

Two-Generation Approaches

May 2016

There is a growing recognition that traditional investments that focus solely on adults or children constrain potential impacts by not engaging with families holistically to support and sustain growth and opportunity. By contrast, two-generation or dual-generation approaches address the challenge of intergenerational poverty by aligning and coordinating services for children *with* services for their parents, and developing programs that serve both together. Two-generation approaches consider the needs of both vulnerable children and parents, together, in the design and delivery of services and programs to support improved economic, educational, health, safety, and other outcomes.

The purpose of this document is to provide local communities and practitioners with an overview of the research, best practices, and many resources available to stakeholders interested in two-generation approaches. As such, it is not an exhaustive survey of all the information in the field, but it will provide a portal and path to the knowledge that exists. As you will see below, this guide highlights critical strategies and practices, spotlights example programs, and identifies additional resources to inform and support local action on this issue.

Key Components of Two-Generation Approaches

While two-generation approaches can include multiple components, three organizations at the forefront of this work—Ascend at the Aspen Institute, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Foundation for Child Development—have developed broadly recognized definitions. This section presents information on how each of these organizations frames two-generation approaches.

» [Ascend](#) at the Aspen Institute, a national hub for strategies and approaches that help advance outcomes and opportunities for vulnerable families, serves as an example to organizations working to advance the two-generation approach. Ascend identifies **four core components common to two-generation approaches**:



Education, spanning early childhood through postsecondary education and employment pathways

Image 1: Graduation cap



Economic Support, including housing, transportation, financial education, and asset building

Image 3: Three dollar signs



Health and Well-Being, including programs to address toxic stress and improve access to basic and preventative care, including mental health services for parents, children, and families

Image 2: Hospital cross



Social Capital, including peer support and opportunities to participate in community and faith-based organizations, community leadership initiatives, and other services that bolster aspirations

Image 4: Person climbing graph bars

THE TWO-GENERATION CONTINUUM¹

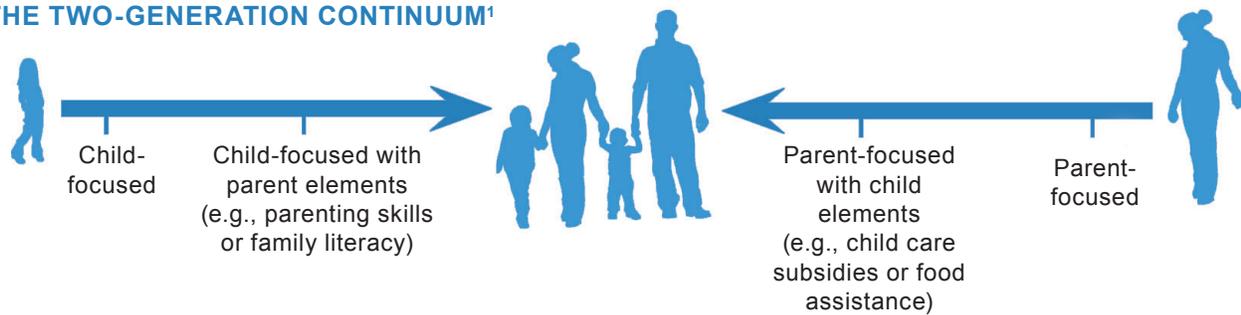


Image 5: Two-Generation Continuum Chart

These components may all be driven by or housed in one agency, or two or more agencies may partner to deliver two-generation strategies. The [Two-Generation Playbook](#) has more information on each of these components, including a description, research evidence, and program spotlights. As illustrated in the continuum above, many current programs in communities around the country are already incorporating two-generation elements. These programs can provide a great base for starting more intentional two-generation approaches.

The [2Gen Toolbox](#) on the Ascend website is a growing collection of case studies, tools, and models to support the adoption and scaling of two-generation approaches. A map of [Promising Programs](#) provides an easy way to identify emerging and established two-generation programs in states across the country.

The [Top Ten for 2Gen](#) brief identifies ten key policy ideas and defines six core principles that federal, state, and local policymakers should consider to support two-generation approaches. Core principles include tracking outcomes for both children and parents, engaging and listening to families, aligning and linking systems and funding streams, fostering innovation, being intentional, and ensuring equity. The policy ideas may be of particular interest to place-based initiatives working in partnership with a federal agency.

» The [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) has also been instrumental in supporting the growth of the current two-generation movement. The 2014 report, [Creating Opportunity for Families](#), outlines The Annie E. Casey Foundation's two-generation approach and provides recommendations on policies, practices, and programs that meet the needs of children and parents. A related post on the foundation's blog lists a [collection of resources](#) on two-generation approaches, including resources on research and rationale, state and federal policies, and state-level strategies.

