



TOP TEN FOR 2GEN

POLICY IDEAS & PRINCIPLES TO ADVANCE TWO-GENERATION EFFORTS

By: Anne Mosle, Nisha Patel, and Jennifer Stedron, PhD



Acknowledgements

Ascend at The Aspen Institute is grateful to the following institutions and individuals for their ongoing philanthropic support and partnership:

Ann B. Friedman

The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Bezos Family Foundation

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Chambers Family Fund

Charlotte Perret Family Trust

The Ford Foundation

The Kresge Foundation

The Rocksprings Foundation

Scott and Patrice King Brickman
Family Foundation

W.K. Kellogg Foundation



October 2014

Dear Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that we release ***Top Ten for 2Gen: Policies and Principles to Advance Two-Generation Efforts***. This publication is the culmination of three years of work with experts in the field, through research, roundtables, and other convenings.

We would like to express our appreciation to all those who contributed their time and expertise, including the following:

- The participants of the 2014 Aspen Forum on Early Childhood, Health, and Beyond, who gave critical feedback during their peer review of the document. They are listed below;
- Lorelle Espinosa, Sara Goldrick-Rab, Ariel Khalil, Christopher King, Joaquin Martinez, Rick Noriega, Aisha Nyandoro, Lucy Ortega, and Caitlin Solis for their final review of relevant policies;
- Our state policy partners — The Bell Policy Center, Montana Budget and Policy Center, Voices for Utah Children, and Washington State Budget and Policy Center — for their constructive comments;
- Celinda Lake and Jonathan Voss of Lake Research Partners for their insights and analysis of the polling data around these policies;
- Andrea Camp and Lori Severens for editorial contributions; and
- Gayle Bennett and Joanne Omang for copyedits.

Participants in the 2014 Aspen Forum on Early Childhood, Health, and Beyond:

Katie Albright, San Francisco Child Abuse Prevention Center • Lorelei Atalie Vargas, ANDRUS • Monica Barczak, PhD, CAP Tulsa • Elizabeth Baskett, Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing • Letty Bass, Chambers Family Fund • Keri Batchelder, Colorado Department of Human Services • Jackie Bezos, Bezos Family Foundation • Reggie Bicha, Colorado Department of Human Services • Andrea Camp, Consultant • Mimi Clarke Corcoran, ANDRUS • Steffanie Clothier, Alliance for Early Success • Sarah Cobler Leow, Montana Budget and Policy Center • Eloisa Duarte Sosa, The Manaus Fund Valley Settlement Project • Ellen Galinsky, Families and Work

Institute • Elaine Grossman, The Manaus Fund Valley Settlement Project • Sandra Gutierrez, Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors • Carrie Hanlon, National Academy for State Health Policy • Benzel Jimmerson, Diversity Dynamics Consulting • Rich Jones, Bell Policy Center • Stephanie Jones, PhD, Harvard Graduate School of Education • Carol Karp, Consultant • Ruth Katz, The Aspen Institute • Christopher King, PhD, The University of Texas at Austin • Michael Laracy, Annie E. Casey Foundation • Victoria Mann Simms, PhD, The Simms/Mann Family Foundation • Peggy McLeod, PhD, National Council of La Raza • Rick Noriega, AVANCE, Inc. • Jeannette Pai Espinosa, National Crittenton Foundation • Monique Rizer, Child Care Aware of America • Marni Roosevelt, Los Angeles Valley College Family Resource Center • Yvette Sanchez Fuentes, National Alliance for Hispanic Families • Dianne Singer, University of Michigan, Division of General Pediatrics • Mary Anne Snyder, Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Early Childhood • Darius Tandon, PhD, Northwestern University • Wanda Walker, Jeremiah Program • Sarah Enos Watamura, PhD, University of Denver • Shelley Waters Boots, Annie E. Casey Foundation • Alan Weil, Project HOPE • Henry Wilde, Acelero Learning • Liane Wong, Dr.P.H., The David and Lucile Packard Foundation • Elaine Zimmerman, Connecticut Commission on Children.

