STATE OF THE FIELD

TWO-GENERATION APPROACHES TO FAMILY WELL-BEING

ANNE MOSLE
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Ascend at the Aspen Institute is the national hub for breakthrough ideas and collaborations that move children and the adults in their lives to educational success, economic security, and health and well-being. We take a two-generation (2Gen) approach to our work – focusing on children and their parents together – and we bring a gender and racial equity lens to our analysis. In all our work, we draw on the expertise of families. Ascend is a policy program at the Aspen Institute. To meet our mission, we:

- Build leadership and a national network
- Advance practice and policy solutions
- Convene and communicate

acknowledgements

Ascend at the Aspen Institute would like to thank the following institutions and individuals for their support and commitment to our work and to the well-being of children and families:

- Ann B. and Thomas L. Friedman Family Foundation
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Bezos Family Foundation
- Catto Shaw Foundation
- Charlotte Perret Family Trust
- Community Foundation of Sarasota County
- The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
- ECMC Foundation
- Frances Mosle
- Imaginable Futures
- Jordan Ruby Fund
- The Kresge Foundation
- Liz Blake Giving Fund of the Blake Family Foundation
- Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies
- Merle Chambers Fund
- Morgridge Family Foundation
- Richard W. Goldman Family Foundation
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Scott and Patrice King Brickman Foundation
- Sheila Walker
- William J. and Dorothy K. O'Neill Foundation

Ascend would also like to recognize the contributions of the following staff and partners for their contributions to this report: Andrea Camp and Julie Sweetland for writing and editing; Kristen Grimm, Sarah Haight, Marci Bloch, Lori Severens, and Danielle Kristine Toussaint for editing; and Lori Severens for design.

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[Cover photo: Lesley Del Rio, Ascend Parent Advisor, and her son]

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ASCEND
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letter to the 2Gen community

Dear Colleagues:

Ascend at the Aspen Institute was established in 2010 with a clear mission: to spark and spread breakthroughs in the ways we support and build the well-being of children and the adults in their lives, together. We knew that breakthroughs were needed, because no matter how much we tinkered with the same old, separate service-delivery vehicles, they couldn't possibly get us to the destination we sought — intergenerational, whole-family success. In the more than 10 years since, in partnership and co-creation with the hundreds of leaders and organizations in the Ascend Network, we have launched a more-powerful, more-effective way of making a difference in families' lives — headed toward the north star of shared prosperity that includes all families, from all backgrounds. Because we worked together to foster a network of leaders equipped to drive systems change, the two-generation (2Gen) approach is now being implemented and advanced in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico — serving more than 10 million children and families and garnering more than $300 million in public and private funding to support 2Gen approaches.

With a decade of experience behind us, this would be a natural point for reflection in any case. But in light of the upheaval and upswell of the past year, the need to take stock has a special urgency. The seismic impact of the coronavirus pandemic has shaken families. As Ascend Parent Advisor Lesley Del Rio put it, "Life as we know it has been turned upside down." Video recordings of Black people being killed by police have emerged with the regularity of a metronome, showing clearly the racial oppression that the United States has failed to confront at a systemic or structural level. Both events have fundamentally altered our country, our communities, and children and families. Americans are more fully recognizing that a system that tolerates social, racial, gender, and economic inequities is on unstable ground — and we are reckoning anew with the history of racism, sexism, and economic exploitation that built them into the foundation of our nation.

This is also a moment when we are witnessing new and unprecedented energy and enthusiasm for bold change. In communities, people are demanding racial and economic justice — an approach to well-being that leaves no one out. In the systems that support families, leaders like you are demonstrating on-the-ground innovation, challenging outdated approaches, and building new pathways for families. In the private sector, corporations and financial institutions are re-examining the way they do business, deploy capital, reject unfair and unjust practices, and retool to deliver results that back up their public statements. Actions at the federal level, specifically the funding added by the recently enacted American Rescue Plan and the vision

set forth in the American Jobs Plan and the American Families Plan, offers the opportunity for states and communities to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic while at the same time deconstructing barriers that perpetuate inequities and expand opportunities for all families. At a collective level, we are all realizing that this moment invites and requires us all to reflect on what has come before, where we want to go, and how we will get there, together.

At Ascend, we are responding to this moment of upheaval and uncertainty, in part, by offering our thinking about what the 2Gen movement has accomplished so far, and what lessons, strategies, and proven solutions we can bring to the task of rebuilding our future. Our conclusion is that the 2Gen approach is timely and essential. We hope that this analysis of the state of the field reminds you how much positive change you have already created. And we hope that it contributes to your continued efforts to reimagine and build solutions that ensure family well-being.

Sincerely,

Anne Mosle
Vice President, Aspen Institute
Executive Director, Ascend at the Aspen Institute

executive summary

Two-generation (2Gen) approaches build family well-being by intentionally and simultaneously working with children and the adults in their lives together. This resource is designed for policymakers, philanthropists, practitioners, researchers, and others interested in learning what the 2Gen approach has accomplished, why and how it has accelerated so quickly, and what different sectors can do to further its aims.

Accomplishments

After a brief review of the hallmarks of the 2Gen approach, we illustrate these major accomplishments of the field in the past decade:

- Advances in application of brain science – especially with young parents of young children.
- Broad awareness and adoption of an equity-focused, family-centered approach to health and human services.
- A national network of close to 440 public, nonprofit, private, and philanthropic organizations serving 10 million children and families and cultivating and cross-pollinating 2Gen/whole-family innovation, implementation, and impact.
- Community of 80 Ascend Fellows advancing intergenerational economic mobility and well-being across sectors and systems, centered in racial and gender equity.
- Increase in public and philanthropic resources devoted to supporting families and children.
- Significant shifts and innovation in and across state systems.
- Transformation of providers' mindsets from human services to human potential and anchor role of public agencies and funding.
- Radiation to and uptake in other systems and sectors.
- Practice of putting family expertise at the center of practice, policy, and philanthropy.

Insights

Looking across the breakthroughs in policy, practice, research, and implementation, we articulate key insights that can be leveraged to drive further impact:

- Examining issues with a racial and gender lens reveals more equitable and effective solutions.
- Engaging with families authentically and responding to their expertise improves policies, practices, and systems.
- Fostering social capital yields currency that stimulates family economic mobility.
- Shoring up the foundations of mental health is essential to building family well-being.

- Taking a test-and-learn and co-design approach fosters evidence and innovation together.
- Innovating and incubating new ideas in states and counties works – and reveals practices and policy innovations that are ready to scale.
- Creating systematic opportunity and lasting systems change requires fostering equity-minded, values-driven leadership.
- Working with young parents of young children has a powerful multiplier effect.
- We conclude the report by calling attention to areas of opportunity and promising, bold directions for the future, which include actions and considerations for current and future 2Gen champions, policymakers, and philanthropists.

Recommendations

These recommendations include opportunities to do the following:

- Advance racial and gender equity
- Advance physical health and mental health
- Model and measure social capital's impact on family outcomes
- Advance early childhood development, learning, and care
- Advance postsecondary and employment pathways
- Advance economic assets
- Work more effectively and equitably within and across agencies
- Elevate field capacity for using data, making continuous improvement, and evolving evaluation and rapid-cycle learning

Let's seize the new and unprecedented energy and enthusiasm for bold change, racial and economic justice, and an approach to well-being that leaves no one out.

Lorena Barton, featured in Ascend's 1in5 podcast, and her son

introduction

Our nation is at an inflection point: a moment where what we do will shape what comes next. With unprecedented federal expenditures in social policy, leaders in health and human services have a similarly unprecedented opportunity to make much-needed changes. This is a moment when a paradigm shift is in reach – changing outdated, ineffective top-down systems to be more responsive, more effective, and more equitable. Yet, while a paradigm shift is within reach, there is also the risk that we will fail to meet the moment and simply pour more resources into the way we have always done things, because of failure of either imagination or implementation.

We can't let that risk become a reality. Our strategies for building prosperity and well-being for all children and families must be bold and equitable – grounded in our purpose – but they must also be pragmatic, based on what we know works. Now is the time for us to think big. But it is also a time when we must choose and focus wisely. Because the American Rescue Plan has brought unprecedented funding to federal, state, and local governments to rebuild American communities and support American families, we also have the resources to take two-generation (2Gen) policies and practices to the next level.

Over the past decade, the 2Gen approach to family well-being has shown that it is both transformative and practical. 2Gen leaders and practitioners have wrestled conceptually with what it means to place racial and gender equity at the core of our work and then applied those big ideas with purpose in pragmatic, tangible ways, from changes to intake forms to increase access to services to shifts in program titles and imagery to attract and welcome more fathers to parenting programs. We articulated a principle of placing families at the center and ironed out the wrinkles in the process of getting families to weigh in on program design in meaningful and effective ways. We boldly imagined a holistic system free of unproductive silos and frustrating funding restrictions and then diligently organized and participated in working groups focused on the nitty-gritty details of reallocating and blending Medicaid dollars with other resources, and doing so when families most need it. In many states, a 2Gen approach has intentionally connected disparate services – from food and nutrition programs to child care to home visitation – and made them work seamlessly for families.

In the process, across all levels of government and the public and nonprofit sectors, we have listened and learned a lot about how to support and engage families in ways that foster and unleash their potential for health, wealth, and well-being. We have done the work to fuse the pragmatism and the idealism that these times require. This report attempts to capture many of the concrete accomplishments and share the abiding lessons we have learned together as a 2Gen field so that we have them at hand and in mind as we seek to make the most of this moment.

Never before have we needed solutions that can immediately improve the prospects for families – and this report shares recommendations and strategies ready to deploy. We also hope that this "state of the field" resource allows newcomers – whether policymakers, practitioners, or philanthropists – to learn what the 2Gen approach has accomplished, why and how it has accelerated so quickly, and how to join and advance the work of supporting children and the adults in their lives simultaneously, intentionally, and effectively.

the two-generation mindset

2Gen approaches build family well-being by intentionally and simultaneously working with children and the adults in their lives together. The mindset, simply put, is the assumption that by designing health and human service programs to support children and families together, the resulting structure is stronger and better for both generations, and communities do better as everyone achieves their full potential. As children, parents, and families grow and change across their lifespan, 2Gen approaches align opportunities to help families pursue their goals and thrive, optimizing each person's potential along the way.

For example, if parents qualify for a state or federal tuition grant to pursue post-secondary education, then it makes sense to see if a high-quality child care program is available to make sure that while they are studying, their children are learning, too. This 2Gen mindset can unlock new possibilities for greater impact from dollars already spent on Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), child care and workforce programs, and more.

The 2Gen approach is not the "next new thing"; rather, it is a necessary evolution of the human services culture and mindset, building on Indigenous wisdom, the philosophy of the settlement house movement, the founding vision of Head Start and Family Literacy programs, and many other family-centered approaches. It also builds on research and learnings from the Perry Preschool Project, the Abecedarian Project, and research conducted on 2Gen approaches in the mid-1990s.

2Gen is bearing results. The positive effects of whole-family approaches are healthy parents with family-supporting jobs, healthy children meeting developmental milestones, and better-connected individuals able to participate in civic and family life. The 2Gen approach ensures that everyone can contribute to their families, their communities, and our shared economic and civic life.

What We're Going For: Family Well-being

The well-being of children and families is the strongest and most fundamental signal of the state of our communities and country. It is a signal composed of several harmonizing and interrelated elements. The 2Gen approach defines well-being holistically, just as parents themselves do. Parents express a sense of well-being when they have opportunities to thrive financially, they experience physical and mental health, and their children demonstrate educational success and are secure and happy. With this in mind, a 2Gen approach involves working with families in five key areas (see figure 1):

"Well-being is happy, healthy and safe, and family well-being is more like having a balanced life." — Asian mother, Parent Voices 2020 participant

1. **Health, including mental health.** Health has a major impact on a family's ability to thrive. A parent's illness or mental health crisis can affect their ability to earn or perform at work as well as their ability to provide a stable, nurturing environment for their children. When a child is physically unwell, it can hamper their ability to explore, learn,

and meet developmental milestones. Social and emotional well-being are critically intertwined with learning and growth, with mental health being of particular concern in the current context of increased social isolation and increased visibility of racist violence. 2Gen approaches make sure that children and the adults in their lives have healthy environments, sound nutrition, and access to high-quality care for physical and mental health.

2. **Early childhood development, learning, and care.** The earliest months and years of life are a period of incredible brain development. The quality of the experiences and interactions shape brain architecture and the foundation for later learning and development. That's why 2Gen efforts strive to ensure that all services and programs for young children – including child care, Head Start, home visits, K-12 education, and supports for their parents and caregivers – include state-of-the-art content, meet proven quality standards, and foster economic security.

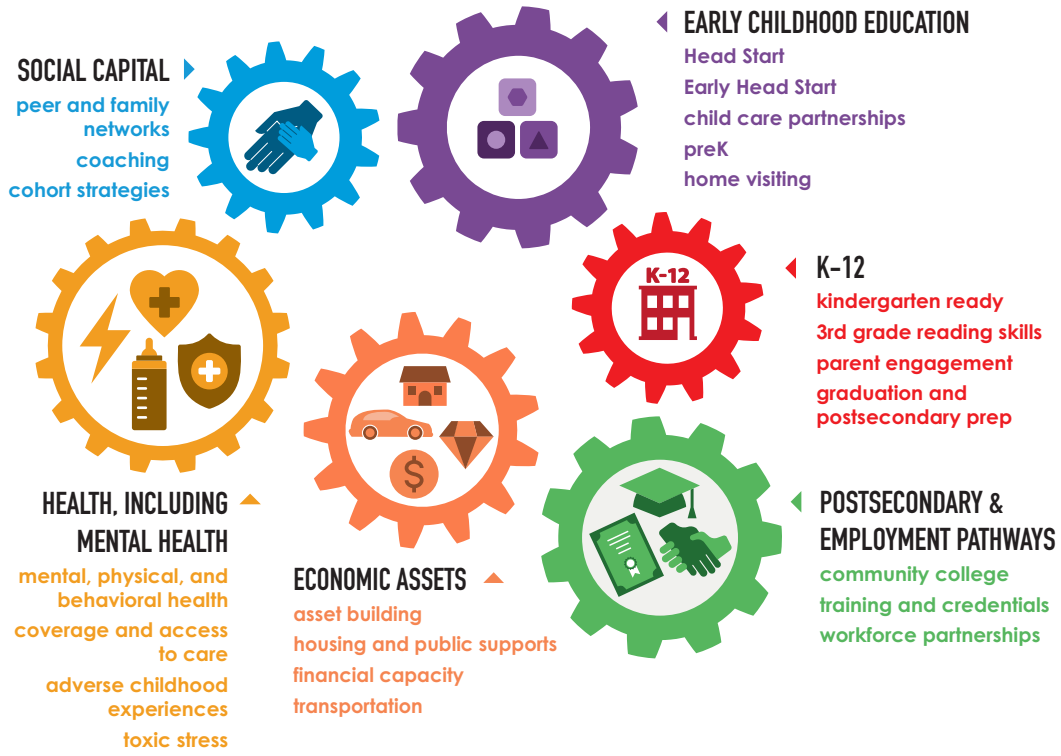
3. **Postsecondary and employment pathways.** Education boosts family economic security. Parents who complete a college degree double their lifetime incomes, adding to the financial security of their families. A parent's educational level is also a strong predictor of a child's success. 2Gen approaches help parents and adult caregivers achieve education milestones and training certifications that lead to better jobs and careers.

