

“Two-generation programs and policies seek to engage families in ways that knit together services and address both groups simultaneously. The idea behind the framework is that when opportunities for children and parents are approached jointly, the benefits may be greater than the sum of the separate parts.”

- Ascend at the Aspen Institute

What is a 2Gen approach?

A Two Generation (2Gen) approach focuses on providing support and opportunities for parents and children simultaneously. The core of the 2Gen theory relies on the idea that when the family unit is treated as a whole, the outcome is far more efficient and successful. Empowering parents and children with the tools to pursue educational and economic supports while teaching them to build social capital means that the family unit grows stronger and moves forward together.

Why is this a fit for an FRC?

When we began the FRC, it made sense to us that our role should be to support the both student-parents and their family during their academic journey. We knew that if the family unit stayed strong during this time, it would free up the student to graduate or transfer with the goal of employment. The FRC adopted a 2Gen approach to create opportunities for and to address the needs of both children and their parents together. We believe that when parents are doing well, their children will also do well.

What 2Gen programs do you offer?

All of the 2Gen programs that we offer are thoughtfully designed to holistically support the family unit. The goal of these programs is to provide services that benefit the general population of student-parents, their families and community members that come to our center.

Playgroups: Playgroups are the hub of a variety of services for families. They are designed for the (newborns through three-year-old) child and parent to spend time together in a fun and creative environment. Our playgroups are continuously full, and tend to be multi-generational, with grandparents as well! First and foremost, a playgroup is a social network for parental-peer support, and it provides socialization for children.

As our groups gained in frequency and size we added a more structured component in the form of a licensed Child Development Specialist who makes herself available to the parents during the play sessions. As they open up to her about their accomplishments and struggles, we are able to determine what other services would be beneficial to parents and their families.

Special Needs Referrals: By partnering with our local regional center that assesses children with special needs, we are able to have concrete answers for our student parents that need support in this challenging area. We have had several families come through that were struggling with their children, aware that something was “not right” but unsure of how to proceed or where to go. Under the safe umbrella of our regular playgroup, we were able to help them find the support and guidance to make the next step for their children and family. We have direct contacts for referrals. In addition, the regional center refers families with children who have special needs to the FRC for the social support that we offer.

Saturday Dad Activity Group: While the attendance of men/dads in our playgroups is usually high, at times we offer Saturday morning playgroups specifically for dads and their children. These are great for fathers who are either working or studying during the week. Playgroups have been a terrific way to offer fathers a way to get involved with their young children and to find support among their peers.

Family picnics, social events: Over the course of our playgroups we noticed parents and children starting to form bonds with each other. We found that offering family play days and weekend picnics was a great way to support the student parents and their families in building their social network. These activities are more informal than our weekly playgroups with less need for staffing. Families bring food to share and parent volunteers lead the charge in organizing and cleanup. This is a great way to build confidence and social connections among the parents and children. Everyone is involved and part of the team!

Community Service Events and Group Volunteering: Building on the momentum of group activities from the picnics and family play days, community service events are a great way to further integrate the college and surrounding community. Explore local businesses around the college campus to see what types of volunteer activities student parents and their families can become involved with. This is another great area to get parents and community members involved in organizing independently to build teamwork and social networking.

Study Lounge with Drop-In Play: For many student parents, dedicated studying time often loses out to the needs of their children and family. With the help of child development student volunteers, we offer a study lounge where student-parents are able to focus on academics while their children play and socialize with other kids.

How are these projects funded? Can some be offered without any funding?

All of the projects we've listed are minimal cost and some could even be done with no funding. The playgroups and study lounge with drop-in play have the highest costs associated with them because of the staffing needs. The other activities are parent/caregiver supervised and organized.

But most importantly remember that this is the perfect opportunity to explore and partner with existing services and departments on your campus! Are there Child Development Students that could earn credit hours for supervising at a playgroup? Does your local high school have students interested in volunteering time to help organize family play day? Does the on-campus study center have tutors they could send to the study lounge? Dig into exploring what's out there; there are many resources available to you on the campus and in your surrounding community!

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