



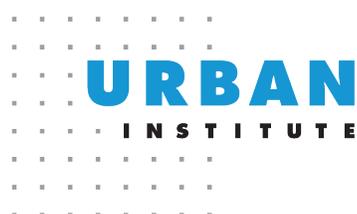
PLACE MATTERS

A TWO-GENERATION APPROACH TO HOUSING

Place matters in the lives of families. Homes are the anchor for family life, and the quality of one's housing is an important determinant of health and economic outcomes. With collectively more than 100 years of policy expertise and values-based leadership between us, Ascend at the Aspen Institute and the Housing Opportunity and Services Together initiative at the Urban Institute partnered to develop a set of recommendations on how to harness assisted housing and public-private housing partnerships for better outcomes for families.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ascend is grateful for the philanthropic support of the following funders: Bezos Family Foundation; Kresge Foundation; Annie E. Casey Foundation; Goldman Family Foundation; Charlotte Perret; Patrice Brickman; The David & Lucile Packard Foundation; Chambers Family Fund; Ann B. Friedman and Thomas L. Friedman Family Foundation; The Catto Shaw Foundation

Roxane White, Marjorie Sims, and Anne Mosle contributed important content and ideas to this brief. Thank you to Lori Severens and Hallie Young for their design and research contributions.

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Dr. Susan Popkin is Director of The Urban Institute's HOST Initiative and Institute Fellow in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center. Dr. Popkin is a nationally-recognized expert on public and assisted housing policy. She brings extensive expertise in conducting evaluations of complex multi-year, multi-site community-based housing and self-sufficiency interventions. Dr. Popkin's current projects include the HOST Initiative, which partners with housing agencies to develop and test strategies that use housing as a platform for services, including two-generation models, work supports, and supports for high-need residents; Promoting Adolescent Sexual Health and Safety, a community-based effort to develop a curriculum to reduce the impact of coercive sexual environments on young girls; and the evaluation of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Family Centered Community Change Initiative. This work builds on her research on how the radical changes in housing policy over the past 20 years have affected the lives of the most vulnerable public and assisted housing families, including two decades of research on public housing transformation in Chicago, the HOPE VI Panel Study, the first large-scale, systematic look at outcomes for families involuntarily relocated from public housing; the Three City Study of Moving to Opportunity; and the analysis of housing and mobility outcomes for the MTO Final Evaluation.

Dr. Popkin is the author of the book, *No Simple Solutions: Transforming Public Housing in Chicago*; co-author of the award-winning *Moving To Opportunity: The Story of an American Experiment to Fight Ghetto Poverty*; lead author for the book *The Hidden War: Crime and the Tragedy of Public Housing in Chicago*; and is co-author of *Public Housing Transformation: The Legacy of Segregation*.

Elsa Falkenburger, MPA, is a senior research associate in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center at the Urban Institute. Ms. Falkenburger is the co-chair of Urban's Community Engaged Methods group and has nearly a decade of experience working on place-based initiatives, community-based participatory research, performance measurement, formative evaluations, and other qualitative research methods. Her portfolio includes being a PI for the Promoting Adolescent Sexual Health and Safety (PASS) project, a cluster randomized control trial of a community-based curriculum for teens living in DC public housing developments, and a separately funded effort to create a sustainable community-based model of PASS that includes partnership with a federally qualified health center. She was formerly the program manager for the Housing Opportunity and Services Together (HOST) demonstration, a mixed-methods, multi-site formative evaluation of a supportive services framework for public and other low-income housing developments. She is now leading efforts to transition HOST from a research demonstration into a learning network that informs and supports low income housing providers in building supporting services for residents.

Sarah Haight, MSW, is the assistant director for network and outreach at Ascend at the Aspen Institute. Ms. Haight co-manages the Aspen Family Prosperity Innovation Community, a project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to develop innovative work-family supportive policies for families with low incomes. Her portfolio also include the Aspen Institute Ascend Network, which empowers and mobilizes more than 280 organizations across the country to explore and implement two-generation approaches. She also designs and implements Ascend convenings with a focus on early childhood, health, mental health, and best practices. She was formerly a clinician in direct-service settings in New York City, with a focus on maternal depression and cognitive behavioral therapy.