4. **Economic assets.** Families with low incomes are under enormous pressure from the costs of housing, transportation, food, child care, and education. An overload of stress can undermine family well-being, while reduced stress helps children get off to a strong start. This helps to explain why a $3,000 increase in the annual income of families with young children is associated with a 17 percent increase in the *child's* future earnings.[1]

5. **Social capital.** To thrive and move ahead in life, both adults and children need helpful connections to people and information, and they need opportunities to both give and receive support. Building a family's "social capital" network is a key component in a successful 2Gen approach. Years of research have shown that social capital connections produce for both families and community – as peer cohorts and support, stronger neighborhoods, more participation in community and faith-based organizations, and school and workplace advances.

1 https://inequality.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/PathwaysWinter11_Duncan.pdf

FIGURE 1: 2Gen Core Components



How We Get There: Hallmarks of the 2Gen Approach

Since 2010, leaders across research, practice, policy, and philanthropy have partnered with Ascend and collectively have worked from a set of five core principles to guide policy, practice, and systems changes:

- Measure and account for outcomes for both children and their parents.
- Engage and listen to the voices of families.
- Ensure equity.
- Foster innovation and evidence together.
- Align and link systems and funding streams.

From our bird's-eye view of the field, Ascend has seen how working with and toward these principles changes the tenor and tone of health and human services work. Across numerous initiatives and innovations at the federal, state, Tribal, and local levels, the process of putting these principles into action has yielded a set of hallmark characteristics that describe what a 2Gen approach, strategy, organization, or system looks like. In most 2Gen efforts, you will notice people consciously and conscientiously choosing to do the following:

Center on families and their strength. 2Gen approaches engage and listen to families as equal partners in setting and achieving family goals. Family expertise and advice drive the design of 2Gen services.

Integrate services. 2Gen approaches find common-sense ways to align the location and timing of parents' and children's activities, provide a range of services at one-stop locations, and eliminate any duplicative hoops to access and participation that families must jump through.

Remove barriers. 2Gen approaches persistently identify long-standing and emerging barriers that keep families from participating in programs and activities to meet their whole-family goals and work to redesign systems or find partners to remove those barriers.

Advance racial equity. 2Gen approaches look at practices and policy – in their own work, their civic and education institutions, their local industries, and government at all levels – to identify and tear down structural barriers that families of color or diverse cultures face in accessing services, training, and employment.

Lead from values and partner with leaders eager to push the levers of change. 2Gen approaches are often catalyzed and sustained by leaders with bold vision and impact-driven mindset and whose commitment to fostering systematic opportunity and advancing racial, gender, and economic equity drives their work.

Shift providers' mindsets. 2Gen approaches ask everyone who works in human services – from the C-suite to frontline staff – to build a family-centered culture. Providers work as family coaches who work side-by-side with families to set goals and develop solutions, rather than as case managers who are too often limited to offering standard referrals or do the work of goal setting themselves.

Partner. 2Gen approaches require committed and creative partnerships with and among organizations, businesses, educational institutions, governments, and philanthropic investors to offer families a comprehensive range of services that are targeted and timed to help them reach their full potential.

Measure family outcomes. 2Gen approaches develop ways to measure family progress and well-being outcomes for children and their parents or their adult guardians.

Ariel Ventura Lazo, Ascend Parent Advisor, and his children

impact and accomplishments

Over the past decade, Ascend at the Aspen Institute has served as the trusted national hub for innovation, breakthrough ideas, and collaborations for children and families. Both our policy efforts and our on-the-ground pilots and programs have been aligned with the north star of whole-family well-being and equity. The collective impact and reach of these efforts have led to measurable changes in families' lives. Summarizing what the field has accomplished through innumerable convenings, collaborations, and initiative is a daunting task. Yet we can confidently observe that, together, we have achieved so much:

- Advances in application of brain science, especially with young parents of young children.
- Broad awareness and adoption of an equity-focused, family-centered approach to health and human services.
- National network of close to 440 public, nonprofit, private, and philanthropic organizations serving 10 million children and families and cultivating and cross-pollinating 2Gen/whole-family innovation, implementation, and impact.
- Community of 80 Ascend Fellows advancing intergenerational economic mobility and well-being across sectors and systems, centered in racial and gender equity.
- Increase in public and philanthropic resources devoted to supporting families and children.
- Significant shifts and innovation in and across state systems.
- Transformation of providers' mindsets from human services to human potential and anchor role of public agencies and funding.
- Radiation to and uptake in other systems and sectors.
- Practice of putting family expertise at the center of practice, policy, and philanthropy.

Advances in Applications of Brain Science

The evidence for early life as a sensitive period in brain development is well understood. The 2Gen approach has fostered – and embraced – important advances in evidence and practice regarding the sensitive period in brain development for parents and caregivers that have, until recently, gone unrecognized. Because of the work of the 2Gen field, we have increasing knowledge and awareness of the powerful motivational link between children and the adults in their lives.

- In Two Open Windows: Infant and Parent Neurobiologic Change, Ascend Fellow Dr. Sarah Watamura and her colleague Dr. Pilyoung Kim, both at the University of Denver, offered a compelling case for the transition to parenting as a distinct and important sensitive period in which the brain undergoes neural development and growth. More recent updates to this body of work have demonstrated that it is the act of transitioning to parenthood – whether as a biological parent or not – that opens a time-limited window where both new parent and baby are especially receptive to being shaped by their environments. This window of opportunity offers a second chance for young adults and caregivers to strengthen skills and capacities that can not only shape the critical interactions that build their babies' brains, but also influence the behaviors that shape their health and employment.

"Early indications from emerging two-generation approaches highlight the importance of **"mutual motivation"** when both parents and children have access to opportunities… a body of research highlights the impact of maternal work and education on outcomes for children. At the same time, children can serve as a motivating factor for adults, particularly mothers." *Two Generations. One Future* – 2012

"Mutual reinforcement: Service providers' efforts align and build on each other toward achieving a shared vision and common or compatible goals for serving families as a whole. Efforts can include designing and offering services of comparable quality, duration, and intensity to parents and children in the same families; developing and using shared measures to assess both parents and children in the same families; and seeking to create a common theory of change or aligned mission statements to positively affect both generations within a family. Efforts should be intentionally differentiated and coordinated to leverage each service provider's area of strength or expertise, with the idea that those efforts will become synergized and strengthened to achieve broader, shared outcomes for both generations beyond what each service provider would have been able to achieve alone." *Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning Research and Evaluation*

- In *Conceptual Frameworks for Intentional Approaches to Improving Economic Security and Child Well-being*, Ascend Fellow Dr. Lindsay Chase Lansdale, the Frances Willard Professor of Human Development and Social Policy at Northwestern University and co-founder of the Two-Generation Research Initiative at Northwestern University, advanced research around the concept of "mutual motivation," which describes how young children's learning motivates parents and how parents' learning can reinforce their children's.

This evidence is an important contribution to the way we think about economic and social policy as well as program design, timing, and implementation. Like all sensitive periods, the environmental conditions and supports during the transition to parenting can contribute to whether the changes that occur increase health, productivity, and well-being or whether new vulnerabilities emerge or existing ones are exacerbated. Supports and skill-building programs provided in the earliest stages of parenthood can have a significant effect on both parents and children. On the other hand, failure to provide effective supports may exacerbate risk and toxic stress during a critical and vulnerable time. Being there for parents, caregivers, and children in this early window will pay dividends in both the short and long term.

2Gen researchers and practitioners have been leading the way in translating this research into professional development, programs, and policies that have a deliberate focus on unlocking parents' potential to meet their own educational and career goals. These efforts are yielding positive results.

- In **Colorado,** the JeffCo Prosperity Project recognizes the benefits of integrating workforce and mental health supports for parents whose children are enrolled in child care and Head Start. It relies on its parent council to provide peer support, advice, and a helping hand for other parents. Staff are hired and trained to coach parents — not manage cases. Similar work is underway elsewhere around the country, including in Connecticut, Tennessee, and Washington.

- SECURe Families — a 2Gen intervention designed for children and families with low incomes developed by Dr. Stephanie Jones and her team at Harvard Graduate School of Education EASEL Lab — has designed social-emotional learning experiences for both parents and children and identified pragmatic ways that social and emotional curricula offered in schools can be extended into family and community settings.
- Vroom is a global program based on the belief that all parents have the potential to create a bright future for their children. Vroom translates brain science into practical tips and tools that equip parents and caregivers to engage with children in easy and everyday ways that establish a strong brain architecture.
- ParentCorps, developed by Ascend Fellow Dr. Laurie Miller Brotman, transforms the preK experience in historically disinvested neighborhoods by helping schools partner with families to build a future where all children thrive. Their work focuses on children's social-emotional learning and includes mental health and parenting programs for parents and teachers. The New York City Department of Education is invested in scaling ParentCorps across its preK system, serving 70,000 four-year-olds annually. In addition, Brotman and Ascend Fellow Ann Kalass have built a partnership to expand the model into Detroit where Kalass leads Starfish Family Services, a lead agency in Detroit's largest Head Start coalition.

Broad Awareness and Adoption of 2Gen Approach

There is a new understanding of families and how to effectively design services and supports that meet their needs. This shift has set the tone for a new era of family policy and created a new culture of collaboration across all levels of the public and nonprofit sectors. The field is moving rapidly from a narrow, limiting definition of its work as mere service delivery to a more expansive, holistic understanding of the work as fostering human development and human potential.

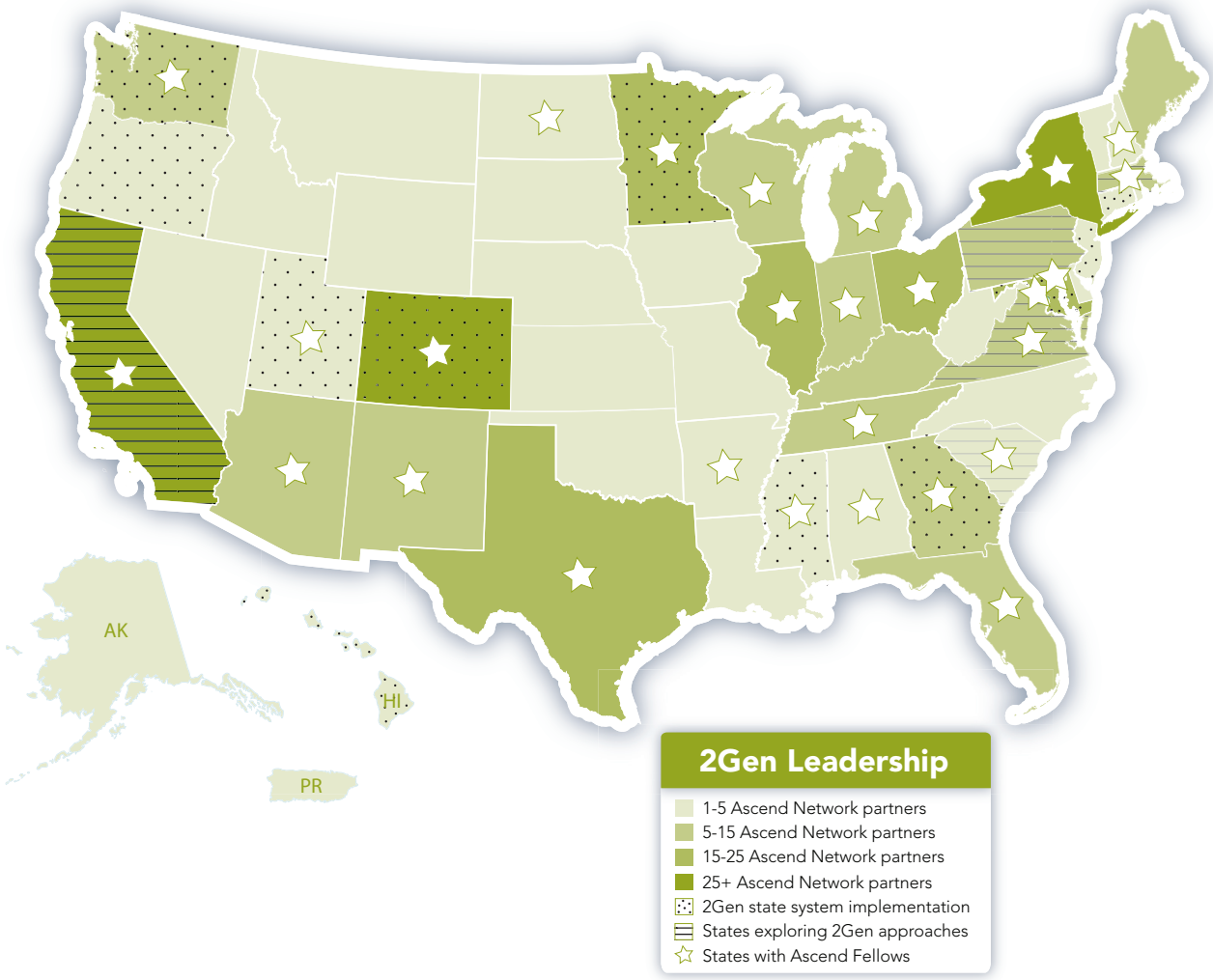
- Ascend is working alongside close to 440 leading multi-sector organizations that are serving more than 10 million children and families with family-focused solutions.
- The modern, equity-centered 2Gen approach is being explored, implemented, and advanced by the Ascend Network in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The American Public Human Services Association, the National Governors Association, and the National Conference on State Legislatures have also fueled and celebrated the work at the state level (see figure 2).

"Across the nation, we've witnessed the powerful impact of states and communities who are leading with a two-gen approach. By bolstering family-led strategies that equip parents and children to set goals and create plans together, we are building well-being for generations to come."

- Tracy Wareing Evans, President and CEO, American Public Human Services Association

- To date, 12 states have implemented 2Gen approaches to align and coordinate their agencies and strengthen programmatic supports for families, including linking child care and early learning programs to workforce development and economic pathways, adopting new models of home visiting, and creating effective parent and child supports

FIGURE 2: 2Gen Leadership and Momentum



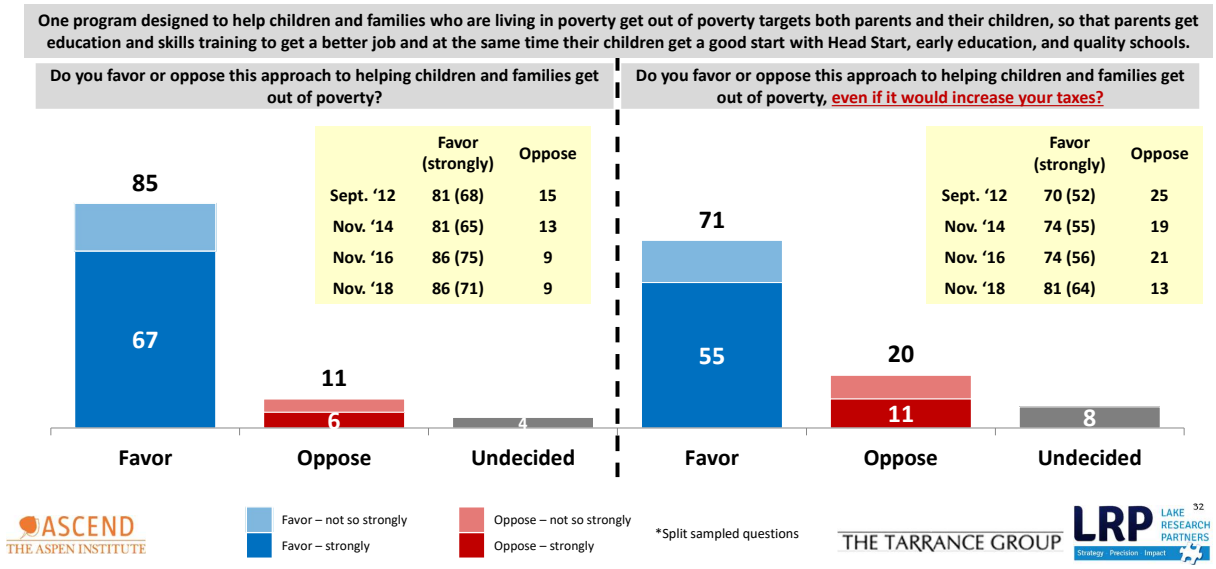
as states seek more effective and equitable outcomes for children and families. These states are Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, Oregon, Tennessee, Utah, and Washington. California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia may soon follow suit as the approach gains momentum in each state. Recently, the District of Columbia reimagined its Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to embrace a 2Gen approach.

