adults and another 23 percent rise only to the second fifth, while 39 percent of children born to parents at the top of the income distribution remain at the top, with another 23 percent moving to the second fifth. This paper focuses on the lower end of the earnings spectrum and highlights findings from a working paper commissioned by the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP). In particular, NCCP reports how common it is for children to experience poverty throughout the course of childhood – defined as the years from birth to age 15 – and how that relates to the likelihood that they will be poor in young and middle adulthood (abbreviated author abstract).

[Getting Ahead or Losing Ground: Economic Mobility in America, January 2008](#)

The belief that those who work hard can achieve success has made Americans more tolerant of inequality than citizens in other advanced nations. However, to succeed, Americans need the opportunity to get ahead. In a report from the Brookings Institute and the Economic Mobility Project, Brookings Scholars Julia Isaacs, Ron Haskins, and Isabel

Sawhill summarize research and present new evidence regarding the extent of intergenerational economic mobility in the U.S. and the factors that impact it.

II. Two-Generation Program Need

[Two-Generation Strategies Can Help Fathers, Too, March 2015](#)

In most of the two-generational strategies and programs, the attention is mainly focused on mothers. However, this brief from the Center for Law and Social Policy explains the early evidence from research that shows if noncustodial parents - mostly young men - are successfully employed and in healthy relationships in their own lives, they can also contribute to more successful outcomes for their children, both financially and emotionally.

[Thriving Children, Successful Parents: A Two-Generation Approach to Policy, July 2014](#)

This brief outlines the two-generation approach to combating poverty. It includes background information on the current state of children and parents in poverty, justification for this approach, and clear policy steps to expand this approach through specifications that can be taken by lawmakers (author introduction).

[Mother's Education and Children's Outcomes: How Dual-Generation Programs Offer Increased Opportunities for America's Families, July 2014](#)

This report from the Foundation for Child Development highlights the benefits of dual-generation programs in terms of children's outcomes. Specifically, research shows the many disparities between children whose mothers had not graduated from high school and children whose mothers had obtained a bachelor's degree. Children whose mothers had not graduated from high school experience higher rates of poverty, lower rates of mathematics and reading proficiencies, a lower likelihood of graduating high school on time, and poorer overall health. The report also spotlights dual-generation programs in Tulsa, Oklahoma and Los Angeles, California. Finally, the authors offer policy options for all levels of government to develop and implement successful dual-generation programs.

[Helping Parents, Helping Children: Two-Generation Mechanisms, Spring 2014](#)

This issue of *Future of Children* assesses past and current two-generation programs. But it goes much further than that. The editors identified six widely acknowledged mechanisms or pathways through which parents, and the home environment they create, are thought to influence children's development: stress, education, health, income, employment, and assets. Understanding how these mechanisms of development work—and when, where, and how they harm or help—should aid us in designing interventions that boost children's intellectual and socioemotional development, strengthen families, and help close academic gaps between students from poor and more affluent families.

[Toward a Two-Generation Strategy: Voices of American Families, December 2011](#)

A critical aspect of Ascend's work is listening to, learning from, and lifting up the voices of the most vulnerable families in the United States today. Ascend commissioned this

bipartisan series of focus groups to examine the experiences, perspectives, and needs of low-income families. By listening to the perspectives of families across demographics - race, gender, and family structure - Ascend aims to elevate their voices and use these findings to inform programmatic and policy work, in particular two-generation strategies to improve educational and economic outcomes for both parents and children (author introduction).

III. Program Implementation/Promising Practices

[Two Generations. One Future. An Anthology from the Ascend Fellowship, 2015](#)

Two Generations. One Future: An Anthology from the Ascend Fellowship, edited by Dr. Christopher King, Dr. P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, and Dr. Mario Small, offers insights into 2-Gen 2.0 approaches spearheaded by 20 leaders from across sectors, including the fields of human services, mental health, justice-involved families, and early childhood. It is divided into four sections: 1) Underpinnings of two-generation strategies, 2) Addressing and empowering families, 3) Innovative policies and programs, and 4) Evaluating and fostering two-generation strategies. Led by the inaugural class of Aspen Institute Ascend Fellows, the Anthology offers the latest and most comprehensive picture of the two-generation field and its challenges, successes, and lessons (author introduction).

[Top Ten for 2Gen: Policies and Principles to Advance Two-Generation Efforts, 2014](#)

This paper from the *Ascend* project at The Aspen Institute provides federal and state policymakers with six principles and ten specific policies from across human service disciplines to foster and guide two-generation approaches. Recommendations and tips for implementing these policies are also provided, and real world examples of policies are given (author abstract).