Place matters in the lives of families. Homes are the anchor for family life, and the quality of one's housing is an important determinant of health and economic outcomes. With collectively more than 100 years of policy expertise and values-based leadership between us, Ascend at the Aspen Institute and the Housing Opportunity and Services Together (HOST) initiative at the Urban Institute partnered to develop a set of recommendations on how to harness assisted housing and public-private housing partnerships for better outcomes for families. Our shared vision is that the use of data, best practices, and voices and perspectives of parents and families inform policymaking at all levels of government, and that an intergenerational cycle of opportunity is a vital goal of policymaking in 2018 and beyond.

Since 2014, the Urban Institute's HOST Initiative has been a trusted Network Partner of Ascend at the Aspen Institute, which is the national hub for breakthrough ideas and collaborations that move children and their parents toward educational success and economic security. Urban Institute is a national leader in identifying, developing, and strengthening research and models that support two-generation (2Gen) approaches in assisted housing for families. 2Gen approaches provide opportunities for and meet the needs of children and the adults in their lives together. These strategies are vital emerging solutions that are especially ripe for public-private partnerships in housing, the very places where families live, play, and raise children.

This brief provides concrete ideas and recommendations on how housing organizations, including assisted housing, residential services organizations, and public-private housing partnerships, can better serve families with low incomes. We explore the importance of blending and braiding funding streams, integrating family voice into on-the-ground programs, and the key tenets of collaboration and data sharing for improved child and parent outcomes. Throughout the brief, we apply a racial-equity lens, considering ways in which racial and ethnic disparities are illuminated in outcomes, policy, and practice. We identify opportunities to more effectively serve all communities and not ignore many which have been historically marginalized and denied opportunity.

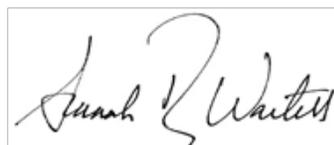
As the 2Gen field evolves and advances, families report they believe the potential for the next generation to be better off than the one before it seems to diminish. It is vital, therefore, to elevate what is working across different platforms—from early childhood to postsecondary education to housing and beyond—so that practitioners and policymakers can have new ideas to scale. Families with low incomes face deep structural inequities, and part of the promise of 2Gen approaches is to address those inequities while building on their resilience and the sense of mutual motivation between a parent and her child.

We hope this brief provides inspiration, guidance, and useful data to help deepen your work on behalf of families in assisted housing. We look forward to your feedback and insights as we work together to sustain, scale, and replicate positive outcomes for children and their families.

Sincerely,



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



Sarah Rosen Wartell
President
The Urban Institute

INTRODUCTION

All families want to be self-sufficient and give their children opportunities for a better future. But families in deep, persistent, intergenerational poverty, living in under resourced neighborhoods, face tremendous barriers to achieving that goal. Even with stable housing, many families still face violence, trauma and mental health issues, food insecurity, substance abuse, discrimination, and other obstacles to stability and independence. According to the National Center on Child Poverty, in 2016, 41 percent of all children in the United States live in families with low incomes; Black, American Indian, and Hispanic children are disproportionately low-income and poor. All children deserve an opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive, just as their parents deserve an opportunity to pursue their dreams. Children with a full-time, year-round employed parent are less likely to live in a family that is low income, compared to children with parents who work part time/part year or who are not employed.¹ That said, many children who are low income or poor have parents who work full time. About half (53.5 percent) of low-income children and 32.0 percent of poor children live with at least one parent employed full time, year round. Additionally, research suggests that stable housing is important for healthy child development. However, children living in families with low incomes are 50 percent more likely as other children to have moved in the past year and nearly three times as likely to live in families that rent, rather than own, a home.²

ASCEND MISSION

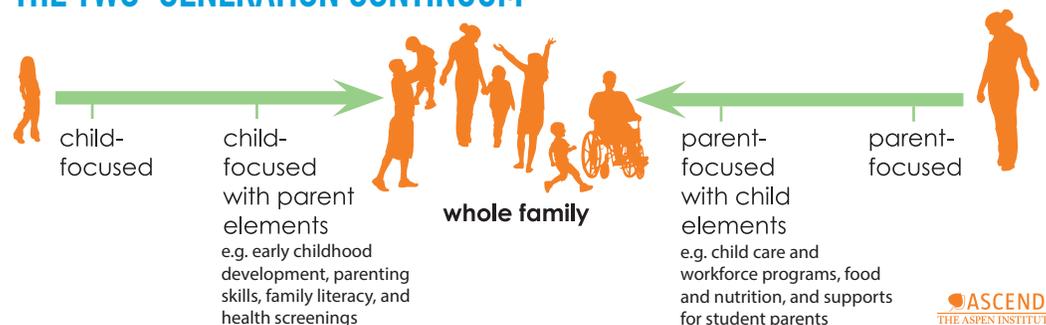
The Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC. Its mission is to foster leadership based on enduring values and to provide a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues. As a policy program of the Institute, Ascend at the Aspen Institute is the national hub for breakthrough ideas and collaborations that move children and their parents toward educational success and economic security.