Sincerely,



Anne Mosle
Vice President
The Aspen Institute

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INTRODUCTION

The War on Poverty began 50 years — two generations — ago, and while it has achieved much, poverty is still being passed down from generation to generation. One reason is that we have been trying to help low-income parents and children in separate ways.

In the United States today, nearly 45 percent of all children — more than 32 million — live in low-income families.ⁱ Almost three-fourths of single-mother families are low income.ⁱⁱ About 65 percent of African-American, American Indian, and Hispanic children live in low-income families, as do 32 percent of white and Asian-American children.ⁱⁱⁱ

The demographics of families in poverty may be diverse, but parents' dreams for their children are similar everywhere: a good education, economic stability and a better future. A mom from Detroit describes what she wants for her children: "A secure life, like for my children to have something that they can start with, but I think a lot of times we don't have anything to start with."

I am going to make it better. ... I am going to make her life better. I will do whatever I can.

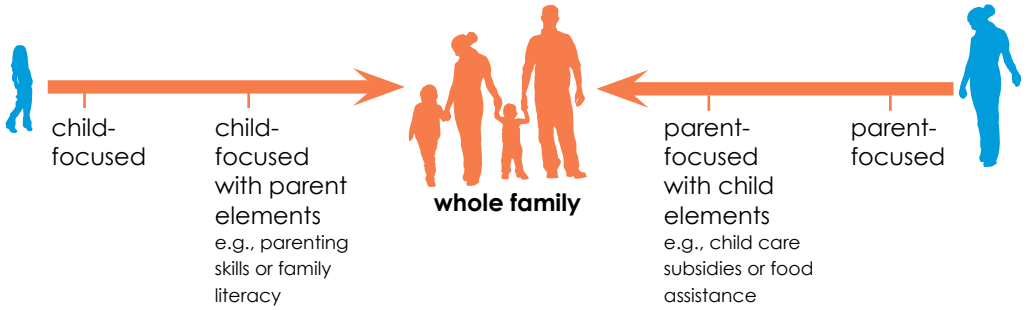
— From focus group with low-income, Latina mothers, Denver, Colorado, 2013

American parents are painfully aware that their children's dreams and economic future are at risk unless all sectors of society can work together to offer a new path forward. This is the promise of what we call two-generation approaches, which address two generations at the same time. Research has documented the impact of a parent's education, economic stability, and overall health on a child's trajectory. Similarly children's education and healthy development are powerful catalysts for parents. Two-generation approaches provide opportunities for and meet the needs of low-income children and their parents simultaneously, helping the two generations make progress together.

Policymakers can take steps now to move two-generation strategies forward and measurably improve outcomes for both children and their parents. Unless they rise to this challenge, the next generation will be at further risk — for developmental delays, academic struggles, and, ultimately, the same challenges facing their parents for economic stability. Our long-term economic prosperity will also be at risk as children and parents struggle to achieve educational and economic success. Two-generation policies offer policymakers the chance to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and replace it with opportunity.

The reality is that many policies created in the War on Poverty era have yet to catch up with the diverse 21st century family or scientific advances that deepen our understanding of the ways that both

The Two-Generation Continuum



children and adults learn. Recent findings in brain science underscore this fact: *the development of children and parents is inextricably linked*. Parents gain motivation to succeed from their children and vice versa; their efforts are mutually reinforcing.