[Creating Opportunity for Families: A Two-Generation Approach, 2014](#)

This policy report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation draws upon data from the KIDS COUNT project, which provides yearly indicators of child well-being from a variety of available data. It highlights the strong need for programs and services that meet the needs of both parents and children experiencing poverty to ensure an improved economic future for children born into poverty. The report highlights promising program examples and provides policy recommendations to encourage two-generation approaches.

[Two-Generation Playbook, 2014](#)

This guide from the *Ascend* project at The Aspen Institute combines infographics, data, and information to explain the operation of two-generation approaches, their core components, and areas of emerging opportunities for implementation. Specific projects are highlighted within each of the core components to show readers the types of real-world work that occur within two-generation approaches.

[Considering Two Generation Strategies in the States, June 2014](#)

The Working Poor Families Project released a policy brief that outlines ways that states can encourage two-generation strategies within programs to continue to help adults achieve economic success while maintaining strong, stable families. The brief includes an in-depth history of poverty and two-generation strategies in the United States and offers specific recommendations to support and stimulate these efforts within states.

[Building Adult Capabilities to Improve Child Outcomes: A Theory of Change, May 2013](#)

The Frontiers of Innovation initiative from Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child released a short video about a theory of change to achieve breakthrough outcomes for vulnerable children and families. The video depicts the need to focus on building capabilities of caregivers, as well as strengthen communities that form the environment of crucial relationships for children's lifelong development.

[Two Generations, One Future: Moving Parents and Children Beyond Poverty Together, January 2012](#)

With catalytic support from a core circle of investors, Ascend at The Aspen Institute was launched with the mission to serve as a hub for breakthrough ideas and proven strategies that move parents, especially women, and their children beyond poverty toward educational success and economic security. Ascend takes a two-generation approach to its work and brings a gender and racial equity lens to analysis. Two-generation approaches focus on creating opportunities for and addressing needs of both vulnerable parents and children together. Two-generation approaches can be applied to programs, policies, systems, and research. This paper outlines the emerging case for and shares a framework for two-generation approaches. Key economic and demographic trends are driving the need for these approaches (author abstract).

IV. Two-Generation Program Types

[New Ways of Creating Opportunities for Families in Poverty: Perspective on the Emerging Two-Generation Policy Discussion, March 2015](#)

The report from First Focus provides a historical context and lessons learned on two-generation approaches to reducing poverty. The author discusses three policy areas to implement two-generation approaches, including Head Start, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training, and TANF.

[Two Generations Together: Case Studies from Head Start, January 2015](#)

Produced by the National Head Start Association with support from the *Ascend* project at The Aspen Institute, this report highlights six case studies from Head Start and Early Head Start programs that have implemented two-generation approaches within their programs. Each case study includes information on the project design, funding, partnerships, research, and future plans. Finally, an analysis of funding, partnerships, and research across all the programs is provided for a broad perspective.

[Using Subsidized Housing as a Platform for Two-Generation Strategies, August 2014](#)

This presentation describes successes and challenges with the Housing Opportunities & Services Together (HOST) demonstration, a housing-based case management and wraparound services program for adults, with child engagement strategies (i.e., two-generation strategy). The presentation was given at the 2014 National Association of Welfare Research and Statistics (NAWRS) Annual Workshop.

[Gateways to Two Generations: The Potential for Early Childhood Programs and Partnerships to Support Children and Parents Together, January 2014](#)

Americans have always relied on a set of core beliefs that fall under the umbrella of "The American Dream." Hard work. Equal opportunity. Optimism. However, many feel these values are in jeopardy; many parents have a growing unease about the future -- their own futures and their children's futures. Major shifts in family demographics and structure, as well as in the skills and education required by the economy, mandate a change in how we help families succeed. Two-generation approaches, which focus on creating opportunities for and meeting the needs of vulnerable children and their parents together, move the whole family toward educational success and economic security. Ascend is the national hub for two-generation approaches. In *Gateways to Two Generations*, Ascend considers the question: Will two-generation approaches applied to the early childhood development arena produce better outcomes for both children and parents? (author abstract)

V. State Policy Information

[Utah Intergenerational Welfare Reform Commission Annual Report on Intergenerational Poverty, Welfare Dependency, and the Use of Public Assistance, March 2016](#)

This annual report is mandated by Utah's Intergenerational Poverty Mitigation Act, and requires the Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS) to report on the status of individuals experiencing intergenerational poverty. Since 2012, DWS has met this requirement through coordination of data sharing across the five state agencies that comprise the Intergenerational Welfare Reform Commission, including the Department of Health, Department of Human Services, DWS, Juvenile Courts, and the Utah State Office of Education. This yearly report provides an update on state two-generation activities over the previous year, and includes evidence-based policy recommendations based on the data contained in each report.