URBAN INSTITUTE MISSION

The Urban Institute is the trusted source for unbiased, authoritative insights that inform consequential choices about the well-being of people and places in the United States. We are a nonprofit research organization that believes decisions shaped by facts, rather than ideology, have the power to improve public policy and practice, strengthen communities, and transform people's lives for the better.

In 2011, Ascend at the Aspen Institute launched with the bold vision of an America where a legacy of economic security and educational success passes from one generation to the next. In 1968, the Urban Institute was founded to pioneer innovative research methods to produce more reliable, nuanced investigations of social policies affecting vulnerable populations. Urban's Metropolitan Housing and Communities Center houses the [Housing Opportunities and Services Together \(HOST\) Initiative](#), which aims to share insights and guidance about using housing as a

THE TWO-GENERATION CONTINUUM

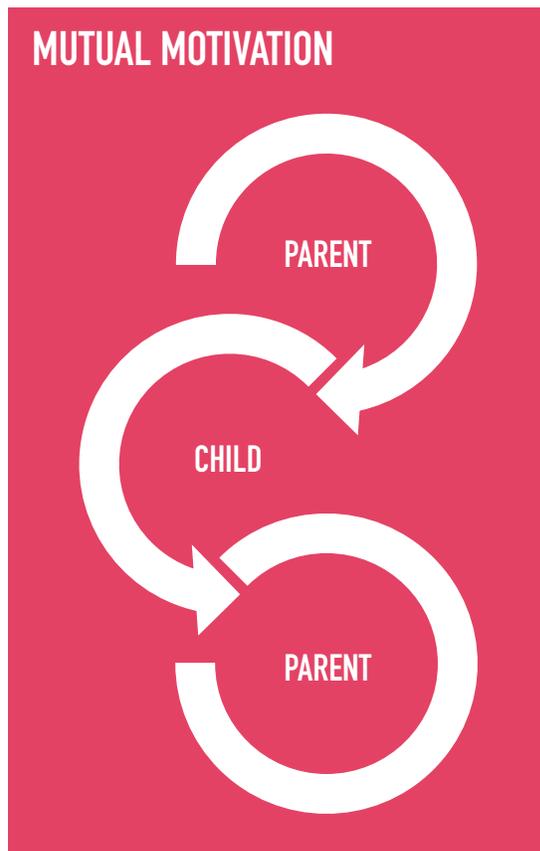




RACIAL EQUITY AS ESSENTIAL TO 2GEN HOUSING IMPLEMENTATION

A central tenet and value of Ascend at the Aspen Institute and the Urban Institute is understanding things through a racial equity lens. Racial equity is both an outcome and a strategy, or process.³ Racial equity in assisted housing is achieved when people have the opportunity to thrive, to be economically secure, and to secure safe, affordable housing regardless of their race. As a strategy or process, we apply a racial equity lens by examining how, why, and when structural inequities exist due to race and we engage those most affected by these inequities to provide guidance and input into the practice, policies, and systems-change recommendations developed. Racial inequities persist in assisted housing throughout the United States. In 2018, new findings by a consortium of researchers was released that estimated racial differences in the rents paid for identical housing in the same neighborhood in U.S. housing markets and how they vary with neighborhood racial composition. Results suggest that households led by blacks pay more for identical housing in identical neighborhoods than their white counterparts and that this rent gap increases with the fraction of the neighborhood white. In neighborhoods with the smallest fraction white, the premium is about 0.6 percent. In neighborhoods with the largest fraction white, it is about 2.4 percent. This pattern holds across different types of areas, namely the 50 largest metro areas, all other metro areas, non-metro areas, and areas with the highest and lowest levels of racial segregation in housing.⁴ This data, in addition to decades of qualitative and quantitative research demonstrating the lack of public and public-private partnership

platform for services to support and empower families living in subsidized housing. HOST provides resources on 2Gen service models, trauma-informed resident engagement, food insecurity, and more, as well as guidance on how to finance such services in public and mixed-income housing. This brief aims to provide you with detailed insights, innovations, and models taking place in communities and states focused on 2Gen housing.



resources allocated toward housing in communities of color, demonstrates the continued urgency of applying a racial equity lens to practices and policies that serve families of color and support their resilience and strengths.