Support for 2Gen Is Strong

The political will is there. According to a new 2014 survey from Lake Research, 70 percent of Americans believe that if we want to make sure low-income children are successful in their early learning, then we also have to invest in their parent's economic well-being. They support programs with a two-generation approach, and that support is gaining strength. Today 89 percent favor such a program as a means to raise families out of poverty. Moreover, 70 percent favor the approach, even if their own taxes were increased to introduce such programs, including majorities of voters across partisan lines. Support for the specific policies that comprise a two-generation approach is both broad and deep. Americans support creating partnerships that build upon existing policies as well as new policy innovations.^{iv}

We all want to see families thrive, but fragmented approaches that address the needs of children and their parents separately often leave either the child or parent behind and dim the family's chance at success. Placing

My personal obsession right now is how disconnected we are from what we really need to be talking about with poverty. We talk about work or training for parents, or we talk about early childhood for kids. But I don't see how we can help the children without trying to help their parents as well. We have to have a serious national discussion about helping families together.

— Paul Krugman, Nobel Prize Winner and Columnist, *New York Times*

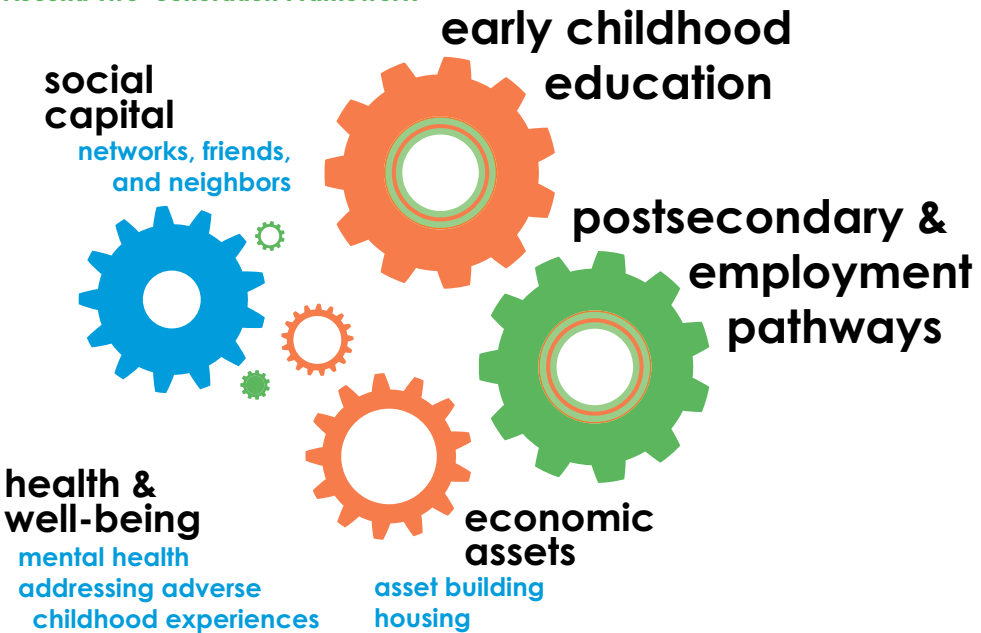
parents and children in silos ignores parents' daily challenges of working or studying while raising a child, challenges that are even more pronounced for those with low wages. Two-generation approaches work with children and their parents simultaneously to harness the family's full potential and put the whole family on a path to permanent economic security.

Early childhood education, postsecondary and employment pathways, economic assets, health and well-being, and social capital are the core components that create an intergenerational cycle of opportunity.⁷ Human services policies can cut across these components of the two-generation approach, particularly the two critical components of quality early education for children and workforce training and post-secondary education for parents. At their heart, two-generation approaches are about a commitment to better outcomes for children and parents at the same time, outcomes that must be measured together. If this commitment is met, using a two-generation lens to view policy can offer practical solutions for programs, communities and states that lead to greater support and higher impacts for children, parents, and families.

In the report **Two Generations, One Future**, Ascend made the case for pursuing two-generation policies now. In **The Playbook**, we offered a clear framework and examples to guide programs and practitioners in considering the needs of children and their parents together.

Today we release **Top Ten for 2Gen**, six principles and 10 specific policies to guide the design and implementation of effective two-generation strategies. Informed by an ever-growing field of pioneering practitioners and innovative policymakers, these recommendations

Ascend Two-Generation Framework



span important areas of the two-generation framework and build upon current funding streams and programs.