[Jeffco Prosperity Project: Breaking the Cycle of Poverty in Jefferson County, Colorado, March 2016](#)

The Jeffco Prosperity Project (JPP) is a collaboration of community, school, business and county partners working together to help Jefferson County, Colorado families break the cycle of generational poverty. JPP believes success for families in poverty can only be achieved with a two-generation approach that includes family-driven education, economic support and social capital. Over time, JPP will reduce poverty in Jefferson County as we work to ensure children from low-income homes graduate on time and have access to post-secondary opportunities. Parents will have the supports they need to become self-sufficient.

[Guidance Document for Connecticut's Two-Generation Initiative, January 2016](#)

Under the two-year state budget adopted in 2015, Connecticut became the first state to establish a two-generational strategy. This document from the Connecticut Commission on Children explains that pilot initiative for integrating various programs serving low-income families.

[Connecticut Two-Generation Legislation, June 2015](#)

As part of the state's 2015-2017 budget, the Connecticut General Assembly and Gov. Dannel P. Malloy included \$4 million to establish pilot two-generational programs in six Connecticut communities.

[Breaking the Cycle of Poverty in Young Families: Two-Generation Policy Recommendations, April 2015](#)

The recent economic downturn has tremendously impacted communities and families in the United States, especially young families. There is a growing chorus of voices calling for new models and solutions that meet the needs of both young parents and their children collectively. Two-generation programming provides an important poverty reduction roadmap for young families, making service providers, policy makers, and government officials critical stakeholders in moving this strategy forward. This policy report summarizes findings from direct service providers and advocates in advancing two-generation strategies. The recommendations outline both federal and state-level policies and regulatory actions to strengthen this approach. It also addresses critical organizational capacity imperatives for existing direct service providers. These policy priorities should provide a comprehensive framework to support young parents and their children toward economic mobility (author abstract).

[State Policies through a Two-Generation Lens: Strengthening the Collective Impact of Policies That Affect the Life Course of Young Children and Their Parents, September 2014](#)

Two-generation approaches to promoting the healthy development and school success of young children aim to enhance the well-being and life opportunities of both parents and children. This approach is based on research that shows how conditions affecting both parents and children are interrelated and play a key role in children's development. For example, health insurance for parents matters for children's well-being since parents' health and mental health problems can reduce parenting capacities and the chance that young children will receive the consistent attention and stimulation they need to develop competencies that are key to school success. Similarly, children's experience of stable, high quality early care and education supports both children's early learning and parents' work effort (author introduction).

[A Two-Generation Approach to Ending Poverty in Utah, June 2014](#)

This report is the first in a series of Voices for Utah Children Issue Briefs focused on two-generation strategies to reduce poverty, supported by Ascend at the Aspen Institute. The June 2014 brief covers Utah initiatives to address poverty with a two-generation approach,

including the Intergenerational Poverty Mitigation Act and the NEXT GENERATION KIDS pilot project.

[A Two-Generation Approach: Helping Parents Work and Children Thrive, December 2014](#)

A 2014 report from Connecticut's Commission on Children providing an overview of their proposed two-generation strategy and the literature and evidence supporting it.

[Breaking the Cycle of Poverty in Young Families: Two-Generation Strategies for Working with Disconnected Young Parents and Their Children, 2013](#)

This research report by the National Human Services Assembly is an exploratory study of current two-generation programs in place within their member agencies. A total of 32 organizations share their insight and knowledge about two-generation approaches, with a specific focus on young parents who are disconnected from education and the workforce. Case studies and recommendations for achieving successful outcomes are included.

[Utah Intergenerational Poverty Mitigation Act \(Utah Code: Title 35A: Chapter 9\), January 2012](#)

In 2012, the Utah Legislature passed the Intergenerational Poverty Mitigation Act, recognizing that children in the cycle of poverty and welfare dependency experience barriers to stability and opportunity. This bill requires the Utah Department of Workforce Services to establish and maintain a system to track intergenerational poverty related data to identify at-risk children and other groups, to identify trends, and to assist case workers, social scientists, and government officials in the study and development of plans and programs to help individuals and families break the cycle of poverty.

LOOKING FORWARD

We encourage you to stay up-to-date with the current literature by utilizing the following online resource libraries:

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation's [Self-Sufficiency Research Clearinghouse \(SSRC\)](#), which is an ever growing virtual portal of research on low-income and TANF families and an online hub for professional networking among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners who serve these populations.
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance's [Peer Technical Assistance Network](#), which is a targeted peer-to-peer model of information sharing, technical assistance, and training between and among States, Counties, Tribes, and community-based organizations.



The Promise of Community Action

*Community Action changes people's lives,
embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities,
and makes America a better place to live.*

*We care about the entire community,
and we are dedicated to helping people
help themselves and each other.*

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