» For those considering two-generation opportunities, there is a valuable guide from the Foundation for Child Development and the Ray Marshall Center. [Promoting Two-Generation Strategies: A Getting-Started Guide for State and Local Policymakers](#) offers important advice on five factors that need to be considered and addressed to support a successful program:

- 1 Supportive policy framework
- 2 Leadership
- 3 Program administration
- 4 Integrated and flexible funding streams
- 5 Evidence-oriented culture

The guide outlines common steps that policymakers and other stakeholders take to get started and includes a checklist of common implementation challenges and opportunities to consider when planning.

¹ Ascend at the Aspen Institute. <http://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/pages/the-two-generation-approach>

Examples of Two-Generation Approaches

Two-generation approaches have been implemented in communities around the country. Many of these have been tied to larger place-based initiatives as communities work to improve outcomes and increase opportunities for residents. Below is a small sample of leading two-generation programs that have been documented in the research literature.

[ASPIRE](#) (Achieving Success through Parental Involvement, Reading, and Education) is an intensive family literacy program operated by Communities In Schools Central Texas. Over its 20-year history, ASPIRE has earned distinction by combining its efforts in early childhood education, adult education, parenting classes, home visits, and volunteer requirements. Children from ASPIRE families have been shown to outperform their peers in school assessments and state exams.

[Atlanta Civic Site](#) is a public-private partnership working to improve an Atlanta neighborhood through a focus on health, education, and economic opportunities for residents. By bundling early childhood education, workforce development, work supports, and asset-building programs, the Atlanta Civic Site puts low-income families on a pathway to success.

Chicago's [Instituto del Progreso Latino](#) offers a broad mix of programs and services for disadvantaged and immigrant families ranging from youth development and adult education, to economic and workforce development, to citizenship classes.

Colorado's [Department of Human Services](#) and [Office of Early Childhood](#) have implemented a statewide two-generation approach to help families achieve self-sufficiency through employment, build wealth through financial literacy, and to support children's success through early learning.

[The Community Action Project of Tulsa County \(Oklahoma\)](#) is an anti-poverty agency operating local Head Start centers. CAP-Tulsa is actively engaged in two-generation work through its CareerAdvance® program for parents, along with other initiatives.

[The Jeremiah Program](#) is a housing-based program to provide single-parent families with stable housing and on-site services, including high-quality child care, access to life coaches, and other assistance, while parents pursue postsecondary education credentials. Current sites include Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN; Austin, TX; Fargo-Moorhead, ND; and Boston, MA.

The [MOMS Partnership](#) in New Haven, CT, is designed to serve the needs of mothers and young children living in economically challenged urban neighborhoods. Through neighborhood hubs, mothers and children obtain services and participate in a variety of interventions including mental health supports to develop executive functioning skills and to reduce stress.

Funding for Two-Generation Work

There are many options for supporting two-generation approaches to working with children and families, including use of existing federal, state, and local funding as well as grant funding. As detailed in the [Getting Started Guide for State and Local Policy Makers](#), one low-cost option for implementing two-generation programs is to move toward collaboration and alignment of existing child- and adult-focused programs and services at the local or regional level. This approach encourages program administrators in different agencies to work together to plan and coordinate service delivery. Sometimes begun to support individual families, two-generation programs often expand over time to encompass collaborative planning and scheduling or joint fundraising at the program or agency level. Because this approach does not ask child- or adult-focused programs to change their core mission or operations, and does not require significant additional resources to implement, it is an easy first step for communities interested in developing better supports for families. The guide also encourages state and local policymakers to explore the ways existing public funding sources can be used to support two-generation approaches, including federal programs such as [TANF](#), [SNAP Employment & Training](#), [CCDF](#), [Head Start](#), and [Early Head Start](#).

For communities seeking to broaden or deepen two-generation approaches, a handful of funders have made targeted investments:

- The U.S. Department of Education funds a number of initiatives based on two-generation strategies. These include the [Even Start Family Literacy Program](#), the [Full Service Community Schools Program](#), and [Promise Neighborhoods](#) grants.
- The U.S. Department of Labor's [Strengthening Working Families](#) grant initiative is a \$25 million investment to "support public-private partnerships that bridge gaps between local workforce development and child-care systems."²
- The Head Start University Partnership Grants program funds research on [Dual-Generation Approaches](#). This five-year initiative is supporting research that examines how Head Start can promote family well-being, including health, safety, financial security, and school readiness.³
- The [W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#) has made significant investments in two-generation programs and related research efforts. In communities around the country, the Foundation is investing in two-generation strategies for tribal families, for young men and boys of color, for families in poverty, and for other families in need. The Foundation is also working at the state level to promote two-generation strategies with investments in individual states, and in a project with the National Governors Association to support states more broadly.

² <http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/eta/ETA20152438.htm>

³ <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/head-start-university-partnership-grants-dual-generation-approaches>

The Evidence Base for Two-Generation Approaches

There is a growing body of evidence favoring two-generation approaches. Since many two-generation programs are fairly new, their evidence base is often drawn from broader research on the programs' constituent parts, including best practices and lessons learned in early education, postsecondary education and workforce development, and family support services. The research highlighted below represents a sample of recent studies, briefs, and reports from leading experts in the field.