Most important, they are attainable today. While changes in state and federal legislation and regulation are sometimes necessary, many positive impacts for families can be achieved with current resources and within current programs and funding streams. For example, human service agencies at the state and federal level invest billions of dollars annually to improve the lives of families. Putting even a fraction of those resources to more effective use would represent a major win for the millions of families struggling for economic stability.

New national policies, from the recent passage of a new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to provisions of the Affordable Care Act, also add to the fertile policy climate for allowing two generations to achieve one bright future.

Principles to Guide Two-Generation Policies

Top Ten for 2Gen observes six principles* that can guide policy and system change at the federal, state, tribal, and local level. While we outline 10 specific policy areas for action in the pages that follow, the six principles below are designed to enable more effective and equitable use of resources in any policy to improve outcomes for families. These principles differentiate two-generation policies from other policies that serve parents or children separately.

Ascend uses these principles to guide its work. They build on several years of conversations within the field and offer a commitment to building policy agendas with tangible outcomes for families.

1. Measure and account for outcomes for both children and their parents.

Dual outcomes are at the heart of true two-generation programs. Whether explicit or implicit, outcomes for children and their parents must be embedded in policies that use two-generation approaches to improve family economic security and break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Assessing how well a policy meets a family's needs should include indicators that measure the impact on both children and parents.

2. Engage and listen to the voices of families.

Undergirding all of Ascend's work — from principles to practice to policy — is a commitment to listen to families and ensure their perspectives and experience inform program and policy design. Policies provide the scaffolding and structures that support parents; parents themselves fuel and create their family's successful path toward economic security.

* Principles are fundamental norms, rules, or values that can help determine the right or wrong course of action. They are more basic than policies or objectives and are meant to govern both.

You don't know what a parent is going through, so respect each parent as an individual and let them tell their own story.

— Tameka Henry, mother and board member of the National Head Start Association, at the Aspen ThinkXChange, 2012

As one mother from Nevada said to a group of policymakers and practitioners, “You don't know what a parent is going through. So respect each parent as an individual and let them tell their own story.”

3. Foster innovation and evidence together.

Tap insights from prior evidence-based research and work at both policy and program levels to build upon what has worked for families. Recognize that programs that meet evidence-based thresholds serve only a fraction of children and parents, so we must innovate to develop better ways to meet families' needs. A deliberate pipeline must be developed to ensure innovation and promising efforts can build evidence where appropriate. Policies should strongly encourage the integration of innovative approaches into emerging evidence, evaluations of effectiveness, and best practice.

4. Align and link systems and funding streams.

Resources exist to serve children and families, but they must be used more efficiently. Rarely will single funding streams fully address all the needs of children, parents, and families. Programs will need to blend and coordinate funds to deliver two-generation services. Aligning and linking systems at the state and community level — eligibility standards, performance benchmarks, and coordinated administrative structures — while simultaneously pursuing improved outcomes for both parents and children will lead to two-generation success.

5. Prioritize intentional implementation.

Evaluations and analyses of past initiatives that attempted to address the needs of both children and parents yield an important lesson: Being intentional about policy implementation details is essential. Support for the direct-service workforce, careful consideration of program outcomes, attention to the level and intensity of services, and the use of data are all critical details that will ensure that child and parent outcomes match a policy's intent.

6. Ensure equity.

Two-generation strategies should evaluate and fix structural problems that create gender and/or racial and ethnic disparities in the ways that programs provide services and assistance. Many current funding

streams and policies do not reflect the demographic realities of 21st century American families, where one in four U.S. children is growing up in a single-parent family, many headed by women, and where children and parents of color are disproportionately low-income.

FUELING NATIONAL MOMENTUM

Ascend at the Aspen Institute is the backbone organization for a national network of partners working to make family economic security and educational success a reality. The 58 organizations that make up the Aspen Institute Ascend Network come from 24 states and the District of Columbia. Together we are creating innovative policy and changing systems for impact on families across generations.