- 2Gen is being implemented and embraced at the city and county level, as well. In 2019, the National Association of Counties formally embraced 2Gen and encouraged the federal government to recognize "that local and state governments are best positioned to help their citizens when federal programs are flexible and support all generations within a family." Even before this formal policy shift, counties were out front on the 2Gen approach.
- There is active research interest in 2Gen, with a growing community of academic centers, such as Northwestern University's Two-Generation Research Initiative, Center for the Economics of Human Development at the University of Chicago, Wellesley

Centers for Research on Women, Cornell University's Project 2Gen, Notre Dame University's Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunity, University of Minnesota's Future Services Institute, and Harvard Graduate School of Education. Methods include randomized control trials of robust 2Gen programs, process evaluations of systems partnerships, innovations in assessments of community engagement efforts, return on investment measures, and collaborative projects in state agencies.

This broad awareness and support within the sector are mirrored by high levels of public support. National polls conducted since 2012 demonstrate strong and enduring support for the 2Gen approach. Voters across the political spectrum and in all regions of the country endorse the 2Gen approach, with 85 percent of 2020 respondents expressing support. The bipartisan polls, conducted by Lake Research Partners and the Tarrance Group, have found that a 2Gen approach is a common-sense way to address poverty that appeals to both sides of the political aisle and nearly all demographic cohorts. Support for this pragmatic, deliberate whole-family approach has remained strong and consistent for the past eight years.

Support for a two-generation approach that helps parents get education and skills training while children get a good start is broad and deep. Voters are tax sensitive, but a majority still strongly favor it even if it increased their taxes.



Public agencies and private philanthropy have supported the 2Gen approach through new national initiatives and investments in programs and strategies that meet the needs of children and parents together. As a result, over the past 10 years, more than $300 million in public and private funding has been allocated to the 2Gen approach.

In addition, a growing number of United Ways, community and women's foundations are embracing a 2Gen approach to increase the impact of their grant making and catalyze community collaboration and partnerships.

Philanthropy and 2Gen or Whole-Family Approaches

A growing number of foundations have invested in and been informed by the 2Gen approach to enhance practice, policy, research, and systems change within organizations, systems, and communities:

Ann B. and Thomas L. Friedman Family Foundation
Bezos Family Foundation
Catto Shaw Foundation
Community Foundation of Sarasota County
David and Lucile Packard Foundation
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
Gary Community Investment
John T. Gorman Foundation
Imaginable Futures
Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies
Merle Chambers Fund
Scott and Patrice King Brickman Foundation
The Annie E. Casey Foundation
The Kresge Foundation
W.K. Kellogg Foundation
William J. and Dorothy K. O'Neill Foundation

Community of Ascend Fellows Advancing Economic Mobility, Equity, and 2Gen Approaches

Across the country, 2Gen leaders are piloting and scaling systems, implementing bold changes, and innovating new forms of support. These leaders have fueled the thought leadership and action that are evident in 2Gen progress at the community, state, and national level. Ascend has intentionally invested in this fresh generation of leaders through artfully designed convenings and cultivating a high-trust community of diverse leaders with bold visions and big ideas to build intergenerational economic mobility and well-being for children and families.

At the forefront is the national network of Ascend Fellows. The Fellowship, launched in 2012, in tandem with the release of *Two Generations: One Future*, is an 18-month journey of thought-provoking reflection, inspiration, and action based on the Aspen Institute's 72-year history of leadership development. The Fellowship's founding purpose was to provide a place to answer a fundamental question: What would it take to break the cycle of poverty? The vision is to invest in visionary, courageous leaders poised for a quantum leap and positioned to drive practice, systems, and policy change at scale.

The 80 alumni of the Aspen Institute Ascend Fellowship reflect the rich talent and diversity of our country. They embrace a commitment to equity and justice and are setting a new tone and vision for how we work with, and think about, children and families. These leaders, selected through a highly competitive nomination and application process, have the influence and courage to bridge divides, shift thinking and practice, and achieve goals that that produce measurable results and meaningful impact for children and the adults in their lives.

Today, Ascend Fellows steward more than $4.5 billion in public resources and lead the organizations and systems that most directly affect child and family well-being. Results of the Fellowship are far-reaching, with influence and innovation in health and human services systems and policy, postsecondary and employment pathways for parents, early childhood development and brain science advances, trauma-informed care, equitable access to capital, and the impact of mass incarceration on parents and children. By providing the space and support to bring Fellows' big ideas to life and scale, the Ascend Fellowship has served as an incubator for meaningful, high-impact innovations and an amplifier of those ideas. The relationships and trust that have been built over time are often the foundation for powerful collaborations and effective replications from one context to the another.

Shifting Health and Human Services Systems from Within

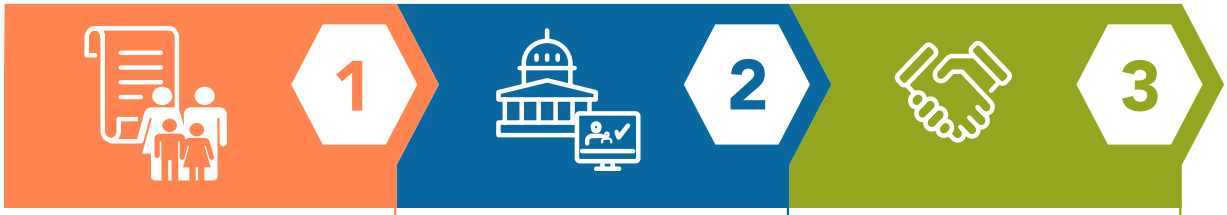
A notable impact has been how the 2Gen approach has transformed state systems and policies. States are key drivers of policy innovation and implementation. Federal, state, and county human service agencies collectively steward trillions of dollars in public resources, and their funding decisions, policy priorities, and implementation efforts ultimately drive the effectiveness and equity of outcomes for families.

The 2Gen approach has provided state agencies with a pragmatic and purpose-driven way to drive equity and well-being by shifting and aligning the gears of early childhood, K-12 education, postsecondary success, health and mental health, economic assets, and social capital. The 2Gen approach offers a family-focused framework for human services to align child- and adult-serving programs and departments within the agency (intra-agency), catalyze partnerships across key agencies (inter-agency), such as labor, education and health, and with community organizations through funding to service providers and trusted local nonprofits.

State momentum is having three major effects. First, many states are reviewing and aligning child- and adult-serving programs to put families at the center. A 2Gen analysis identifies ineffective practices that force families to navigate fragmented systems, inconsistent eligibility rules, or contradictory expectations, all of which set up barriers to good outcomes. Second, 2Gen has fostered new family-centered collaborations across public agencies to produce better child, parent, caregiver, and family outcomes. Third, 2Gen has catalyzed new community- and county-level partnerships (see figure 3). As discussed above, 12 states are implementing 2Gen approaches. These states are not only leading change in their own context, they are also leading the learning of other states. New interest and action in states such as California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia signal that 2Gen momentum in the states will continue to grow and accelerate state and local innovation.

The 2Gen approach demands greater integration and cooperation across agencies, organizations, and funding streams. Effective 2Gen state innovation engages and extends from cabinet-level leadership to front-line staff. As a result, since 2015, eight states have established a dedicated staff position within a state agency to deepen and coordinate statewide 2Gen approaches and foster a family-centered culture. Recognizing that peer learning and support are essential for these leaders of change in newly created roles, Ascend created the 2Gen Coordinator Community of Practice in 2019 to support learning across states and accelerate implementation. State innovation and leadership remains a priority focus of the Ascend Fellowship. Lifting up 2Gen state accelerators and barriers with federal agencies has been an important factor in informing national policy efforts and funding.

FIGURE 3:
System Shifts: Intra- and Inter-Agency Alignment and Community Partnerships



States review and align child- and adult-serving programs to put families at center.

For example: In the Colorado Department of Human Services, the Offices of Early Childhood and Economic Security partnered to align early childhood and employment services and braid funding to support families.

Public agencies collaborate to put families at the center and produce better outcomes.

For example: Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning partnered with the state technical college system to support the educational success of both children and their parents by linking student parents to

States foster and fund community and county partnerships.

For example: The Minnesota Department of Human Services issued Whole Family Systems Grants focused on strengthening child-family coordination across programs and systems to address racial, geographic, and economic inequities. ($17.5 million

Radiating to Other Sectors and National Networks

The shift in the human and social services sector has radiated throughout other relevant fields and networks that touch families. The examples below illustrate how the 2Gen approach has activated a reimagination of systems to truly serve families: changes in postsecondary institutions, the early childhood sector, and national networks. Together, these examples show the broader impact of the 2Gen approach.

"I needed my children to see that I wasn't or hadn't always talked about education because it was just what I wanted for them. So when I got my grades, I posted them…I wanted them to see that I was doing it as well. And they stay grounded. They kept me grounded." – African American mom, Richmond, Virginia

Postsecondary Systems Recognizing Student Parents' Potential

One in five undergraduate students are also parents – and the percentage of student parents is significantly higher at community colleges and workforce and nontraditional credentials programs. Imagine both the strength of, and stress on, parents struggling to make ends meet, push for a postsecondary degree, and care for their children. Despite additional responsibilities and challenges, student parents, who carry the hopes and dreams of their children along with their own, have higher grade point averages than their non-parenting peers.

Buoyed by the 2Gen movement, student parents and their children are influencing a new chapter in higher education equity and excellence. In 2018, Ascend launched the Postsecondary Success for Parents Initiative to accelerate parents' postsecondary success in

collaboration with parents, researchers, and policy experts. A newly created Postsecondary Leadership Circle for Parents influences innovation in three higher education systems that encompass 37 colleges, have a collective budget of $9 billion, and serve more than 980,000 undergraduate students. In 2020, Imaginable Futures and the Lumina Foundation unveiled the Rise Prize, which put out a multisector call for early- and mature-stage solutions to fuel parents postsecondary success, attracting more than 300 applications, innovations, and solutions with potential for scale. Field collaboration is growing with national policy organizations, such as the Institute for Women's Policy Research, The Hope Center, and College Promise. In addition, Ascend's National Postsecondary Advisors came together with policy experts; student parent advisors; practice innovators such as PeletonU, LIFT, and Jeremiah Program; and the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program, resulting in congressional testimonies supporting the inclusion of provisions for student parents in the American Rescue Plan.

While work remains to be done on systematically tracking the numbers of student parents, their leadership is becoming more visible on campuses and in policy. One example is the City University of New York's new Student-Parent Task Force, which comprises student parents, a student trustee on the University Board, central and campus-based staff, and faculty, including a research scientist who ensures student parents are identified upon entry to the University. Another is in Oregon, where in May 2021, the state senate passed legislation aimed at collecting data to determine the number of students who are parents enrolled in their higher education programs. Senate Bill 564 requires the state's Higher Education Coordinating Commission to design a question or questions allowing each student to identify whether they are a parent or person acting as a parent or legal guardian. The demographic information would be collected annually by public postsecondary education institutions. This legislation, which was the first of its kind in the country, was championed by student parent Michaela Martin and supported by Mark Mitsiui, president of Portland Community College, who ensured the support of the Oregon Association of Community Colleges. These examples foreshadow the next chapter in equity, diversity and inclusion in higher education.

This matters. Accelerating parents' postsecondary success is one of the most effective economic mobility solutions for the current and next-generation population. For example, a bachelor's degree translates into $1 million more in lifetime earnings, compared to those with a high school diploma.

2Gen action in the postsecondary sector is growing at the national and state policy levels. In 2020, Congress quadrupled to $53 million the funding for Child Care Access Means Parents in School, and a range of state actions informed by student parents themselves are underway. In October 2020, Ascend announced the Parent Powered Solutions Fund, the first-ever parent-led fund dedicated to supporting community-based efforts that further student parent postsecondary success. These six parent-designed projects help create student parent advisory councils, connect parents to mental health and financial counseling, and compensate student parents for sharing their expertise and developing practice and policy recommendations.

In July 2014, Congress boosted the potential for Workforce Development Boards (WBD) to support families with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which requires governors to develop state plans that include coordinating government agencies and non-government partners to ensure the local labor force matches the area's labor market. WIOA opened the door to more 2Gen initiatives by mandating stronger partnerships among the business and social service sectors to better engage employers, prioritize supports for individuals with low income, and promote career pathway strategies. Representing

approximately 550 WBDs and their 12,000-plus business members throughout the country, the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) plays an important role in building and maintaining policies that support 2Gen approaches. It is supportive of opportunities to use 2Gen approaches and strategies to build a stronger workforce and offers its members a variety of 2Gen-related resources.

In 2017, NAWB and Innovate+Educate launched the Family Centered Employment initiative to advance new pathways to employment for parents and families with children while providing linkages between early childhood development and employment, leading to economic advancement. What started as three pilot sites serving 150 families recently expanded to incorporate 12 more workforce development boards. NAWB and Innovate+Educate also launched the Family Centered Community of Practice to support WDBs interested in integrating 2Gen in their workforce development services and local communities.

In 2020, Ascend unveiled the Postsecondary Acceleration Partnerships, which after a competitive review, awarded $900,000 to six state and county systems change collaborations focused on increasing postsecondary completion for parents by increasing access to supports and public benefits. These partnerships will ensure that policies and systems lead parents to credentials and careers that provide living wages, access to opportunities for advancement, and continued learning in sectors with high growth and demand. As much of higher education grapples with declining enrollment, attracting and investing in student parents and family friendly policies offers an important, timely economic and equity opportunity.

Early Childhood Systems Strengthened by Embracing the 2Gen Approach

A 2Gen approach is most beneficial when engaging young parents and their children. Investing in their early years is at the heart of 2Gen approaches and essential to ensuring that young families thrive. New models affirm the power of connecting parents' economic mobility to early childhood development, addressing health and mental health to augment early childhood impacts, and ensuring quality early childhood systems and services are designed to account for and respond to the conditions and contexts that disproportionately and inequitably affect families with low incomes as well as families of color.