EVOLUTION IN U.S. OF PUBLIC AND ASSISTED HOUSING PROGRAMS

Public and assisted housing programs began as real estate programs, with the primary goal of providing decent, affordable housing for families with low incomes. Some developments included community centers or offered space for outside service providers, but housing authorities—and HUD—generally did not directly fund or deliver resident services. Beginning in the 1960s, HUD subsidized the development of properties targeted for low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities, and these developments often provided some basic services for residents. But until the 1990s, there was no systematic effort to use low-income housing as a platform for delivering services that might address residents' broader needs. In recent decades, as Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and local housing agencies faced the impact of time-limited welfare benefits, implemented as part of 1996 welfare reform laws, and the fact that federal housing subsidies cannot serve all those experiencing housing hardship, interest has grown in developing strategies to link families receiving HUD assistance with services to help them move toward economic independence.⁵

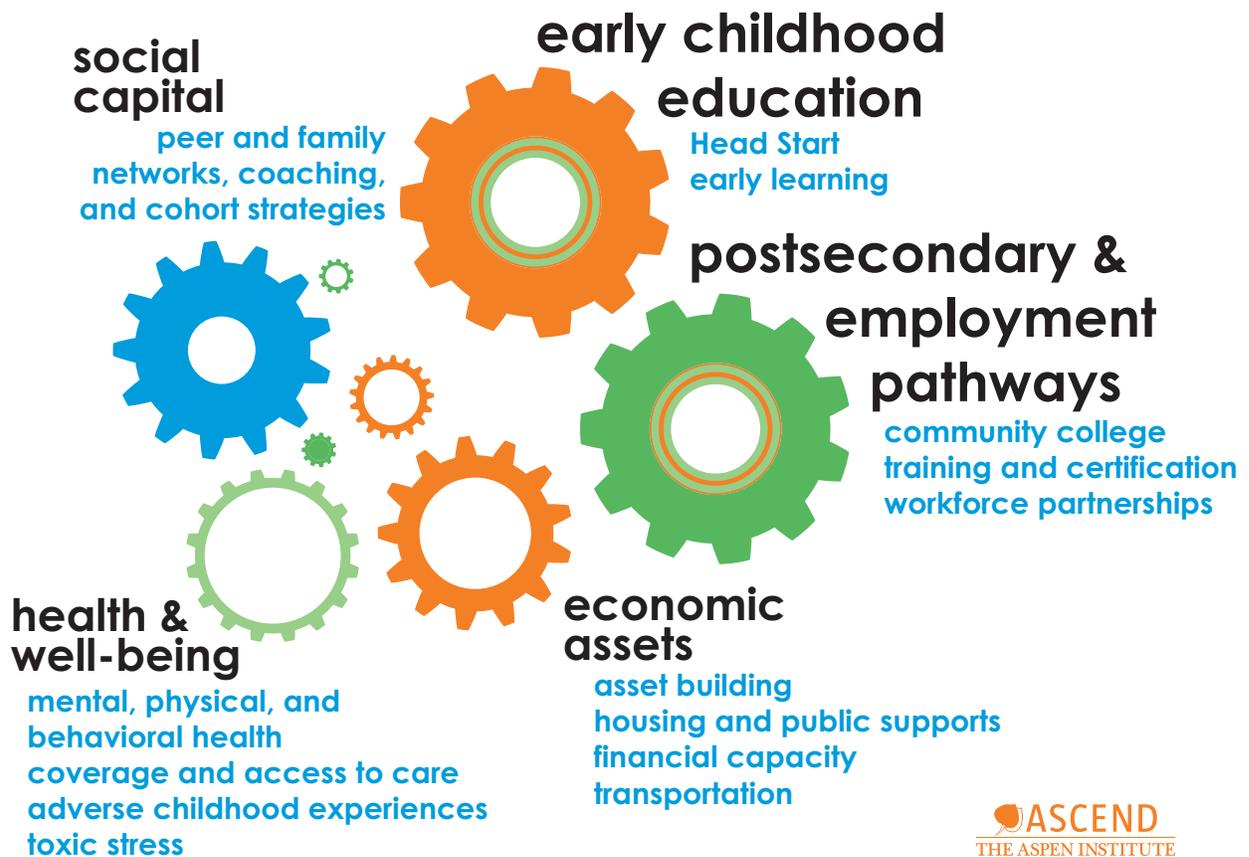
BUILDING 2GEN HOUSING MOVEMENT

For the past eight years, Ascend at the Aspen Institute has been convening a diverse circle of leaders to tackle educational success and economic security for children and families, worked with states