Top Ten Policies for 2Gen

Our work in the field and the best thinking of experts, practitioners, and families have yielded the policies below, which we believe have strong potential to advance two-generation work and put more families on a path to permanent economic security.

While we focus primarily on federal initiatives, we provide examples of ways that states, tribes, and communities may leverage federal resources and use flexibility to enact additional reform. These policies are not detailed legislative models. Rather they are policy areas in which the federal government, states, and communities can play a role in building opportunities for families.

In the coming months, in partnership with the field, Ascend will deepen its work in these policy areas, sharing models, identifying trends, and linking leaders and ideas.

The **Top Ten** span the core areas of the Ascend two-generation framework: early childhood and postsecondary education, economic assets, and health and well-being. Joining these four, is social capital – or the trusted networks of friends, family, and institutions – the fifth core component of the framework. Social capital does not lend itself to legislation, but it should be integrated throughout program design and implementation because it is also a crucial contributor to the well-being of children and their parents.

Moving Forward

Top Ten for 2-Gen is more than a counting exercise: It is a significant “to do” list for achieving better outcomes. And the policy principles can guide comprehensive policy analysis and development at the local, state, tribal, and national levels.

Central in all of this are the voices of families. Heeding those voices will ensure that policies support programs that generate real opportunities for family economic success.

TOP 10 POLICIES

Low-income families have shown strong resilience despite great odds. This resilience should be encouraged in any new vision for effective approaches to education, economic assets, human services, and health and well-being that are based on strengths and assets rather than deficits.

The top 10 policies to promote two-generation strategies:

1. Help Head Start and Early Head Start fulfill their two-generation missions by strengthening family supports and increasing the emphasis on parents, not only in their role as mothers and fathers but also as breadwinners.
2. Reform the Child Care Development Block Grant to increase access to and quality of early childhood settings for children and to ensure greater access to job training and education for parents.
3. Increase efforts to support economic security outcomes in home visiting programs.
4. Promote cross-system collaboration and partnership among human services agencies and institutions of higher education, especially community colleges, to increase bundled services and access to benefits for low-income students, many of whom are parents.
5. Increase postsecondary education access and completion through institutional financial aid reform and policies that more accurately reflect the needs of enrolled student parents, a growing national demographic.
6. Use the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to allow for state and local changes that enable two-generation support.
7. Redesign Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for 21st century families — mothers or fathers, married or single.
8. Strengthen family connections through support and promotion of work opportunities for noncustodial parents.
9. Leverage provisions of the Affordable Care Act to improve economic security and family health and well-being.
10. Maximize opportunities for whole-family diagnosis and treatment for mental health.

Here are specific recommendations for federal, state, local, and tribal policy on how to implement the Top Ten for 2-Gen policy ideas.

Early Childhood

1 Help Head Start and Early Head Start fulfill their two-generation missions by strengthening family supports and increasing emphasis on parents, not only in their role as mothers and fathers but also as breadwinners.

- Provide incentives for programs to formally partner with education and workforce programs.
- Highlight best and next practices,** especially around early childhood workforce training and competencies, and share learning across formal and informal care and early learning settings.
- Encourage new approaches, especially through partnerships, to support family economic security through the new Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships funding opportunity

84 percent of Americans agree that Head Start and Early Start should also partner with organizations that help the parents of low-income children further their education and receive job training, including 67 percent who strongly agree.

— Lake Research Partners, September 2014 National Survey

2 Reform the Child Care Development Block Grant to increase access to and quality of early childhood settings for children and to ensure greater access to job training and education for parents.

- States should allow job seekers and those enrolled in postsecondary education or workforce training to be eligible for child care subsidies, so child care concerns do not become a barrier to pursuing economic security.
- Align application and eligibility requirements (such as income verification) across different programs to expand access.