In the past decade, fueled by the 2Gen approach and lessons from research, intentional program design, and on-the-ground innovation, the early childhood field has widely embraced the importance of increased social capital and economic mobility among parents. States like Georgia and Connecticut implemented a 2Gen state plan that spurs examination of not just child but whole-family outcomes. For example, to enhance its cross-agency system and promote better outcomes for children and families, Georgia built a cross-agency child data system that takes child-level data from the state's birth-to-five programs and matches it across all systems throughout the state to determine when, where, and which services are going to which children. With changes in the administration of child care subsidies, Georgia was also able to give more funds to high-quality providers that meet standards and are in areas where there is a great need but few services. Georgia also developed a powerful partnership between the Department of Early Care and Learning and the state technical college system to support the educational success of children and their parents together.

Networks Drive 2Gen Momentum and Learning

Community-based organizations affiliated with a national network are well-suited to drive rapid innovation, assess new models and practices, and scale them so that they continue to work well as they grow to meet the needs of more families. Community Action Agencies such as CAP Tulsa and Garrett County Community Action Committee have been at the forefront of the 2Gen movement, and the Community Action Partnership is scaling 2Gen with select organizations throughout its network of more than 1,000 Community Action Agencies. In recent years, local Catholic Charities agencies, United Ways, women's funds, Head Start programs, Family Resources Centers, and community colleges have implemented 2Gen approaches that have informed and helped scale 2Gen across their national networks.

Aspen Institute Ascend Fellowship

When it comes to making the lives of children and families better, we bet on diverse, well-connected, visionary leaders to get the job done. The Ascend Fellowship is an investment in leaders who have the courage and influence to shift thinking, bridge divides, and build relationships to chart a bold new path for equitable outcomes for children and families.

The Ascend Fellowship is an 18-month journey of thought-provoking reflection, inspiration, and action based on the Aspen Institute's 50-year history of leadership development. Fellows have the opportunity to step back from the day-to-day demands of their role, meet with extraordinary peers who push their thinking and boundaries, set their sights on something even more significant in the work they do, and get the encouragement and support to pursue that vision.

Fellows have used this time to prepare for a dramatic expansion of their reach and results, identify and launch their dream organizations, and clarify their vision and voice to deepen their base of resources and partners and achieve aspirational goals. A full list of the 80 Ascend Fellows to date is included in the appendix.

National Ascend Network

The Ascend Network is a national network of practitioners, policymakers, philanthropic leaders, and researchers advancing 2Gen approaches to support families in achieving their full potential.

Since the launch of the Ascend Network in 2014, Network Partners have spurred significant shifts in the field and in the lives of families through two-generation efforts. Being a member of the Ascend Network is a powerful opportunity to learn and connect with others around the country committed to identifying, developing, and implementing 2Gen approaches in service of families' dreams.

Ascend Network membership now includes close to 440 Partners active in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, serving more than 10 million families. See the appendix for a complete list of Network members by state.

Authentically Engaging and Centering Parent Voice

Just as no one builds wellbeing on their own, decision makers cannot build sound policies or programs on their own. The voices and perspectives of people affected by policies and programs are essential elements of making them work. The words of parents animate and reinforce what we learn from the data and the facts on the ground about these policies.

To capture parent voices and perspectives, Ascend, working with Lake Research Partners, conducted 12 virtual focus groups in fall 2020 to ask racially diverse parents and caregivers with low incomes and young children how they were experiencing this unique moment in our history. Ascend then supported a bipartisan election omnibus poll of 1,200 voters fielded by Lake Research and its partner Republican firm The Tarrance Group to gauge voter support on the two-generation (2Gen) approach and policy options.

This is what we heard:

PARENTS THINK EXPANSIVELY ABOUT WHAT "FAMILY WELL-BEING" MEANS: IT'S FINANCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND MORE. VOTERS AGREE.

Financial

- The expenses that parents of young children bear – especially child care – are major sources of stress and financial strain. If parents were in charge, across groups they say they would create affordable or even no-cost child care.
- The stimulus checks opened parents' eyes to the possibilities of the role of government, but they feel cynical about future help. About half (49%) of all voters, and a majority of women (53%) and parents with children under 18 at home (53%), favor providing $1,000 per month for a year through direct cash deposits to shore up financial stability.

Emotional

- Parents are wildly in favor of increasing access to emotional and mental health services for children and parents. More than seven in ten voters (72%) agree that emotional and mental health screenings and services should be available to parents and children together, even if only one is enrolled in a health insurance plan.

Structural

- Parents really see a need to create more programs that support fathers in their role as parents, in addition to the ones we have for mothers. A majority of voters (78%), including majorities across demographic and partisan groups, favor creating more programs that support fathers in their role as parents.
- Other programs parents would institute include affordable housing, distribution of baby and toddler supplies, universal health care, financial literacy classes and support, maternity and paternity leave, and mental health support.

COVID-19 pandemic and structural racism

- With the anxieties and disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, parents are feeling overwhelmed, worried, frustrated, and stressed.
- The sudden national focus on racism, police brutality, and racial justice issues put into focus the personal experiences with racism that many Black, Latinx, Asian American, and Native American parents face.

- Across groups, Black, Latinx, Asian, and Native American parents are concerned about how racism affects their children, but they have strategies and interventions prepared for when their children inevitably face prejudice or racism.

Support for a 2Gen approach

- In 2012, 81% of voters favored programs designed to help children and families who are living in poverty get out of poverty by targeting both parents and their children, with parents getting education and skills training to get a better job and children getting a good start with Head Start, early education, and high-quality schools. In 2020, this percentage grew to 85%.
- Voters are tax sensitive, but a majority (71%) strongly favor 2Gen programs, even if that means an increase in their taxes.

8 PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGING AND CENTERING PARENT VOICES

1. **Engage parents as experts.** Parents know better than anyone how and why family-supportive programs and policies fall short and what changes can be made to improve program and policy outcomes.
2. **Ensure equity.** Structural barriers such as labor market discrimination and lack of access to educational and economic opportunities disproportionately affect communities of color. As a result, while families of a wide range of geographies, education levels, and racial and ethnic backgrounds have faced economic insecurity, communities of color have been most affected.
3. **Partner with parents.** Partnerships develop when parents are not just asked to provide their opinions, but also given leadership opportunities and decision-making power.
4. **Foster parent safety, authenticity, and autonomy.** Support parents as they think about how to tell their story, but do not censor them. Ensure the demographics of those in the room are reflective of the community you serve.
5. **Prioritize social capital.** Social capital manifests itself as increased peer support and connections to family, friends, neighbors, organizations, and colleagues. Such support appears to be a powerful success factor in programs that help families in moving toward economic security.
6. **Compensate parents appropriately.** Like an expert on economics or public health, parents should be compensated for their expertise. Stipend amounts should also compensate parents for any out-of-pocket costs and be determined through analysis of local market costs for child care and the local living wage rate.
7. **Cultivate learning and evaluation.** To engage and center parents, organizations need solid capacity to conduct outreach, identify parent participants and leaders, adjust organizational culture to center parents, and evaluate these efforts. Organizations can document their efforts to create a team knowledge base.
8. **Thank and recognize parents.** Express gratitude and appreciation to parents for their work and recognize their contributions publicly. This recognition demonstrates the equitable inclusion of parents as experts and establishes a public track record of their leadership, which they can use for future professional opportunities.

Learn more at Ascend's Parent Voices microsite.

insights from a decade of innovation

Over the past 10 years, Ascend has been curating, contributing to, and learning from breakthroughs in research, science, practice, and the importance of centering of lived experience. These breakthroughs have been co-created, shared, and refined by the network of hundreds of diverse organizations – from different sectors, different regions, and different disciplines – who have been working to reorient health and human services systems to center on the needs and experiences of families. As discussed above, the innovations in policy and practice are also diverse; some are technical and concrete, while others are less tangible yet still transformative. Looking across the body of work that the 2Gen field has taken on, eight insights emerge as cross-cutting lessons that we believe will serve us well as we move forward:

- Examining issues with a racial and gender lens reveals more equitable and effective solutions.
- Engaging with families authentically and responding to their expertise improves policies, practices, and systems.
- Fostering social capital yields currency that stimulates family economic mobility.
- Shoring up the foundations of mental health is essential to building family well-being.
- Taking a test-and-learn and co-design approach fosters evidence and innovation together.
- Innovating and incubating new ideas in states and counties works – and reveals practices and policy innovations that are ready to scale up.
- Creating systematic opportunity and lasting systems change involves fostering equity-minded, values-driven leadership.
- Working with young parents of young children has a powerful multiplier effect.

1 INSIGHT
Examining issues with a racial and gender lens reveals more equitable and effective solutions.

By looking at existing policies, practices, and problems through the lens of racial and gender equity, we can see that most health and human services policies are not designed for the families of today, and many were explicitly designed to perpetuate inequities. One in four U.S. children grow up in a single-parent family, and the majority of single-parent families are headed by women. While families from every racial and ethnic background have been affected by economic trends and policies that have allowed the cost of living to rise while wages remain stagnant, children and parents of color are more likely than whites to have low incomes. The 2Gen approach involves calling out the ways current programs, services, and policies create gender and/or racial and ethnic disparities – and identifying ideas that bring the root causes of inequities into sharper focus.

Over the past decade, it has become clear that programs and systems are more effective when they collaborate to address the different conditions impacting families and when they replace uniform approaches with responsive approaches that consider the unique situations of different families and different family members. The best approach for engaging families with parents in

the criminal justice system will be different from strategies for working with immigrant families. Program recruitment strategies that appeal primarily to mothers can be enhanced to also support fathers. In an interdisciplinary approach, all systems that interact with families are aware of the nuance of the parents' circumstances and respond in a condition-appropriate way. The 2Gen approach facilitates understanding of these complexities, especially for those programs focused on serving children.

Parents' Perspectives:

"Being harassed, it traumatizes you." – Latino father, Colorado

"It's everywhere, it's in the bones of our country. I feel like it's very systemic so it's hard to imagine life without that. It's everywhere, it in the grocery store, in the parking lot, like you name it, it's everywhere."

– Mixed race mother, Connecticut/Maryland/New Jersey

Insight in Action:

- Using an equity lens has revealed ways to grapple with the interacting conditions affecting families. A clear example is the shift that has occurred in working with parents in the criminal justice system. Currently, 1.8 million children have an incarcerated parent, and 5 million children have had an incarcerated parent at some point in their lives – a form of severe adversity that, without a supportive, buffering response, can disrupt children's physical and mental health and undermine overall development. Given this, 2Gen proponents have begun to redesign early childhood systems to better support children with an incarcerated parent, while working in other parts of the system to eliminate unjust and unfair practices and policies that drive higher rates of incarceration in communities of color. College & Community Fellowship (CCF) in **New York City** is one such model. Led by Ascend Fellow Rev. Vivian Nixon, CCF has helped women leaving the criminal justice system by working with early childhood systems on ways to support both children and mothers affected by the justice system, including strategies such as "banning the box," ensuring that more women convicted of felonies have access to employment to support their families. Nixon was also a leader in the successful movement to end the 25-year ban on Pell Grant eligibility for those who are incarcerated, providing an opportunity for parents and other adults to obtain an education and expand pathways for themselves and their families.
- Ascend Fellow Dr. Wendy Ellis, director of the Center for Community Resilience at the Milken Institute School of Public Health at George Washington University, is using adverse childhood experiences research to identify strategies for providing communities the buffers and supports to not only bounce back from adversity but to also bounce forward. Ellis works with community partners using community mapping, interviews, and demographic and health data to combine collaboration and community to address the sources of adversity in communities. She and Ascend Fellow Laura Huerta Migus, who leads the Association of Children's Museums, have developed a community-driven movement to address root causes of childhood trauma, foster equity, and dismantle structural racism. The pilot in **Cincinnati, Ohio** includes the public school system, Cincinnati Museum, a local youth arts and activism program, and local policy nonprofits.

- In **Western Colorado,** Jeff Kuhr, executive director of Mesa County Public Health and an Ascend Fellow, started out with a concern about the availability of child care. Looking at the issue through a racial and gender equity lens, the barriers presented by low pay for child care professionals, who tend to be women, and the unsustainable business model for home providers and small centers came into view. As a result, Kuhr is partnering with the business community to strengthen provider business practices and increase profitability, working with the state Office of Early Childhood to streamline licensing procedures, and advocating for higher pay for providers. The goal – to double the availability of child care – remains the same, but the means of achieving that goal will not just serve children and families, but also advance broader pay equity and economic justice.
- In **Baltimore, Maryland,** and **Alameda County, California,** leaders have recognized that efforts to support families need to include programs and policies for fathers in addition to the important work supporting mothers. In Baltimore, the Center for Urban Families, led by Ascend Fellow Joe Jones, has successfully advocated for family-supportive child support policies at the state level. The Alameda County Fathers Corps, a county-wide partnership, is a national leader in supporting fathers and father figures to be meaningfully engaged with their children and families, promoting a shift in national narratives around fathers, and advocating for family service providers to provide father-friendly services.

2 INSIGHT
Engaging with families authentically and responding to their expertise improves practices, systems, and policies.

One reason the 2Gen approach has become a powerful, cross-sector movement is that it offers solutions grounded in the hopes and dreams of families.

As a society, we have consistently denied families a voice in the design and implementation of programs and services meant for them, resulting in poor uptake and weak programs. The 2Gen approach insists on involving families in analyzing where previous efforts have fallen short and what needs to be changed to make sure things work for all families. Recognizing that parents are the experts in their own lives helps ensure that programs and policies truly meet their needs.

Engaging parents authentically can occur several ways, such as focus groups when designing or assessing a policy or program, parent councils when implementing long-term initiatives, and listening tours. Once a policy or program is adopted, the 2Gen approach encourages ongoing feedback loops for parents to share their experience and recommendations.

Since its inception, Ascend has actively engaged family expertise and created multiple models and practices ready for field adoption, including:

- Including parents as peer experts in convenings and report reviews as a standard of practice.
- Building a parent ambassador platform that facilitated share their experiences and recommendations with program and policy leaders, philanthropists, and academics.
- Developing a parent advisor cohort model and parent powered solutions: Eleven

professionally compensated parent advisors who helped shape the policy agenda and partnered with Ascend to develop the first Parent Powered Solutions Fund. Both the advisors and the fund provide philanthropists and policymakers with concrete models and frameworks.

Engaging with families as equals has changed the mindset that drives the way agencies operate. In some places, the new mindset is revealed when flyers for ill-attended parenting programs give way to meaningful partnerships with mutual accountability for agencies' investments in parents' education, health, and career trajectories. In Colorado, the JeffCo Prosperity Project relies on its parent council to provide peer support, advice, and a helping hand for other parents. Staff are hired and trained to coach parents — not manage cases. Similar work is underway elsewhere around the country, including in Connecticut, Tennessee, and Washington. Additionally, states have recognized the power of compensating parents for their expertise, not simply reimbursing them for expenses incurred when presenting or sharing that wisdom.