- Ascend at the Aspen Institute's 2016 report [Making Tomorrow Better Together](#) identifies and defines intended outcomes from two-generation programs, and the related [2Gen Outcomes Bank](#) collects and organizes research and evaluation findings on two-generation efforts.
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched the [Rural IMPACT \(Integration Models for Parents and Children to Thrive\) Demonstration](#) in September 2015 with ten designees in rural and tribal communities across the country that will adopt two-generation approaches to meet the needs of low-income families.
- A brief released in 2015 by the Institute for Child Success, [When Brain Science Meets Public Policy: Designing for Outcomes through a Two-Generation Lens – Good Science & Good Common Sense](#), examines the evidence base for two-generation programs over the fifty years since Head Start was implemented. The brief also identifies emerging two-generation frameworks and defines action steps for policy and program leaders.
- [Two Generations. One Future: An Anthology from the Ascend Fellowship](#) presents chapters from leading two-generation thinkers in the fields of early childhood education, human services, workforce development, mental health, justice, and reentry. The anthology examines the foundation of the current two-generation movement and profiles innovative programs. Other chapters explore how two-generation programs address family needs and empower families, or identify opportunities for evaluating and fostering two-generation strategies.
- The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) held a two-day roundtable discussion with leading policymakers, researchers, advocates, and practitioners in early childhood, workforce development, and immigrant services. The meeting is documented in the brief [Two-Generation Strategies to Improve Immigrant Family and Child Outcomes](#) and provides important next steps for identifying opportunities, forging partnerships, and reshaping institutions.
- The spring 2014 issue of [The Future of Children](#), a journal published by Princeton University and the Brookings Institution, focused entirely on the subject: Helping Parents, Helping Children: Two-Generation Mechanisms. Leading researchers explore the evidence and potential for two-generation programs to positively impact children and their families by examining key developmental influences such as stress, education, health, income, employment, and assets.
- In a 2013 article, [Rethinking Evidence-Based Practice and Two-Generation Programs to Create the Future of Early Childhood Policy](#), authors Shonkoff and Fisher argue for the development of new two-generation approaches. The researchers believe that “substantially better outcomes for vulnerable young children could be achieved by greater attention to strengthening the resources and capabilities of the adults who care for them.”⁴

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⁴ From the abstract, page 1. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4745587/pdf/nihms752089.pdf>

- A 2013 study looking at the [return-on-investment](#) from The Jeremiah Program showed a positive return for participants, taxpayers, and society ranging from \$1.66 to \$34.16 per dollar invested.
- The [CAP Family Life Study](#) was a multiyear evaluation of the CareerAdvance® program in Tulsa, OK, which serves parents of Head Start children pursuing health care careers. The study showed improved persistence and completion for parents and improved academic and other outcomes for children. CareerAdvance® is also the focus of a current random assignment evaluation, the [CAP Family Advancement Study](#), funded by the Head Start University Partnerships Dual Generation grant program.
- The Administration for Children & Families is currently funding the [Two-Generation Approaches to Improving Family Self-Sufficiency](#) study led by Mathematica Policy Research to help build the evidence base for two-generation approaches and develop appropriate evaluation models.
- The [Two-Generations Together](#) initiative at the National Head Start Association presents a series of case studies on two-generation programs, including adult education and job training programs, supported by Head Start agencies around the country.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following list of resources provides background information, research, and examples of two-generation approaches and strategies that, while not exhaustive, may be particularly useful to stakeholders interested in deepening the impact of place-based initiatives with a two-generation approach.

- [A Theoretical Framework for Two-Generation Models: Lessons from the Housing Opportunities and Services Together \(HOST\) Demonstration](#)
- [Breaking the Cycle of Poverty in Young Families](#). This brief focuses on programs targeting families headed by out-of-school, out-of-work youth.
- Connecticut's [A Two-Generational Approach: Helping Parents Work and Children Thrive](#)
- [Considering Two-Generation Strategies in the States](#)
- [National Center for Families Learning](#) offers a range of professional development and training opportunities for family literacy staff
- [New Ways of Creating Opportunities for Families in Poverty: Perspective on the Emerging Two-Generation Policy Discussion](#)
- [Tackling Intergenerational Poverty: How Governors Can Advance Coordinated Services for Low-Income Parents and Children](#)
- [The Affordable Care Act: Affording Two-Generation Approaches to Health](#)
- [The Case for a Two-Generation Approach for Educating English Language Learners](#)

This publication was prepared under Contract No. ED-ESE-15-A-00011/0002 with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement. Sarah Zevin served as the Contracting Officer's Representative. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, service or enterprise mentioned in this publication is intended or should be inferred. This document is one in a series of documents developed for the Department of Education on topics critical to place-based initiatives including, Early Learning, FAFSA Completion, Opportunity Youth, Two Generation Approaches, and Youth Workforce Development. This document is available online at <http://www.jff.org/>.