** "Organizations become winners by spotting big opportunities and inventing next practices ... Next practices are all about innovation: imagining what the future will look like; identifying the mega-opportunities that will arise; and building capabilities to capitalize on them." Pralahad, C.K. (2010). *Best practices only get you so far. Harvard Business Review Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://hbr.org/2010/04/column-best-practices-get-you-only-so-far/ar/1>.

- Ease the “cliff effect” by ratcheting up income eligibility criteria, so working families will not lose child care support due to small wage increases.^{vi}
- Provide incentives to increase the quality of a child’s early learning and development through tiered reimbursement that pays more for higher-quality programs.

60 percent of Americans oppose reducing or eliminating child care subsidies when a working low-income parent receives a raise in wages that does not equal the amount of the subsidy.

— Lake Research Partners, September 2014 National Survey

COLORADO: CHILD CARE REFORM BILL HB1317 - In May 2014, the Colorado legislature approved landmark legislation to increase access to the state child care assistance program (CCCAP), decrease red tape, and promote higher-quality services. With a two-generation focus, the law:

- Allows job seekers and those enrolled in postsecondary education or workforce training to be eligible for CCCAP.
- Removes application barriers by allowing presumptive eligibility and aligning income verification with other programs, for instance.
- Adjusts co-payment requirements and tiered co-pay increases to mitigate the “cliff effect.”

Highlights for small businesses include:

- Higher floors for provider reimbursement rates.
- Holiday and absence policies tied to program quality ratings.
- Tiered reimbursement so providers can provide higher-quality care.

[HB14-1317, 69th Gen. Assem., Reg. Sess. (CO. 2014)]

When I look at my son, he’s eight now, I see my mom, and I think of what she said: America is a place where a nobody can be a somebody. I just want to show my son, don’t give up on your dreams.

— Lubens St. Fleur, father, student at Miami Dade College

3 Increase efforts to support economic security outcomes in home visiting programs. Funding streams, such as Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) require that programs demonstrate not just improved child outcomes (e.g., school readiness) but also adult outcomes (e.g., economic self-sufficiency).^{vii} Parents in these programs often cite increased education and employment opportunities as significant personal goals.^{viii}

- Explore options in home visiting programs to include an additional focus on education and employment opportunities for parents while maintaining the integrity of current evidence-based models.
- Provide professional development to front-line home visiting staff to enhance their knowledge and ability to connect interested parents with opportunities to increase economic security.
- Support the use of MIECHV's flexible funds for training and community partnerships to create innovative models that include meaningful pathways to adult education, postsecondary, and workforce training opportunities.

88 percent of Americans favor home visiting programs that provide services to low-income pregnant women and parents of young children in their homes, offering parents information on education, workforce training, and employment opportunities.

— Lake Research Partners, September 2014 National Survey

INDIANA: HOME VISITING AND WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP - Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana serves 29 counties and employs almost 3,000 individuals. In 2001, Goodwill partnered with the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) home visiting model to implement the program in the state. NFP currently reaches more than 600 families in Marion County, Indiana. Beyond just home visiting, Goodwill links parents in NFP to education and employment opportunities and assists with additional support as needed. A Guide Consultant with strong community connections helps with employment and education goals and other resources needed for financial security and stability. Goodwill has committed to maintain contact with the families for several years after the termination of home visiting services, until the children are at least age five.

[Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana, Inc. (2014). White paper. Indianapolis, IN.]

Postsecondary Education

As nearly a quarter of postsecondary students are parents, program design and implementation should take into account the needs of student parents and their children and ensure that this important population receives equitable access.^{ix}

4 Promote cross-system collaboration and partnership among human services agencies and institutions of higher education, especially community colleges and public regional colleges and universities, to increase bundled services and access to benefits for low-income students, many of whom are parents.