With a more authentic, meaningful engagement with families, states and counties are recognizing the untapped potential of parents and designing more deliberate ways to help them advance their own educational and career goals. We are seeing a long overdue shift from a culture of blaming parents to one of respecting them. From this shift emerge new practices, such as shared goal setting, motivational coaching, and cohort models that recognize the power of parents' dreams and peer support. A respected human services leader shared a powerful story of what switching to motivational coaching from case management meant in setting a new standard of practice. She had seen a long-time client, a mother, cycle through an array of services over a decade. But this time, they experienced a breakthrough that led to stable employment for the mother and a safer home for her family. When discussing what made the difference, the mother said simply, "This was the first time you asked me about my goals."

Parent Perspective:

"We know where the cracks are because we have fallen through them."

– Anjanette Vaidya, Parent Advisor for Ascend's Postsecondary Success for Parents Initiative

Insight in Action:

- Under the leadership of Ascend Fellow Reggie Bicha, the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) held listening sessions and interviews in 2016 with absentee parents who were behind on child support payments. Bicha says, "We saw parents who wanted to provide for their children but did not have the skills or education to obtain employment that allowed them to meet the needs of their families. We found that most parents wanted to engage, provide resources, and be involved in caretaking for their families. Listening to parents, both those with custody and those ordered to pay child support, we realized there must be a better way to do this work." Ultimately, the state pursued a strategy that took parents' views into account and moved from a punitive to a supportive approach – for instance, providing positive parenting skills support,

employment training, and support groups that built social capital among fathers. A rigorous national evaluation, supported by the CDHS Child Support Services Program, showed that the program increased participants' earnings, boosted their sense of connection to their children, and improved participants' attitudes toward child support.

- In **Mississippi**, Dr. Aisha Nyandoro, an Ascend Fellow and CEO of Springboard to Opportunities, launched and is expanding one of the country's most-watched cash transfer programs – Magnolia Mothers' Trust. Families had told her that too often they saw doors to opportunity open for them – the possibility of a new job, or a better place to live - only to see them snap shut because they did not have the right amount of money at the right time to take advantage. In response, she began providing participants with $1,000 a month for 12 months to use as they see fit. The program recently launched its third cohort and was named a recipient of Goldman Sachs' landmark $10 billion fund for Black women. This trusting, respectful approach represents a sea change in how human services agencies listen to and act toward families.
- In **Washington**, Lori Pfingst, an Ascend Fellow and the Senior Director in the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, led Governor Inslee's Task Force on Poverty Reduction, which created a comprehensive, 10-year plan to reduce poverty and inequality in Washington state. People with lived experience and a commitment to equity were at the center of creating the plan, forming the Steering Committee that informed the process and approved the Plan's content. It was a state-wide effort of more than 70 people across agencies and communities. The result is a blueprint for the next decade focused on dignity and well-being for all children and families, a blueprint state leaders, families, and community partners are eager to put into action.

3 INSIGHT
Fostering social capital yields currency that stimulates family economic mobility.

Social capital, or the influence and support that we gain through relationships, networks, and trust, is less tangible than other aspects of family well-being systems, but it is no less essential. People who have and give more of this social currency are better equipped to reach personal, professional, and financial goals because they can access information, guidance, and other forms of support. Social capital, however, is generally unevenly distributed, and under some conditions, is in short supply. Isolated or distressed areas offer fewer organic opportunities for strong relationships with neighbors. Lower-wage jobs often discourage or prevent meaningful interactions among employees. People who are caught up in the maze of the justice system are often cut off from family, friends, and professional contacts.

The 2Gen field has demonstrated that when health and human services initiatives are designed to generate social capital, families use this currency to improve their lives and benefit their children.

- An investigation by Dr. Mario Small, an Ascend Fellow and Grafstein Family Professor of Sociology at Harvard University, documented, tested, and translated the elements

and impact of social capital for diverse children and low income families. The study, documented in his book *Unanticipated Gains*, found that the practices and structure of New York City child care centers affected parents' social capital in subtle and sometimes surprising ways. The frequency of field trips and the rules regarding drop-off and pick-up times had more impact on the connections parents made than deliberate "networking" efforts.

- Additional research conducted by Dr. Small with Ascend Fellow Dr. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, the Frances Willard Professor at Northwestern University, along with Dr. Teresa Eckrich Sommer and Dr. Terri Sabol at the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University, found that classroom composition affected social connections, with parents being more likely to ask for help from other parents when their children were in classrooms with other children from the same neighborhood. A low-cost intervention, tested in partnership with Acelero Learning, led by Ascend Fellow Henry Wilde, that offered families the opportunity to form parent partnerships made a difference, diversifying social networks and increasing participants' willingness to ask other parents for help. Moreover, as parents' level of connection and trust increased, their commitment to their children's education and to supporting other parents also increased.

Parents' Perspectives:

"My network has grown with lots and lots of people that always can say oh I know about this job opening and I know about these people and would you like to do that?" – African American mother, Chicago

"It's weird because one of my support systems is the YMCA. They pick my daughter up from school and take her there until six o clock and then my neighbor works there and she lives next door to me. She will take my daughter and keep her until I get off of work." – African American mother, Chicago

Insight in Action:

- Direct-service organizations have put social capital research into practice, demonstrating its effectiveness. CAP Tulsa in Oklahoma, for example, used a cohort approach with the families in its CareerAdvance® program to improve the completion rates in education and career pathways for the parents of children enrolled in its Head Start program.
- Social capital can help state and county agencies and other organizations work more effectively, too. Recently, as the pandemic struck, Ascend Fellows tapped into the power of their relationships, relying heavily on their network of Ascend Fellows to solve problems through direct and candid collaboration, and they worked together to secure just-in-time resources. As one Fellow said, "We had already done the norming and storming, and we were able to just perform." Another added, "I could pick up the phone, and I knew all of my co-Fellows would take my call."
- UpTogether (formerly Family Independence Initiative) is a national organization that centers social capital practices to support the goals toward economic mobility of

families with low incomes. UpTogether works with families to form cohorts of six to eight people, and over the course of two years, the families meet monthly to discuss goals and challenges and hold each other accountable to previous commitments. UpTogether aims to place families in all decision-making roles about program design and outcomes. Based on families' feedback, FII-Detroit is shifting its online UpTogether platform so that members can form small groups on their own, without in-person, staff-based enrollments. Groups will be able to access interactive digital tools for sharing social support and practical resources to help each other reach their goals and connect with other groups across shared interests or geography. In this strengths-based social network, groups connect with each other to share the robust resources they already have in their relationships.

- The MOMS Partnership, housed at the Yale School of Medicine, works to improve the mental health and economic outcomes of mothers or adult caregivers who have acknowledged mental health needs. Using social media, mothers can chat with each other and earn tokens for completing social capital-related activities, such as getting a library card. Tokens can be donated or redeemed for gift cards. The program can also track when mothers are connecting with each other virtually or in person through location data.

4 INSIGHT
Shoring up the foundations of mental health is essential to building family well-being.

The emotional well-being of young children is directly tied to the mental health and functioning of their caregivers and the families in which they live. When these relationships are chronically neglectful or otherwise psychologically harmful, they are a potent risk factor for the development of early mental health problems. In contrast, when relationships are reliably responsive and supportive, they can buffer young children from the adverse effects of other stressors.

Ascend has engaged in 2Gen efforts to prevent childhood adversity from happening in the first place and offering supports for parents and children who have had adverse experiences. Ascend Network Partners like Safe & Sound (formerly the San Francisco Child Abuse Prevention Center), National Crittenton, and the Children's Home Society of Washington in Seattle have demonstrated that taking a strategic, sensitive approach to adversity makes a difference in family functioning and well-being.

Parents' Perspectives:

"I think it (mental health care) teaches both the parent and the child how to cope with certain situations together. It's not enough to teach your child certain life skills. You have to be able to reenforce those in the home. It'd be good to learn with your child how you're supposed to deal with things."

– Mixed race mother, Minnesota

"When it (mental health care) is easier to access, well you prevent children and parents going to an extreme level of depression. Heightens increasing productivity and then - a healthy nation."

– African American mother, Parent Voices 2020 Participant

Insight in Action:

- Dr. Matthew Biel, child and adolescent psychiatry division chief at Georgetown University Hospital/Medstar and an Ascend Fellow, recognized the need to approach mental health with a view to the entire system. He and colleagues at Children's National Hospital launched an effort to transform mental health systems for children and families in the nation's capital. They started by listening to parents, community partners, and DC public health and human services leaders to understand the challenges and potential pathways and build trust for the significant shift they envisioned.
- The Washington State Health Care Authority, the largest health care purchaser in the state, is integrating physical health and behavioral health services to give residents access to better health care at a lower cost. The Health Care Authority recently secured infrastructure money to build out nine Accountable Communities of Health whose boundaries align with Washington's Medicaid regional service areas. This initiative will identify and pursue a variety of innovative approaches, including treating behavioral health in the primary care setting and developing solutions to widespread opioid misuse.
- Mothers and Babies, developed by Ascend Fellow Dr. Darius Tandon, is an evidence-based home visiting model, that has been highlighted as one of the most effective interventions for the prevention of postpartum depression, a critical step in ensuring mothers and their children have a healthy start. Recognizing the need to support fathers too, Tandon and his team have developed Fathers and Babies to complement their work with mothers.

5 INSIGHT
Taking a test-and-learn and co-design approach fosters innovation and evidence together.

The most effective 2Gen strategies have tapped insights from prior evidence-based research, adapted or expanded them to meet local needs, and committed to evaluating the resulting innovation. When 2Gen practitioners, policies, and organizational cultures have integrated innovation and evidence, coupled with respecting and listening to families, they have uncovered and refined more-responsive, better-integrated services. This test-and-learn approach has led to changes at every level of health and human services systems, from transformed frontline practices, improved contracting models, stronger partnership approaches, and enhanced service delivery.

Parents' Perspectives:

"I feel positive about everything, because as easy as they put that money in my account, they could do it again." – Parent Voices 2020 participant

Insight in Action:

- The **Connecticut** Office of Early Childhood drew on brain science and research on trauma-informed care to craft a **pilot rate card for assessing outcomes during home visits.** Agencies such as Parents as Teachers, Child First, Early Health Start, and Nurse-Family Partnership use the rate card, which enables the state to link incentive payments to outcomes such as a healthy birth, safe children, family stability, and caregiver employment.
- In **Indiana**, the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) – an evidence-based program for new mothers known for its rigorous attention to program fidelity – took on a larger vision for **what it takes to foster family well-being.** The program focuses primarily on physical health, mental health, and child development, but the 2Gen approach prompted it to seek out partnerships that moved mothers toward educational and employment success. NFP partnered with the Goodwill Excel Centers, which offer tuition-free adult high school education, combined with life coaches, child care, and career counseling to students who did not complete high school. This innovative partnership between two evidence-based programs amplifies the impact of each.
- **New York City** has applied insights from behavioral science in several of its agencies, using a test-and-learn approach developed under the leadership of Ascend Fellow Anthony Barrows and colleagues at ideas42 to land on procedures and forms that streamline and expand access to services. Examples include a **redesigned SNAP renewal process**, which has reduced the number of families who face gaps in food assistance, successful efforts to increase financial aid applications and academic persistence for students in the CUNY system, and an increased uptake of school gifted and talented programs by families in districts with low incomes.
- In **Colorado**, Cheryl Ternes, the director of the Department of Human Services in **Arapahoe County** and an Ascend Fellow, launched GOALS (Generational Opportunities to Achieve Long-Term Success) in 2019 to move families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing. Data showed a lack of **transitional housing for families experiencing homelessness**; simply put, traditional shelters weren't working. GOALS embeds 2Gen principles by setting and measuring goals for the whole family and takes a holistic approach that goes beyond narrow housing-related topics. Services address physical health and mental health for children and parents, support learning and education for children and parents, and more. The Center for Policy Research has designed a two-phase evaluation that will ensure that this innovative model is continually improved and yields an evidence base that can inform future efforts.

6 INSIGHT
Innovating and incubating new ideas in states and counties works – and reveals practices and policy innovations that are ready to scale.

2Gen leadership and collaborations have redesigned numerous state and local policies and practices. The 2Gen commitment to engaging the expertise of diverse parents and families was key; each of these efforts authentically included the voices of families with low incomes in the conversations about the policy and systems changes that would affect them. Additional state 2Gen action steps include new governance structures; family-focused data collection, agreements, family councils, and feedback loops; 2Gen summits; and catalytic community grants. While each state initiated its 2Gen policy and systems change with different areas of

focus, all embraced it as an opportunity to reimagine and transform human services to achieve stronger outcomes for children and families.

Parent Perspective:

"Doors were opened for me to have my voice heard. 2Gen has helped me as a parent create awareness. We now look at the family. Grants have even become 2Gen." - Veronica Rosario, parent advocate

Insight in Action:

- **Washington –** To better align services to promote whole-person wellness, Washington created the Department of Children, Youth and Families, the state's lead agency for state-funded services for children and families to build resilience and improve health and educational outcomes. The department now oversees and integrates several services previously delivered separately by the Department of Social and Health Services and the Office of Early Learning. Likewise, reflecting the 2Gen principle of integrating services, the state now provides behavioral health services through the state's health care authority, rather than through a standalone agency.
- **Georgia –** To create a stronger education system for all of the state's students – from early childhood education through workforce development – Georgia's education agency heads and the Governor's office have formed a collaborative partnership referred to as the Alliance of Education Agency Heads. This body coordinates efforts on policies and projects that involve multiple agencies and accomplish together what no one agency can accomplish alone. An excellent example of 2Gen thinking is illustrated in the state's approach to linking student parents attending technical colleges to high-quality early learning and care programs for their children.
- **Maryland –** Without measurement approaches aligned with a 2Gen approach, systems will default to tracking outcomes for adults and children separately, and programs will follow suit. Signaling their commitment to the approach, Maryland launched the Two-Generation Family Economic Security Commission, which includes select state agency directors, state legislators, and community and county leaders. The Garrett County Community Action Committee (GCCAC) developed a robust system of tracking measurable outcomes for the entire family. By centralizing data intake and database management, GCCAC has achieved a universal data workflow that supports integrated service delivery for families. Achieving this involved careful selection of the technology platforms and information management systems that would work for this approach. Lessons learned in Garrett County are ready to share with other jurisdictions.
- Gretchen Hammer, an Ascend Fellow and the former director of Medicaid in Colorado, developed a 2Gen Medicaid Checklist to identify opportunities to target and optimize Medicaid funding for young children and parents. The checklist was complemented by a 2Gen and Medicaid policy brief from the Georgetown Center for Children and Families.

7 INSIGHT
Creating systematic opportunity and lasting systems change involves fostering equity-minded, values-driven leadership.

Values-driven, community-focused leadership is essential to the 2Gen approach, involving leaders who understand their role as unlocking the door to well-being for families and who have cultivated the practice of listening to and learning from their perspectives.

Fellows' Perspectives:

"When you head an organization, you get a title. But, that doesn't make you a leader. Over the past few years, I've faced several thorny challenges. Thankfully, colleagues in the Ascend Fellowship have given me concrete solutions to deal with these values-based challenges that have been incredibly helpful to me personally and profoundly propelled our organization forward. I look at those moments and know I will draw on them forever."