and communities ranging from Tennessee and Utah to Chicago and Minneapolis to undertake systems change, and provide leadership training and guidance to nonprofit and governmental leaders to address the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Through this work, housing as emerged as a powerful platform through which to support and propel families toward greater stability and health. As recently as January 2018, the Ascend Network, which includes over 260 organizations in 42 states and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, came together for a [national webinar](#) in partnership with Urban Institute to share outcomes in assisted housing using 2Gen approaches. Demonstrating the demand for new solutions for families in assisted housing, the webinar included over 230 participants from throughout the country including 31 housing authorities as well as state, county, nonprofit, and philanthropic leaders representing communities in Maryland, Arkansas, Kansas, Ohio, Colorado, California, and Washington, among others.

Concurrently, the HOST Demonstration, part of the broader HOST Initiative, provided technical support and research partnerships to three public housing authorities (PHAs) seeking to develop and assess innovative supportive service models for their residents. These service models aimed to acknowledge and address the significant barriers families with low incomes face, and help families find stable footing. From 2010 to 2015, HOST demonstration sites in Portland, OR, Chicago, IL, and Washington, DC explored using public housing as a platform for intensive, 2Gen interventions, and incorporated the lessons learned into their agency's approach to resident services and community engagement.

CORE COMPONENTS OF A TWO-GENERATION FRAMEWORK



During the five years of the Demonstration, a number of other housing authorities and affordable housing providers reached out to Urban to learn how they could apply promising practices. To meet the demand for a learning community, Urban created the HOST Network in 2018 as a vehicle for sharing innovative ideas, encouraging partnerships and communication between housing and human service providers, and piloting new evidence-informed resident support models.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS AND PRACTITIONERS: 2GEN OPPORTUNITIES IN HOUSING

The case for 2Gen approaches has been building over the last eight years, illustrated by emerging research focused on the importance of early childhood education, postsecondary education and workforce development, brain science and mental health, social capital and key assets like housing.⁶ As a core component of the 2Gen approach, economic assets, particularly housing, are essential for families to continue climbing the ladder to the American Dream. These assets, including access to

affordable housing and benefits such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Family (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), support families as they participate in school and learning; earn credentials toward living-wage jobs; seek healthcare; and importantly act as a buffer to food insecurity and trauma. There is an opportunity to leverage data and research and best practices in the fields of early childhood, brain science, asset-building, and workforce pathways for parents for improved systems delivery and outcomes for families living in subsidized housing. These places include public and mixed-income developments owned and managed by local housing authorities as well as “project-based Section 8” communities that are owned and managed by nonprofits. Tapping the expertise of the Ascend Network, including Ascend Fellows, and the HOST Initiative, we have developed six recommendations that can strengthen affordable housing organizations’ (both housing authorities and private, nonprofit developers and housing providers) efforts to improve outcomes for children and their parents together, as well as shift systems to more effectively serve whole families. They are:

1. Create professional development strategies and performance measures that promote and require enhanced case management and coaching that uses a strengths-based approach.
2. Create strong partnerships between housing agencies and service providers that can bring services on-site in assisted housing developments, leverage home visiting programs, and stabilize families during relocation and redevelopment initiatives.

TWO-GENERATION PRINCIPLES

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.

3. Use a trauma-informed approach and address mental health needs of children and parents together using evidence-based approaches.
4. Engage residents as leaders in designing and implementing new support systems or programs (i.e. parent policy councils) to enhance social capital, ensure services reflect families’ needs and goals, and contribute to the sustainability of the efforts.
5. Support long-term stability by ensuring assisted residents have time to build assets and address economic challenges, including acknowledging and addressing benefit cliffs as they transition off assistance.
6. Identify and develop partnerships with early childhood, K-12, and postsecondary systems to increase trust and engagement and address attendance and social-emotional learning.