- Pilot the provision of more systemic, comprehensive, and high impact support to low-income student parents who attend community colleges and other regional or open access institutions that receive funds from the Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program. Offer bundled services and access to benefits to support both children and their parents to stabilize households and increase graduation rates for student parents.
- Use demonstrated strategies for student success, including career coaches, mentors, navigators, and access to child development programs, and offer programs during hours that match working parents' schedules.
- Provide incentives for cross-system collaboration with state and county human services agencies and local institutions of higher education to increase service uptake, ease loan burdens, and improve graduation rates.

86 percent of Americans favor creating partnerships between private, state, and community colleges and universities with government and non-profit organizations to provide services for low-income students who have young children.

— Lake Research Partners, September 2014 National Survey

5 Increase postsecondary education access and completion through institutional financial aid reform and policies that more accurately reflect the needs of enrolled student parents.

- Allow 12-month (i.e., year-round) financial aid plans for certificate and other programs.
- Take a broad two-generation approach to financial aid need calculations: Include transportation needs; cover child

care as an allowable expense, not just for class time but also for critical study time; and offer the other broader supports that low-income student parents need.

- Use a 12-month funding calendar for Pell Grants and state financial aid to increase opportunities for student parents to maintain full-time status and use summer semesters to complete required coursework.
- Increase both work-study and educational opportunities for student parents that are meaningfully connected to career pathways. For example, the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Grant Program provides community colleges with funds to expand delivery of education and career training programs that can be completed in two years or less and prepare students for employment in high-wage, high-skills occupations.
- Ensure that financial aid is available for part-time, adult students, many of whom are parents.
- Prioritize need over merit aid, and create aid programs that target students seeking credentials for high-demand fields.

84 percent of Americans favor including childcare expenses in determining financial aid eligibility for low-income students with young children.

— Lake Research Partners, September 2014 National Survey

Economic Assets and Human Services

6 Use the recently passed Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to allow state and local changes that enable two-generation support.

- Implement more flexible support for the education needs of adults – from contextualized adult education to integrated education and training opportunities, including bridge programs.***
- Streamline multi-agency plans and reports to create a state job training strategy that better supports a two-generation approach.
- Evaluate progress with a common set of performance metrics that span employment, earnings, and education

*** Bridge programs help adult students with low levels of initial skills acquire the skills they need to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and career-path employment.

to encourage partnership among programs more narrowly focused on either education or employment.

- Increase workforce and training opportunities for populations with greater barriers to employment, including young parents and homeless families with children.
- Encourage states and local workforce boards to provide much-needed support services (e.g., child care, career coaching) to support parents as they participate in training.
- Provide technical assistance to states and local workforce boards in developing and operating career pathway programming for parents consistent with the new legislation.

CONNECTICUT: TWO-GENERATION PLAN - In 2014, Connecticut's General Assembly passed the SB340, creating the two-generation school readiness plan. The bill directs the Office of Early Childhood to establish a plan that promotes both school readiness for children and long-term learning and economic success for low-income families. The plan will promote both preschool as well as adult education and workforce training. The development of the plan, to be completed by December 1, 2014, will be funded by private dollars. [S.B. 340, Gen. Assem., Reg. Sess. (CT 2014)]

7 Redesign Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for 21st century families — mothers or fathers, married or single.

- Count postsecondary education, adult basic education, English as a second language, and training linked to high-wage jobs and employer demand as work activities. Likewise, include school activities like class time, homework, and work-study hours in individual employment plans.
- Revise reporting outcomes to include family economic security indicators such as credential attainment, employment, earnings, and job retention.
- Allow common outcome measures across workforce development policies such as TANF and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
- Ensure that sanctions do not counteract other two-generation reforms. Consider reducing the severity of sanctions, ending full-family sanctions, and allowing families enrolled in TANF to keep more child support money.

71 percent of Americans favor allowing workforce training and education programs beyond high school to count as part of the 20-hour weekly work requirement for government programs.