– Katie Albright, Ascend Fellow and executive director, Safe and Sound

"I couldn't sleep if I didn't do it… I want all of our kids to inherit a world that is worth inheriting." – Ascend Fellow

Insights in Action:

- In **South Carolina,** Ascend Fellow Georgia Mjartan, who heads First Steps, the state's dedicated early childhood initiative, led the design of a portal that shows parents what free, public options are available for preK 3 and 4 across the state. Her goal was to ensure more-equitable access to state services for families. In the first 6 months, 22,000 families visited the site, and 3,500 have connected with the programs they need. She recently secured state funding to make free child care and after-school care available for all siblings age 12 and under of any child in state-funded preK, enabling parents to go back to school and work.
- We see a similar leadership mindset in **St. Paul, Minnesota,** where Mayor Melvin Carter, an Ascend Fellow, raised the city's minimum wage and joined a cohort of mayors in reimagining cash assistance and housing support for families and their children.
- We see it in **New York City,** where CUNY Chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez, an Ascend Fellow, fought for the resources to ensure that all the university's students have access to emergency resources in the midst of a pandemic and worked to ensure that student parents are seen, supported, and succeed throughout the CUNY system.
- We see it in **Las Vegas, Nevada,** where Tameka Henry, a mother, community leader, and Ascend Postsecondary Parent Advisor used her years of experience on the local Head Start policy committee to run for the school board to spur system-wide change.

These leaders — all Ascend Fellows or Ascend Parent Advisors — listen to the experience and expertise of families and take courageous steps to adopt a 2Gen approach that puts the

well-being and prosperity of children and families at the center of their work. They are building political will, changing the culture of their organizations and systems, taking solutions to scale, and creating an environment that embraces change and innovation with a shared north star of equitable economic mobility and prosperity.

8 INSIGHT
Working with young parents of young children has a powerful multiplier effect.

Parents make up a growing share of the target population of workforce development programs. For example, 25 percent or more of young people (aged 16 to 24) who are neither enrolled in school nor employed are parents.

There are reasons that such young people have been called "opportunity youth." As described above, there is strong evidence that parenthood can be a powerful motivating factor for young people to pursue education and employment. The latest neuroscience shows that the brains of new parents undergo reconstruction, making them more sensitive to experiences and open to change and growth. And of course, young parents have young children – who are developing rapidly, learning about relationships, acquiring language, and creating a million new neural connections each second. With two sensitive periods for growth and learning co-occurring, it makes sense that supports for young parents have a powerful multiplier effect, affecting the children and the family in both the short and long term.

Yet, until recently, very few programs addressed this population. Not only did this approach lock young parents out of opportunity, but it also often locked their children into poverty, increasing the likelihood of stressful conditions that can undermine healthy development and learning.

After the 2Gen movement brought to light the disconnect in responding to those families most likely to live in poverty — young parents with young children — programs and initiatives that focus on parental economic mobility pivoted to respond. Today, a core part of workforce development program design, as well as community college student services, entails components addressing child care and early learning. According to a 2018 Urban Institute survey, about 64 percent of workforce development respondents said they provided supportive services for child care. Eighty-four percent of respondents partnered with at least one child care-related organization, including child care resource and referral agencies, Head Start, and individual child care providers. Prior to the COVID pandemic, partnering with nonprofit and community-based organizations allowed workforce development boards to tap into additional resources and supports. It is hoped that these partnership will only be strengthened going forward.

Parents' Perspectives:

"I think the biggest thing for me is trying to figure out how I am going to take care of myself and how am I going to set my children up for success."

– Latina mother, Denver, Colorado

"We're planting the seed. And now that I'm back in school, it's helping my son to get back in school; it's helping my daughter to think about going to school."

– College and Community Fellowship parent

Insight in Action:

- UTEC in **Lowell, Massachusetts**, works with young adults trapped by proven barriers to success, primarily incarceration and other serious criminal histories. Recognizing that about 4 in 10 of the young adults in their programs are parents of young children, UTEC adopted a 2Gen approach and committed to reaching multiple generations through its services, expanding from traditional anti-violence programs like streetworker outreach and workforce development to include initiatives that engage young parents and their children. In 2017, UTEC opened an on-site early childhood education center that ensures that children at the 2Gen Center are building the same core competencies that their parents are working on in their own programs. The 2Gen Center's provision of high-quality child care also removes a barrier for young adult employment. As a result, UTEC alumni are less likely to be re-involved with the justice system and more likely to make progress on a pathway to economic and civic participation.
- In **Tennessee**, the Metropolitan Action Commission in Nashville built a system of care based on the whole family through a 2Gen approach. It provides short-term, high-yield job training to help parents access living wage jobs while their children are in Head Start or Early Head Start. These programs focus on two primary programs — the Child Development Associate program and the CompTIA A+ program. Additional programs and supports include adult education (GED or HISET), English for speakers of other languages, fatherhood programs, and a youth technology camp.
- National Crittendon has worked to address both the strengths and needs of pregnant and parenting youth in foster care, calling national attention to the need to transform the child welfare system to one of well-being, centered in parents' and their children's success and resilience, and focused on prevention and family support, instead of punitive placements in foster care. The advocacy efforts of National Crittendon and others have contributed to policy breakthrough, such as the requirement, beginning in 2022, for states to collect and report through the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System on the number of expectant and parenting young people in foster care – a much delayed yet critical step in our work to align our public policies to better support them and their children.

Waukecha Wilkerson, Ascend Parent Advisor, and her children

2Gen 2021 and beyond: recommendations for action

"Don't meet parents where they are. Meet parents where they dream."

– Janine McMahon, Ascend Parent Advisor

One of Ascend's parent advisors, Janine McMahon, offered a provocative perspective: "Don't meet parents where they are. Meet parents where they dream." As we undertake the hard work of a just recovery from the pandemic and a full reckoning with racial injustice, we believe that this aspirational mindset is essential. At the same time, we see with clear eyes that this mindset must be embodied and embedded in the policies and practices we advance.

We are at a generational window of opportunity to place family well-being at the center of our national agenda. The 2Gen approach has been embraced across administrations from its inclusion in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) 2015-2016 Strategic Plan and the Rural IMPACT demonstration project, which spanned two administrations. President Biden's American Families Plan adopts a 2Gen approach in the proposal to establish a $62 billion grant program to increase postsecondary completion rates by allowing colleges to adopt innovations such as wraparound services ranging from child care to mental services, which are critical supports for student parents seeking degrees. The pragmatic and family-centered focus of 2Gen has been embraced by a growing cohort of states and counties, resonates across urban, suburban, and rural communities, and transcends both political polarization and leadership transition, from gubernatorial to presidential.

The following forward-thinking, actionable recommendations are grounded in equity, rooted in the evidence of health and economic disparities for communities of color, and the strength and resilience of those communities. Many draw on lessons and ideas from the Aspen Family Prosperity Innovation Community, the Aspen Postsecondary Success for Parents Initiative, the Aspen Ascend Fellowship, and the Ascend Network. These are organized according to the elements of the 2Gen approach: physical health and mental health; early childhood development, learning, and care; postsecondary and employment pathways; economic assets; and social capital. We also offer recommendations for elevating the state of the field's capacity for using data and advancing racial and gender equity.

Because public sector leadership is vital at this time, the majority of ideas here focus on federal levers. Some ideas highlight ways the private, philanthropic, and nonprofit sectors can innovate and collaborate on behalf of families. As states and local governments consider how to effectively use the unprecedented billions of funding from the American Rescue Plan and funding proposed in the American Jobs Plan and the American Families Plan, all these ideas offer strategies to do right by families.

We cannot solve the problem of child and family poverty without committing to advancing and achieving racial and gender equity. Advocacy and organizing efforts have successfully elevated this view to the highest levels of government: The Executive Order on Advancing Racial

Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government outlines a timely and comprehensive racial justice strategy for the federal government, while the Executive Order on the Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council represents an opportunity to sharpen our focus and advance an intersectional approach to equity and equality for women and girls.

Together, these efforts present the nation with an unprecedented opportunity to reshape the role and goal of the public sector – powered by a modern approach to governance that includes and invests in the potential of all people across race, gender, ability, income and geography. This work, if done well, will not only allow us to live up to our highest values, but will also yield tangible, pragmatic benefits. Ensuring that people of color have equitable wages, housing credit, lending opportunities, and access to higher education would create an additional $5 trillion in gross domestic product in the American economy over the next five years.

Aspen Family Prosperity Innovation Community

Family Prosperity's mission is to strengthen parents' and families' access to employment opportunities, economic security, and health and well-being. Our community brings together cross-sector leaders, including and especially employers in the public and private sectors, who recognize a shared responsibility for families in their community and broadly. We prioritize anti-racism and reimagining systems and structures to achieve family prosperity.

Family Prosperity Partners include on-the-ground innovators – local and regional organizations that have significant track records of possessing the research, practice, and policy expertise to create high-impact solutions – and the most visionary and results-driven national policy organizations advancing family prosperity.

Advisors are distinguished experts and thought leaders from the business, government, academic, philanthropic, and nonprofit sectors who provide additional perspective, content expertise, and partnership to Family Prosperity. See the complete list of partners and advisors in the appendix.

Aspen Postsecondary Success for Parents Initiative

The Aspen Postsecondary Success for Parents Initiative raises awareness of the needs of student parents and shares recommendations to increase parents' postsecondary success. Centered on a 2Gen approach, the Initiative urges postsecondary leaders to identify and meet the needs of parents and their families, connect with policymakers to strengthen political will among states and regions, and bring innovative family-support models to the forefront.

Three dynamic groups of leaders – student parents as Parent Advisors, policy and practice experts as National Advisors, and college presidents and chancellors as the Postsecondary Leadership Circle for Parents – inform and advance the recommendations and best practices. A complete list is in the appendix.

Opportunities to Advance Racial and Gender Equity

There is much work to be done to make the most of this specific guidance – and of the larger moment. The focus on equity calls the 2Gen field to:

- **Hold the federal government accountable for its promises to center equity – and follow its lead when it uncovers ways to disrupt inequitable systems.** The Executive Orders will, we hope, result in concrete recommendations for where and how to continue the work of dismantling systemic racism in federal programs, policies, and practices. We trust that the 2Gen field will partner with the Federal government to identify opportunities to advance racial equity, hold them accountable for following through to achieve equitable whole family outcomes. will press for these recommendations to be implemented swiftly, thoroughly, and thoughtfully – and hope that the federal process will provide a model for doing similar work at the state and local level.
- **Embed a racial, gender and economic impact analysis into all 2Gen efforts to drive economic mobility and family well-being.** While we pursue specific changes in discrete policy domains like those outlined below, we must consistently bring an equity mindset and toolkit to the work. In doing so, it is critical for the 2Gen field to connect and integrate efforts for racial justice with attention to gender equity. Because such a large portion of families are headed by women, we believe that only an intersectional lens – one that sharpens our focus on the connections between race, gender, and class – can reveal the path to economic mobility and family well-being.
- **Leverage philanthropic sector commitment to racial equity.** As major national foundations and private philanthropists have made their public commitments to centering and supporting racial equity, there is an opportunity to accelerate child and family prosperity. One important mechanism is through leadership — specifically, investing in emerging and established leaders of color across sectors and disciplines, but especially those that have historically lacked strong pathways to leadership for communities of color. Fellowship programs, pilots that explore and adapt increased pay and compensation models, and cultural competency trainings and innovative recruitment strategies in graduate programs are several ways in which we can tap the vast talent pipeline for systems that serve children and families.
- **Engage the private sector in building well-being with families of color.** In response to the 2020 public outcry on racial injustice, the Business Roundtable created a special committee for the business community to coalesce around advancing racial equity and justice in public policy and corporate initiatives. From pledging increased funding of community initiatives on racial equity to expanding their commitment to diversity and inclusion in their own workforce, companies are taking concrete and meaningful steps to recognize — and eliminate — the structural barriers in the workforce. We have an opportunity to apply 2Gen ideas to business commitments to remove the barriers that system racism places between families and their full potential. For example, the 2Gen field can lead by translating the Business Roundtable statement on racial justice into concrete and measurable advances in on-the-job training, pay, family-supporting

benefits, and hiring and promotion practices that give employees of color greater opportunities to build their skills and earn credentials while their children benefit from quality early childhood programs.

Efforts to advance equity across the federal government will revitalize communities that have been harmed by a history of disinvestment and discrimination — and catalyze economic activity that will contribute to broader, shared prosperity. For the upcoming investments to yield the full returns they promise, it will be especially essential to implement Racial Equity Executive Order Section 8 on Engagement with Members of Underserved Communities. Ascend at the Aspen Institute recommends:

Pilot family councils in federal policymaking on families and children

To design stronger, more effective policies and programs, it will be critical to establish Family Councils across the federal government. Family councils and advisory roles — which have been piloted and refined by Ascend and many state human services agencies — are a powerful governance innovation that give policymakers a proven way to authentically engage the perspectives, expertise and insights of parents, guardians and caregivers. The results are smarter policies and more robust public support.

As America rebuilds with equity as a central design principle, key agencies, starting with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the U.S. Department of Education, should lead the way and launch a cohort of Family Council Pilots by September 2021. Family councils — comprised of up to 20 compensated members who are parents and caregivers from historically underserved groups — would convene quarterly and work according to principles that have already been operationalized in the field, such as Ascend Principles for Engaging and Centering Parent Voices and Ascend Parent Powered Solutions Fund.

Opportunities to Advance Physical Health and Mental Health

The pandemic has clarified for ordinary Americans what experts have long recognized: physical and mental health are interconnected, and the well-being of one family member affects that of all others in the household. To advance inter-generational well-being, we must pursue promising innovations that reflect a holistic, equity-minded approach to physical and mental health. Opportunities include:

- **Focus on upstream solutions that prevent trauma and significant adversity.** The science is clear that significant early childhood adversity can have long-lasting negative effects — and that it is possible to prevent the accumulation of traumatic experiences. We need a national commitment to make prevention a priority, fully funding efforts to implement, evaluate, and scale up strategies that prevent trauma and toxic stress. One way to do this is through expanded funding for the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program funding at approximately $100 million per year through 2025. Funding should be implemented in ways that allow states and providers flexibility to implement 2Gen preventive strategies, including HealthySteps, integration of workforce training and mental health supports in home visiting, and fostering

partnerships for perinatal treatment and support at Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) with community agencies that provide access to asset-building benefits like child savings accounts.

- **Build on recent expansions to dyadic screening and referrals for parental mental health.** In 2016, federal guidance for Medicaid reimbursement made it possible for parents to be screened for maternal depression during their child's well-being visits – a huge step toward acting on what we know about the connection between parent mental health and child development. To advance 2Gen well-being, more work is needed to fully leverage this guidance:

  - Build better coordination among systems and funding, so pediatricians have the ability to refer parents to additional, affordable treatment and support as a follow-up practice.

  - Ensure that when parents or guardians are identified as having a mental health need, they are connected to appropriate services within three weeks.

  - Revamp pediatric training and staffing models to ensure that holistic teams of providers are aligned on a family's needs, rather than individually serving different parts of the family without communication mechanisms in place to support baby and parent.

- **Expand telehealth coverage while investing in real-time research to prevent inequitable experiences.** The pandemic catalyzed greater adoption of telehealth services, and post-pandemic, such services could prove to be a more efficient and cost-effective means of addressing the needs of families with inflexible work schedules or transportation challenges. However, the history of public health innovations demonstrates that unless we make intentional efforts to design and implement new methods to work at the margins, we risk increasing disparities rather than reducing them. Therefore, significant investments are needed to ensure that telehealth is available to families with low incomes (through expanded Medicaid coverage) and that this service delivery method works for families with low incomes (through research to understand barriers to high-quality care, care experiences, best practices, and efficacy).

