Selections highlight research, evaluation reports, and other publications that inform the field about key issues in, and effective practices for, fostering economic self-sufficiency.


[https://www.opressrc.org/content/breaking-cycle-poverty-young-families-two-generation-policy-recommendations](https://www.opressrc.org/content/breaking-cycle-poverty-young-families-two-generation-policy-recommendations)

In this policy report, the authors identified policy and administrative barriers to two-generation strategies and suggested changes to enhance policies at the federal, state, and local levels. Through engagement of members, including direct services providers, experts, and advocates, the authors recommended strengthening support and funding for two-generation service provision. Specific federal policy recommendations included expanding the federal poverty level to create better access to government services such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); increasing the federal minimum wage; providing additional funding for block grant programs; increasing access to employment resources and skills training; maintaining or expanding tax relief for working families; providing technical assistance to states and localities on key federal programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); and allocating funding for scalable, innovative, evidence-based programs. To enhance policies at the state and local levels, the authors proposed reducing legislative and regulatory barriers that limit flexibility of federal programs, including SNAP and TANF; strengthening childcare and workforce development funding opportunities to support working and student parents; and expanding criminal justice diversion programs for youth, among others.


[https://www.opressrc.org/content/creating-opportunity-families-two-generation-approach](https://www.opressrc.org/content/creating-opportunity-families-two-generation-approach)

Recognizing the connection between child and family well-being and future success, authors from the Annie E. Casey Foundation outlined an approach to address the needs of both children and parents simultaneously: a two-generation approach. The report acknowledged the innumerable challenges low-income parents face on a daily basis, including inflexible, unpredictable jobs that do not pay enough to support a family; lack of access to high-quality, flexible, and reliable early care and...
education; and stress at home for both kids and parents. At the same time, agencies and programs work in silos to address the needs of either children or parents, but not both, which can negatively affect families. Breaking down the silos and serving whole families, the authors argued, requires an intentional, coordinated approach, or a two-generation strategy with the following three key components: (a) provide parents with multiple pathways to get family-supporting jobs and achieve financial stability, (b) ensure access to high-quality early childhood education and enriching elementary school experiences, and (c) equip parents to better support their children socially and emotionally and to advocate for their kids’ education. This report also highlighted innovative two-generation programs and the importance of creating partnerships in two-generation approaches and outlined three policy recommendations to create better paths to opportunities for parents and children. The recommendations outlined include: (a) creating policies that equip parents and children with the income, tools, and skills they need to succeed as a family and individually, (b) structuring public systems to respond to the current realities faced by families, and (c) using existing child, adult, and neighborhood platforms to build evidence for pathways out of poverty for whole families.

https://www.opressrc.org/content/two-generation-programs-twenty-first-century

In this article, the authors focused explicitly on two-generation programs—programs that combine job training or education for adults with early childhood education program for their children. Using a combination of theory and evidence, the authors delved into this second surge of two-generation programs (or “Two-Generation 2.0”, as the authors called them) to differentiate these two-generation program from the first programs of the 1980s and 1990s. As the authors noted, this first wave of two-generation programs was largely focused on improvements in child outcomes through parental interventions, producing mostly disappointing results but laying the groundwork for a new direction for future programs. Making improvements to programs of the first generation, these new two-generation programs acknowledge the strong connections between success of children and success of adults, incorporate new programmatic workforce and education elements, and provide services to adults and children simultaneously. While this new wave of programs is still young and evidence of success is yet to be established, the authors argued that the early results show promise and the theoretical justification for the framework remains strong.

https://www.opressrc.org/content/family-assets-and-child-outcomes-evidence-and-directions

In this article, the authors asked two key questions, “Do family assets improve child wellbeing? And can asset-building programs increase savings and assets, leading to improvements in the wellbeing of children from low-income families?” Drawing from longitudinal, and therefore correlational data, the authors pointed to research that shows children in families with greater assets such as savings
accounts and homes are associated with positive educational outcomes, including academic achievement, postsecondary enrollment, and college graduation. These outcomes underscored the potential of asset-building as part of effective two-generation programs. The authors acknowledged that much of this evidence is correlational rather than causal, and looked to demonstration projects to explore results from experienced programs in which savings accounts were opened and matched for low-income parents. Additional time is needed to determine precisely what impact these programs have on child well-being. However, promising practices have emerged sharing several common features, including that the saving accounts are opened early in life, are automatic and require no action on the part of parents, and come with an initial deposit.


https://www.opressrc.org/content/top-ten-2gen-policies-and-principles-advance-two-generation-efforts

This brief, published by Ascend at the Aspen Institute, compiled three years of expert research and round table discussions, extracting six principles to guide policy and systems change and ten policies to promote two-generation strategies. Ascend identified the following six principles as integral to two-generation approaches and improved outcomes for families: (a) measure and account for outcomes for both children and their parents, (b) engage and listen to the voices of families, (c) foster innovation and evidence together, (d) align and link systems and funding streams, (e) prioritize intentional implementation, and (f) ensure quality. The ten policies identified to promote two-generation approaches centered largely on federal initiatives and included the core areas of Ascend’s two-generation framework, including early childhood and postsecondary education, economic assets, and health and well-being. Guided by practitioners and policymakers in the field, the principles and policies identified aimed to inform the design and implementation of effective two-generation strategies and to improve outcomes for families.


https://www.opressrc.org/content/state-policies-through-two-generation-lens-strengthening-collective-impact-policies-affect

In this brief, the authors suggested that as a new wave of two-generation programs are developed and implemented, it is important to consider (a) how to strengthen policies providing supports (e.g., wages, safety net benefits, health care, high quality child care) needed to serve large numbers of low-income families and children and (b) the collective impact of state policies on the experiences of children and their parents to best understand such two-generation supports. In all states, the
collective impact on families was mixed. To illustrate the value of looking at policies across the two-generation spectrum and to provide a view of their collective impact by state, the authors divided them into the following categories: early care and education, health and nutrition, and parenting and family economic supports. A table included in the policy brief illustrated existing supports as well as missed opportunities for promoting well-being and life opportunities for children and their parents.


https://www.opressrc.org/content/breaking-cycle-poverty-young-families-two-generation-strategies-working-disconnected-young

This National Human Services Assembly report explored two-generation approaches to serve “young families”, or families with children with one parent who is between the ages of 15 and 24 and disconnected from both school and work. The authors highlighted challenges faced by disconnected young parents, including homelessness, exposure to violence, mental health issues, and others; described the two-generation approach to serving both children and parents; and outlined an exploratory study of existing two-generation programs through member organizations. The study’s methodology consisted of a literature review and expert interviews, selection of case studies, semi-structured interviews with program practitioners, and case study review. Through this process, the researchers identified common elements of success instrumental to achieving positive outcomes, including program design (must be multi-faceted, intensive, longer-term, and collaborative) and service provision (need for positive youth development, baby boosts, family development, and social connection).