— Lake Research Partners, September 2014 National Survey

8 Strengthen family connections through support and promotion of work opportunities for noncustodial parents.

- Support and provide incentives for employment opportunities for noncustodial/nonresident parents across federal programs.
- Monitor the results of the multistate National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration project and create flexibility to expand the use of effective practices.**** Intriguing program elements include participation in peer-supported parenting activities and programs to reduce child support debt.

Health and Well-Being

Health coverage and access and quality of care are major factors in family well-being and economic stability.^x

9 Leverage opportunities in the Affordable Care Act to improve economic security and family health and well-being.

- Identify and enroll parents and children who are eligible individuals into expanded Medicaid coverage to ensure the health and well-being of both.
- Streamline the enrollment process: Increase efforts to identify the uninsured and keep those who do enroll covered as their life circumstances change.
- Increase the focus on education and employment opportunities for parents in home visiting programs, while supporting young children's school readiness and health and well-being.
- Minimize the financial burden on families by ensuring that subsidies allow access to care and a safety net of care for those who do not have it.

**** The National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration is an initiative of the Office of Child Support Enforcement in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families. A total of \$6.2 million was awarded to child support agencies in eight states: California, Colorado, Iowa, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin.

MAINE: PARENTS AS SCHOLARS PROGRAM - In 1997, the Maine legislature passed the Parents as Scholars (PaS) program to help low-income parents obtain two-year and four-year postsecondary degrees. Parents who are eligible for but not necessarily receiving TANF are eligible for the PaS program. Parents receive monetary support equivalent to what they would be eligible for under TANF. Additionally, a family contract determines additional supports and services the parent needs to achieve postsecondary goals. Possible supports include child care, transportation, eye and dental care, and school supplies. Student parents may participate in this program for up to 60 months.

[Maine Equal Justice Partners, Inc. (2012). Parents as Scholars (PaS) Program Guide. Retrieved from <http://www.mejp.org/content/parents-scholars-pas-program-guide-pdf>.]

- Support coordination and integration within the system, building on progress made by patient-centered medical homes and community health centers.
- Promote links between the health care, education, and human services systems, using community health teams, a focused use of resources in geographic areas with high costs and high-need families, and other approaches.
- Focus on eliminating health disparities through care accountability processes that emphasize equity.

10 **Maximize opportunities for whole-family diagnosis and treatment for mental health. Parental, especially maternal, depression is a two-generation issue, harming the quality of parenting and sometimes inhibiting child development.^{xi}**

- Parity in coverage between mental and physical health for those newly enrolled in Medicaid can further de-stigmatize mental health issues and allow both families and providers to cooperate around the importance of screening, diagnosis, and treatment of major issues like depression.
- Diagnosis, screening, and treatment of mental health issues can be encouraged for both parents and children using the new coverage of preventive services coverage.
- Home visiting programs can be expanded to support two-generation treatment for parents who are not Medicaid-eligible.

86 percent of Americans agree that mental health screenings and services would significantly benefit the whole family if offered to both parents and children at the same time.

— Lake Research Partners, September 2014 National Survey

Moving Toward a Two-Generation Future

These policy recommendations come at a seminal time as the path to economic and social mobility in the U.S. is being fundamentally challenged. Yet, families possess a profound resilience, and communities offer us hope anchored in experience and evidence. Communities and the families they serve are hungry for policies like these that can provide guidance on effective and powerful uses of limited resources.

Strong public support for the elements of the two-generation approach is evident. We must now build the political will and advance the policy solutions that can lift children and their families. The Aspen Institute stands ready to work with policymakers, so together we can move two generations toward one future that creates new opportunities for families to break out of poverty.

I'm going to make sure that she is more ambitious than me. I'm going to make sure she hangs around the right kids and gets a network going in school and college.

— From focus group with low-income, Latina mothers, Los Angeles, California, 2011

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- ^{iv} Lake Research Partners survey of 1,005 adults 18 years of age and older in the continental United States conducted September 18-21, 2014 by telephone using professional interviewers, including 40% reached on a cell phone. The margin of error is +/- 3.1%.
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