Opportunities to Model and Measure Social Capital's Impact on Family Outcomes

Trust, relationships, and networks are invaluable but often informal factors in economic and social mobility of families across generations. Yet, the majority of policies, program design, and funding do not have explicit strategies and models to build social capital, nor is there evaluation capacity to measure the impact of social capital. In 2018, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) began a three-year effort to understand how local, state, faith-based, and nonprofit human services programs and organizations can create and use social capital to increase employment, reduce poverty, and improve child and family well-being. We have a timely opportunity to build on ASPE's work and new tools available to expand the social capital of families. We may also leverage innovations in evaluation methodologies, technology, and increased recognition of parent and caregiver 2Gen engagement with practitioners and policy leaders.

Social Capital Checklist. All programs and policies should answer these questions: Does this service, intervention, policy, or funding break or build social capital for families? Does the strategy or service strengthen the three forms of social capital? Testing and refining a social capital checklist offers potential for more meaningful outcomes at relatively low cost.

Social Capital and Family Well-being Working Group Lab. Building on the ASPE research, convene a diverse working group comprising parent leaders, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers to identify the breadth of social capital models and strategies. The goal is to identify, design, and test social capital approaches and measurement tools, and identify models with potential for scale.

Opportunities to Advance Early Childhood Development, Learning, and Care

More Americans than ever agree that early childhood development is a policy priority, and the science is clear that the early years of a new family are a critical time to offer supports. Parents seek choice and quality when determining the best out-of-home care and learning arrangements for their children. Whether it be family, friend, and neighbor care, family-care homes, cooperatives, or center-based care and learning, our programs, systems, and funding must evolve to be equitable for families and the providers. The Biden administration has set forth a bold vision to invest in and modernize the nation's early learning system. To keep this component of the 2Gen approach moving at the leading edge of innovation, we should:

- **Commit to all early care and learning settings becoming places of excellence.** A 2Gen approach would help all settings achieve their full potential. Efforts should be made to increase the knowledge and capacity of staff to implement 2Gen and early childhood development best practices, such as fluency in the science of early brain development; the implications of early adversity, trauma, and toxic stress for early learning; and anti-racist, anti-bias practices for early childhood settings and workforce. Increased compensation for staff, including parent volunteers and service corps staff, would advance racial and gender pay equity while enhancing the program's capacity to attract, retain, and invest in an experienced, effective care and early learning workforce. Incentivize and reward partnerships between childcare and early learning settings, both center- and home-based, with job training opportunities and core family supports such as health, housing, and food assistance.
- **Launch 2Gen Head Start 3.0 National Acceleration Initiative.** In states and cities — such as Washington, Georgia, and Tulsa, Oklahoma — powerful new models for aligning early childhood, health, and employment systems are being built using 2Gen principles. Outcomes are promising; in Tulsa, we see that when parents are enrolled in health care credential programs, their children have improved attendance rates at Head Start. An Acceleration Initiative would incentivize such partnerships, provide flexibility to develop new payment and delivery models, support improved approaches to integrating measurements for parent and child outcomes, and provide training and technical assistance. Promising models could be considered by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and scaled through federally qualified health centers, which are ripe for partnerships using American Rescue Plan funding, including early childhood partnership and mental health supports for parents.

- **Incentivize partnerships and alignment within and across federal grantmaking efforts especially for families with young children,** such as Child Care and Development Funds, Preschool Development Grants, and flexible resources from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Maternal Child Health Bureau Medicaid, among others as well as intentional coordination Departments of Education, Labor, and Housing and Urban Development.

Opportunities to Advance Postsecondary and Employment Pathways

Parents know what researchers have documented: education, especially postsecondary education, is the most promising path toward economic stability for families because it can lead to jobs and careers with living wages. This helps to explain why over the years the federal government has made investments in developing the workforce — most recently about $3.4 billion in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act grants and $30 billion in Pell Grants. The Biden administration has called for sizable increases in workforce programs and free community college to lay the foundation for a more competitive workforce and economic mobility for families. Corporations play a significant role, spending $500 billion annually on education and training programs for their employees. A 2Gen approach to these existing programs would enhance their immediate and long-term impact. As mentioned above, the Biden administration has proposed a bold $62 billion grant program to increase postsecondary completion rates by funding innovations on campuses such as wraparound services ranging from child care and mental health services to emergency basic needs grants. If enacted, the proposal would complement and accelerate the following recommendations to advance postsecondary success through a 2Gen approach:

- **Declare parents' postsecondary success a national economic mobility priority.** We propose creating and funding a national initiative jointly administered by the U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Education that leads to meaningful, high-quality jobs supported by child care, housing, economic, and public benefit supports. The initiative would influence the framing and communication strategies of postsecondary institutions to demonstrate their competitive strength in serving a broader student population.
- **Make visible the number of parents in postsecondary systems and the power of their leadership.** Parents are a sizable but often overlooked student population in postsecondary systems. It is estimated that more than one in five college students — or 22 percent of all undergraduates — are parents, according to analysis of data from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study. However, most colleges and workforce training programs do not capture parenting status of students. To improve retention and completion rates, collecting data to make parents visible and fully welcome in postsecondary systems is a critical first step. As mentioned above, legislation recently passed in Oregon (Senate Bill 564) provides a strong model for other states.
- **Invest in community-wide partnerships and adapt existing student supports to provide support for students with caregiving responsibilities.** As higher education grapples with declining enrollment numbers, investing in postsecondary pathways for student parents presents both a growth opportunity and chance to create more inclusive and equitable postsecondary experiences leading to degree and credential attainment.

- **Target public and philanthropic investments to institutions that serve students of color.** The majority of student parents are women of color, and 42 percent of this key population attends community colleges. Historically Black colleges and universities, Tribal colleges, and minority-serving institutions are proven and proximate educational anchor institutions. We must invest in their capacity to serve student parent populations. Now is the time to also scale successful innovations and models at leading higher education systems committed to economic and social mobility such as those at the City University of New York, Los Angeles Valley College, and Portland Community College.
- **Create the first-ever National Family Prosperity Corps as part of the Corporation for National and Community Service.** 2Gen leaders, including parents, are primed to help families grapple with the short- and long-term impacts of COVID-19. A National Family Prosperity Corps can translate and apply 2Gen principles to a national service model that rebuilds early childhood and family well-being post-pandemic and provides economic opportunities for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and young parents aged 18-24. As of October 2020, more than 16 AmeriCorps volunteers had been installed in 2Gen efforts across the country, supporting the advancement of programs and policies that serve whole families. A more intentional approach to this model — one that would also advance education and employment pathways for young parents with low incomes — would amplify the vision and impact of key federal programs, including the vision and impact of Early Head Start and Head Start, and strengthen civic participation and equity in national service approaches. With student loan forgiveness strategies as an incentive for recruitment, the National Family Prosperity Corps would build on lessons from National Health Service Corps and unleash a new generation of parent leaders who would learn and see firsthand the power of supportive strategies for all families.

Opportunities to Advance Economic Assets

Profound inequities limit family prosperity. Bias in our health care systems, the pattern of Black, Latino, and Indigenous men being disproportionately separated from their families by our legal system, and discriminatory bank lending practices that perpetuate racial segregation at the neighborhood level are a few of the systemic barriers that block families of color from safe living conditions and access to high-quality education, healthy foods, and good jobs. There is a collective demand to dismantle barriers and put families on the path to prosperity. To increase family financial security and stability, we can:

- **Reform the Community Reinvestment Act.** Prioritize and direct financial resources to community development efforts that are designed, led, and controlled by Black and Indigenous communities of color. Review criteria and rewrite them to focus on their assets, aspirations, and assessment of success, with a keen focus on and representation of parents of young children. Ensure that equity is at the center and include community capacity building to create pathways to economic mobility for families.
- **Make paid leave universal in practice and policy.** Existing family and medical leave policies are both effective and popular. Paid family leave enjoys strong bipartisan support, and state laws that provide paid family leave have produced positive results for families. However, our current paid leave system is not as comprehensive nor as equitable as it should be; even when paid leave exists, 42 percent of employers say that

whether employees can use this leave depends on employers' discretion, according to data from the Families and Work Institute. Paid leave must be more inclusive of workers with low wages and low incomes, those who are most likely not to be able to access leave policies. States need to strengthen mechanisms to support employers' capacity to swiftly and effectively implement leave requirements. Leave policies must include the range of caregiving roles, not focus solely on new and expecting parents.

- **Ensure access to public programs and services for fathers with low incomes across the lifespan.** It is increasingly clear that family well-being cannot be built if we maintain current policies and practices that exclude or marginalize fathers – and to continue to do so will only exacerbate existing racial disparities. On the other hand, evidence shows that when policies and programs include fathers, the whole family experiences more prosperous outcomes.
- **Scale family-centered child support policies,** such as those in Colorado, that provide employment and other services to noncustodial fathers with low incomes instead of focusing on ineffective, punitive enforcement models. Supportive approaches can increase both the commitment and ability of noncustodial fathers to support, care, and co-parent their children.
- **Pursue a portfolio of immediate action within housing authorities nationally.** Strengthen professional development strategies to enhance coaching and case management using a strengths-based approach; create strong partnerships between housing agencies and service providers that can bring services on-site in affordable housing developments; leverage home visiting programs and stabilize families during relocation and redevelopment initiatives; and engage residents as leaders in design and implementation to enhance social capital, ensure services reflect families' needs and goals, and contribute to the sustainability of the efforts.
- **Increase household assets in subsidized housing.** We can augment assets of residents of subsidized housing through the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program, an innovative but underutilized program. We can strengthen FSS without adding costs by redesigning it as an opt-out program with a 2Gen approach: Allow participants to start family development accounts when they enroll in FSS and increase parents' financial capacity through efforts like access to financial education and allowing families the option of banking with a financial instituting with no fees for a child's first five years.
- **Expand and target cash assistance innovations.** One pragmatic solution, put forth by organizations like Springboard To Opportunities after listening to families, is a direct cash assistance program that give mothers a little bit of breathing room so they will be able to dream about something a little bigger. These solutions not only get results and drive up rates of family prosperity but do so in a way that dismantles white supremacist systems, respects families, and uses public resources responsibly, equitably, and effectively.

Opportunities to Work More Effectively and Equitably Within and Across Agencies

Just as a family's social capital network is a hidden but essential piece of them moving toward greater prosperity, a more intentional approach to cross-agency, multi-sector work is essential

for driving outcomes. To advance the 2Gen approaches in the months and years ahead, we recommend that leaders look to:

- **Create a 2Gen Innovation and Implementation Acceleration Program for states, cities, and counties.** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families (ACF) could fuel and scale the momentum of interest in the 2Gen approach by launching a 2Gen Innovation and Implementation Pilot Program, made available to states and counties through an application process requiring clear target goals, equity plans, and performance measures. This innovation catalyst could build on similar, previous 2Gen innovation efforts, such as Rural IMPACT, by ensuring partners are engaged in population and process evaluation, have access to employer and community memorandums of understanding, develop parent policy councils or feedback loops, and tap multiple systems for funding.
- **Create an Interagency Family Policy Council in tandem with the Interagency Council on Economic Mobility.** The 2Gen principle of authentic engagement of parent and caregiver voices and their recommendations has proven that when families are meaningfully involved in program and systems change conversations, bold new ideas emerge. As federal, state, and local agencies set out to "build back better," the cornerstone of family expertise must be in place. Effective parent and caregiver policy councils recruit and compensate parents to address, inform, and develop recommendations to departments and agencies with funding streams for families that are marginalized or have low income. Engaging the ACF Office of Planning, Research, & Evaluation to provide qualitative evaluation and support for these councils at the state and local levels would advance the state of the art.
- **Develop a federal framework for children and family outcomes.** To deepen the impact of the policies and programs to support all families that exist across multiple federal agencies, our nation needs a unified framework to measure what matters. A bold new framework would center child and family outcomes with performance measures that reflect meaningful outcomes in education, economic status, and health and well-being. Such a framework would not only strengthen existing interventions but seed a range of pilots and innovations, making the most of the inventive mindset that has emerged during the pandemic. Opportunities to build on earlier federal efforts include the Rural IMPACT project discussed above and the U.S. Department of Labor Strengthening Working Families Initiative.

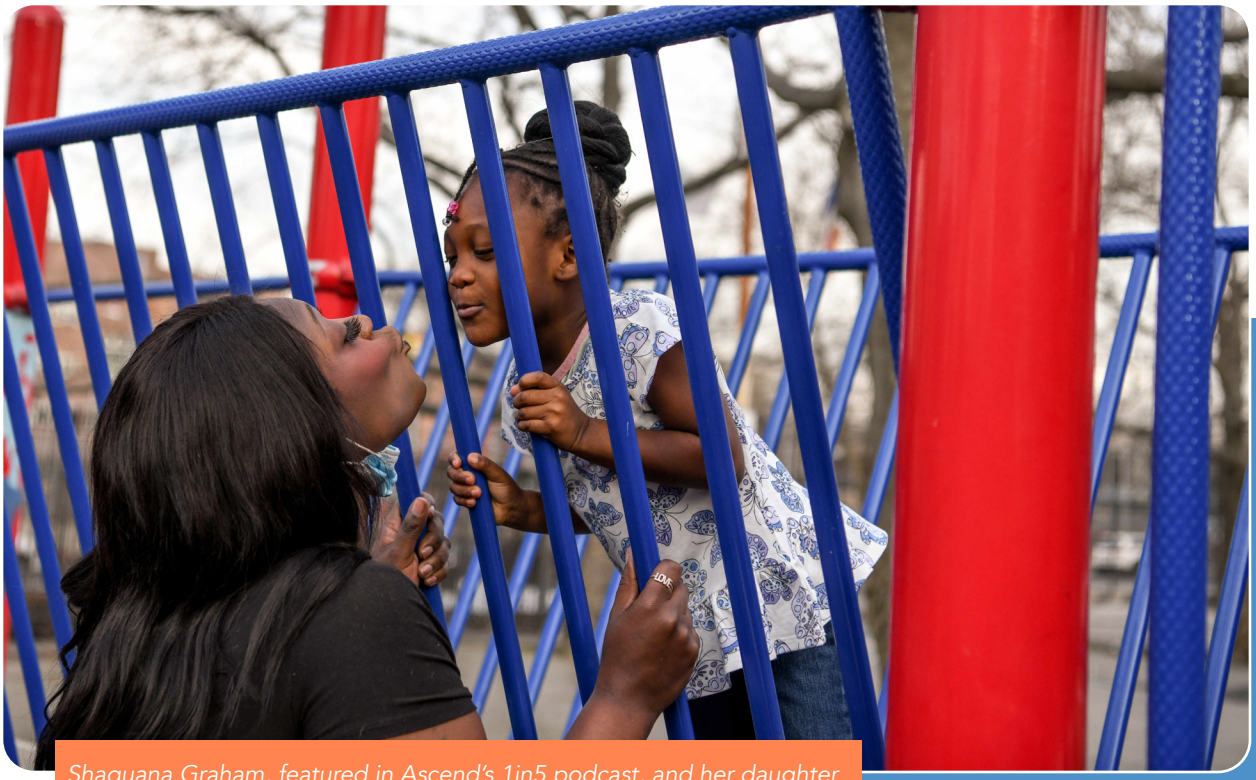
Opportunities to Elevate Field Capacity for Using Data, Make Continuous Improvement, and Evolve Evaluation and Rapid-Cycle Learning

2Gen success stories often revolve around the innovative use, collection, and analysis of data. To maintain momentum for important evidence-gathering and -building work, we recommend:

- **Develop a research and evaluation framework around whole-family and father engagement** to equip stakeholders with the information necessary to maximize the impact of policies and programs for families as they define themselves. One example is to expand the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), the only post-natal surveillance system that also includes new fathers. The CDC Division of

Reproductive Health has been partnering with researchers at Northwestern University to explore the feasibility of conducting a PRAMS-like survey with new fathers in an effort to better understand their post-partum experiences and what supports they might need.

- **Fund and build capacity for independent, rapid-cycle program evaluations** to fuel real-time continuous improvement and cultural and racial competency. Through federal investments and state-level partnerships, we need to support rapid-cycle project assessments, efforts to identify population outcomes that are equity-informed, and data collection rooted in an analysis of historical racism and structural disparities.
- **Support and build credibility for qualitative findings and data.** While quantitative data has historically been — and should continue to be — a gold-standard of evidence, we must also recognize that parent voice and expertise, as well as provider and policymaker feedback, are vital for creating effective and efficient models that are nimble in adjusting elements of practices and policies that serve families. This could mean including qualitative data in grant reports for federal and state funding and mandating parent policy councils and feedback loops as data sources.



Shaquana Graham, featured in Ascend's 1in5 podcast, and her daughter

concluding thoughts

We need to act now to build on the new awareness of the need to shift the trajectory of the United States to meet the moral, economic, and social justice imperative of reinventing our systems on behalf of families. We have an opportunity to make a difference now when American families need it most. We don't have to search for what works. 2Gen leaders, communities, and families have pointed the way and produced the proof points we need to act decisively and intentionally. We have strategies and solutions ready to deploy across all sectors.

We are now positioned for a bold step forward to replicate and expand. The 2Gen approach has ushered in a new era of policy that puts families at the center. By embracing family-centered innovation, we emerge stronger. We must learn from the past and reimagine a better future. We have the resources — public and private, but policy leaders and the private sector must act in our families' best interests.

Let's seize the new and unprecedented energy and enthusiasm for bold change, racial and economic justice, and an approach to well-being that leaves no one out. 2Gen is such an approach, one that continues to stand out as a rare solution that cuts through the political polarization that holds families back and undercuts our democracy. Let's build on this common ground and hunger for bold, pragmatic solutions. Let's pursue new opportunities based on what is actually working — opportunities that can open up a better way of serving parents and children together. We owe it to the indomitable spirit and tenacious determination of parents. As a mom from Maryland told us about navigating the pandemic, "If we make it out of this, we will be unstoppable." If we seize these opportunities as we meet the challenge of rebuilding America, parents will have the tools and conditions they need and deserve to be unstoppable.

appendices

Go Deeper: Additional Resources on the 2Gen Approach

What are the big ideas behind the 2Gen approach?

When Ascend released *Two Generations: One Future* in 2012, policies, systems, and services were outdated, inequitable, disconnected, and often misaligned. We articulated a vision for centering equity, bringing parents' voices into the conversation, and making government work better for families.

What state-level innovations are most promising?

In 2014, *Gateways to Two Generations* outlined a framework for linking early childhood programs to solutions that support parents' economic mobility and harness the power of social capital and opportunity.

How can funding streams be linked and aligned?

In the 2018 report *States Leading the Way: Practical Solutions that Lift Up Children and Families*, Ascend highlights the policy and practice innovations of seven states and localities, including the various federal funding streams and programs that have been used to fund and support 2Gen approaches.

How can we evaluate and assess the impact of 2Gen approaches?

Stronger outcomes for children and their parents are at the heart of the 2Gen approach, and programs and policies must measure how well they serve the whole family. Our March 2016 report *Making Tomorrow Better Together* outlined intended outcomes and key measurement principles. *Making Tomorrow Better Together 2018* outlined an outcomes framework for 2Gen systems change and policy, and our 2020 iteration of the report details organizational process outcomes for 2Gen practitioners.

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Aspen Institute Ascend Network

The Aspen Institute Ascend Network is made up of leading organizations and experts working to create a portfolio of two-generation solutions through practice, policy, evidence building, and political will. To date, there are 437 partners and 80 Fellows in the Network. Listed below are the partner organizations within the Network.

ALASKA

Cook Inlet Tribal Council

First Alaskans Institute

ALABAMA

The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham

ARKANSAS

HIPPY USA

Mississippi County, Arkansas Economic Opportunity Commission, Inc.

North Little Rock Housing Authority

Our House, Inc.

Southern Bancorp Community Partners

ARIZONA

A Stepping Stone Foundation

City of Phoenix, Workforce Development

Higher Ground

Maricopa Community Colleges

Maricopa County Human Services Department

Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona

CALIFORNIA

Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors

Alameda Family Services

Bananas Inc.

Black Star Fund

California Polytechnic State University

Catholic Charities Santa Rosa

Children's Institute, Inc.

Community Action Marin

Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County

Early Care & Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS) dba Tikkun Consulting

Education Trust-West

Families In Schools

Family Independence Initiative

Family Story

Jewish Vocational Services of San Francisco

LAANE

Los Angeles Valley College Family Resource Center

Mission Economic Development Agency

Oakland Promise

Raise the Barr

Reading and Beyond: Fresno Promise Neighborhood

Root & Rebound

Safe and Sound

San Diego Housing Commission

San Diego Workforce Partnership

San Jose Evergreen Community College District

Techbridge Girls

Teen Success, Inc.

The Cambodian Family Community Center

The Dibble Institute

United Way of The Bay Area

COLORADO

Adoption Exchange

Arapahoe County Department of Human Services

Catholic Charities Diocese of Pueblo

Catholic Charities of Central Colorado

Catholic Charities of Denver

Center for Policy Research

Colorado Department of Human Services

Community College of Aurora

Community Partnership for Child Development

CrossPurpose

Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance (ECCLA)

Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County

Early Learning Aspen

ECDC African Community Center

Emergency Family Assistance Association

Family Resource Center Association

Florence Crittenton Services of Colorado

Growing Home

Jefferson County Department of Human Services

LENA

Mental Health Center of Denver

Mesa County Public Health

Mile High United Way

Morgridge Family Foundation

National Association of Counsel for Children

Nurse-Family Partnership

Office of Family and Community Engagement - Denver Public Schools

Pitkin County Human Services

Queens Legacy Foundation/New Eyes Village

San Juan Basin Public Health

STOMP Parent to Teacher Program

The Bell Policy Center

The Haven

The Manaus Fund

The Matthew House

University of Colorado - Denver

University of Denver, Department of Psychology

Warren Village

CONNECTICUT

All Our Kin

Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Hartford

New Haven MOMS Partnership

Youth on Fire Inc.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

1,000 Days

Bright Beginnings, Inc.

Briya Public Charter School

CentroNia

Community Action Partnership (National Association)

Community of Hope

Enterprise Community Partners

Generation Hope

Housing Assistance Council

Institute for Women's Policy Research

LIFT

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)

Mary's Center for Maternal & Child Care, Inc.

National Association for the Education of Young Children

National Family Support Network

National Human Services Assembly

Office on Trafficking in Persons

Opportunity Nation

Prosperity Now

PT Chat LLC

Save the Children Action Network

The Family Place, Inc.

The Innovation Academy of Liberal Arts & Sciences

The Mary Elizabeth House

UnidosUS

Urban Institute

Washington Area Women's Foundation

Young Invincibles

ZERO TO THREE

DELAWARE

Children and Families First

FLORIDA

Branches

Charles and Margery Barancik Foundation

Children Services Council of Broward County

Community Foundation of Sarasota County

ECHO Outreach Ministries

Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation

Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg

Hispanic Unity of Florida

Miami Dade College

Polis Institute

Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida

Spark Growth

Visible Men Academy

GEORGIA

Action Ministries

Ebenezer Baptist Church

Enrichment Services Program (ESP)

Fathers Incorporated

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

Kennesaw State University

Morehouse School of Medicine

Nana Grants

Ninth District Opportunity, Inc.

Quality Care for Children

Sheltering Arms

United Way of Greater Atlanta

YMCA of Metro Atlanta

HAWAI'I

Hawaii Alliance for Community-Based Education Development

Hawaii Department of Human Services

INPEACE

One Shared Future

IOWA

Burlington Community School District

Mid-Iowa Community Action, Inc.

Oakridge Neighborhood Services

IDAHO

Jannus, Inc.

ILLINOIS

American Academy of Pediatrics

BPI

Cabrini Legal Aid

Catholic Charities of Chicago

Chicago Child Care Society

Chicago Commons

Christopher House

Facing Forward

Future Institute

mRelief

New Moms

Northwestern University, Feinberg School of Medicine

Northwestern University, Institute for Policy Research

Ounce of Prevention Fund

Prevent Child Abuse America

University of Chicago, Center for Human Potential and Public Policy

INDIANA

Community Action of Greater Indiana

Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana, Inc.

Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority

Lincoln Hills Development Corporation

Lutheran Child and Family Services of Indiana/Kentucky, Inc.

Real Services, Inc

TRI-CAP

United Way of Central Indiana

KANSAS

Topeka Community Foundation

KENTUCKY

Brighton Center

Care for Children

Family Scholar House, Inc.

Kentucky River Foothills Development Council, Inc.

National Center for Families Learning

NorthKey Community Care

Partners for Education at Berea College

Social Partners Advocating for a Resilient Kentucky (SPARKodc)

LOUISIANA

Cradle to K - Baton Rouge

Kingsley House

MASSACHUSETTS

Brazelton Touchpoints Center

East Boston Social Centers

Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath)

Endicott College

FamilyAid Boston

Harvard University, Department of Sociology

Harvard University, Graduate School of Education

Inner Explorer

Neighborhood Villages

Reach Out and Read

Roca, Inc.

Room to Grow, Inc.

United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley

UTEC

MARYLAND

Allegany County Human Resources Development Commission

Bowie State University

CASA

Center for Urban Families

Community Action Council of Howard County Maryland

Family Values @ Work

Frederick Community College

Garrett County Community Action Committee

Human Services Programs of Carroll County, Inc.

Maryland Department of Human Services

Maryland Family Network

National Black Child Development Institute

Office of Maryland Governor Larry Hogan

Ready at Five

The Heart of America Foundation

United Way of Central Maryland

US Dream Academy

WorkSource Montgomery

Johns Hopkins University, International Arts + Mind Lab

MAINE

Aroostook County Action Program

Community Caring Collaborative

Community Concepts, Inc.

Educare Central Maine

Kennebec Valley Community Action Program

Penquis

The Opportunity Alliance

MICHIGAN

Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)

Coalition for Temporary Shelter (COTS)

Communities First, Inc.

Eastern Michigan University

Flint Genesee Literacy Network

Focus: HOPE

Gianna House Foundation

Lansing Community College

Matrix Human Services

Michigan League for Public Policy

Shared Prosperity, City of Kalamazoo

Starfish Family Services

The SOURCE

Wayne Metro Community Action Agency

WMCAT

MINNESOTA

Alia

American Indian OIC

Better Futures Minnesota

CLUES

Jeremiah Program

MAHUBE-OTWA Community Action Partnership

Minnesota Children's Cabinet

Olmsted County Health, Housing and Human Services

Reading Corps

RS Eden

Southwest Health and Human Services

Southwest Initiative Foundation

Student Parent HELP Center at the University of Minnesota

The Family Partnership

The Future Services Institute at the University of Minnesota

White Earth Child Care/Early Childhood Programs

Women's Foundation of Minnesota

YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities

MISSOURI

Connections to Success

Family and Workforce Centers of America

Parents as Teachers National Center

MISSISSIPPI

Children's Defense Fund Southern Regional Office

Friends of Children of Mississippi, Inc.

Springboard to Opportunities

Women's Foundation of Mississippi

MONTANA

Montana Budget and Policy Center

University of Montana

NORTH CAROLINA

Rural Opportunity Institute

United Way of Greater Greensboro

United Way of the Greater Triangle

NORTH DAKOTA

North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services

NEBRASKA

Heartland United Way

Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Southern New Hampshire University

NEW JERSEY

Catholic Charities Diocese of Metuchen

Pascale Sykes Foundation

Saint Peter's University

United Advocacy Group

NEW MEXICO

Central New Mexico Community College

Generation Justice

New Mexico Asian Family Center

Prosperity Works

Santa Fe Community Foundation

Saranam LLC

United Way of Santa Fe County

NEVADA

CORE

The Public Education Foundation, Inc.

NEW YORK

ANDRUS

Bronx Community College

College and Community Fellowship

Columbia Law School, Center for Institutional and Social Change

Cornell University

Educational Alliance

Hamilton-Madison House

Hostos Community College

Ideas42

It Takes a City

LaSalle School

Literacy Inc.

Literacy Partners, Inc.

Montefiore Medical Center

New York City Administration for Children's Services

New York City Housing Authority

New York City Technical College Our Children's Center

New York Immigration Coalition

NYU Langone's Family Health Center

NYU Langone Medical Center

Queens College (CUNY)

Rural Outreach Center

Sesame Workshop

The Doe Fund

United Neighborhood Houses of New York

United Way of New York City

Vera Institute of Justice

Western New York Women's Foundation

OHIO

ACCESS Collaborative Program - The Ohio State University

Aspire Greater Cleveland

Bowling Green State University Firelands

Catholic Social Services of Miami Valley

Cleveland Central Promise Neighborhood

Cuyahoga Community College

Cuyahoga County

Cuyahoga County Public Library

East End Community Service Corporation

Family Connections of Northeast Ohio

Highland County Community Action Organization, Inc.

Knox County Head Start

Learn to Earn Dayton

Ohio Department of Health

Ohio Guidestone

Policy Matters Ohio

Saint Luke's Foundation

Siemer Institute for Family Stability

Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland

The Centers for Families and Children

The Glen at St. Joseph

The Literacy Cooperative

Towards Employment

United Way of Greater Cincinnati

William J. and Dorothy K. O'Neill Foundation

OKLAHOMA

CAP Tulsa

Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc.

Madison Strategies Group/Tulsa Community WorkAdvance

OREGON

Friends of the Children

Home Forward

Multnomah County - Multnomah Idea Lab

National Crittenton

PENNSYLVANIA

Allegheny County Department of Human Services

Asociacion Puertorriqueños en Marcha

Blueprints

Catholic Social Services of Casa Del Carmen

Center for Hunger-Free Communities - Drexel University

Community Action Partnership of Lancaster County

Diversified Community Services

Episcopal Community Services

Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy

Misericordia University

Partner4Work

Pennsylvania Women Work

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation - Special Recreation Services

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Fact Forward

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Association of Children's Museums

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Northern Virginia Community College

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Ascend would like to thank the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for their vision and support of the Family Prosperity Innovation Community.

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Colorado College Community System
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Ascend is grateful for the support of Imaginable Futures, ECMC Foundation, and the Liz Blake Giving Fund of the Blake Family Foundation for their support of the Postsecondary for Parents Initiative.

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