1. Implement strength-based coaching approach to case management supported by data and staff training.

Why is this important? Enhanced case management means a number of different things: 1) low-caseloads (no more than a ratio of 30:1) that allow the time for building trusting relationships with families; 2) using a

strengths-based approach; and 3) meets families where they are and supports them in achieving the goals they set. The experience of the HOST team shows that programs that follow this model are more successful in engaging families and in sustaining relationships as they work toward their goals. And the experience of the [Compass Family Self-Sufficiency \(FSS\)](#) program shows that this approach can help families in assisted housing achieve financial stability. Coaching is another modality gaining momentum for social service agencies around the country; approaches like [Mobility Mentoring \(https://www.empathways.org/approach/mobility-mentoring\)](https://www.empathways.org/approach/mobility-mentoring) and [Family-Centered Coaching \(https://www.theprosperityagenda.org/familycentered-coaching\)](https://www.theprosperityagenda.org/familycentered-coaching) recognize that parents themselves are the experts in their lives, and use a range of tools to harness that expertise and the individual's and families' strengths to identify a path forward with guidance and input from a trained coach.

To put this 2Gen approach into action, case managers and coaches need both substantial training and flexible policies and work environments. Because most 2Gen models have their origins in either a parent- or child-centric program or service, case managers must be mindful from the beginning of these inherent biases and have training on coaching and other social work techniques that emphasize getting to know the whole family with a certain degree of agnosticism about family goals, who in the family will need the most time and attention, and what solutions might look like. In addition, staff need to be well connected to a diverse set of resources for families with low incomes and have access to support from partners who are formally trained in counseling

or clinical social work to deal with the depth of issues that arise once close relationships are established.⁷ Providing these supports mitigates the likelihood of eviction, leading to greater stability for families.

A 2Gen approach also means anticipating the degree of coordination required to share information among partners, avoid duplication, and build trusting relationships. This means cultivating a sense of a team, both through regular family-focused meetings (in which all staff who work with a particular family discuss issues affecting the family, to ensure they are working toward shared goals) and in providing other structured ways for staff to share information with each other, particularly when they belong to different organizations or primarily work off-site. Case management systems may provide important space not only for discrete data points (i.e., performance measures) but also for the kind of qualitative information that helps everyone who touches a family stay on the same page. Importantly, programs need to set meaningful performance measures that go beyond tracking attendance. In HOST, the original demonstration case management system tracked engagement (number of contacts with families), and key outcomes like lease violations, employment, and income. As the field has continued to evolve, new HOST partners like Bangor Housing's Families Forward program and other housing-based programs also track school attendance for children and, for younger children, scores on measures to assess developmental and socio-emotional learning (e.g. the Ages and Stages or ASQ questionnaire).⁸

2. Create strong partnerships between housing agencies and service providers that can bring services on-site in assisted housing developments and leverage home visiting programs

Why is this important? Given the stressors on parents raising families on low incomes, there is an opportunity to co-locate services in the very place families live, play, and raise their children: public and mixed-income housing. Innovative programs around the country are demonstrating that when you include food assistance, child care, medical care, and workforce training services and postsecondary education as integrated components with one or few entry points for families, parents can move into living wage jobs and children become developmentally prepared for Kindergarten. Programs such as the [Jeremiah Program](https://jeremiahprogram.org) (<https://jeremiahprogram.org>) in Minneapolis, MN and [Springboard to Opportunities](http://www.springboardto.org) (www.springboardto.org) in Jackson, MS have found improved work and health outcomes when child care and housing are either co-located or in close proximity, while ensuring the residents are involved in decisions made about program design, referral services, and child care approaches and trainings. Springboard to Opportunities has three strategies: Springboard To Learning, Springboard To Success, and Springboard To Community. These programs are customized at different Springboard sites (the program recently expanded to Washington, DC and Maryland), with an emphasis on creating mechanisms to tap community supports; resources for life skills building, tutoring, and educational support; and coaching to set short and long-term goals. This “radically resident-driven” programming engages families in all aspects of the services that most



impact them, as well as engages them in the design of equity-focused pilots and research projects intended to enhance Springboard's model.⁹

HOST partners have also co-located services in their public housing developments. HomeForward (the Housing Authority of Portland and Multnomah County in Oregon), one of the HOST communities, continues to offer coaching services, as well as linkages to workforce services for adults and an alternative high school. The housing authority built a new elementary school and Boys and Girls Club as part of the HOPE VI redevelopment effort and continues to seek out partners to bring services like bike lessons and community gardens. Finally, as an outgrowth of its partnership with HOST, HomeForward helped to create the Portland Teen Food Literacy Program, which includes a curriculum for teens and a [monthly youth-led Harvest Share](#).

Home visiting programs have also proven to be effective as on-site support for families in public and mixed-income housing. A new model of these efforts is from [Goodwill of Central and Southern Indiana](http://www.goodwillindy.org) (www.goodwillindy.org)

and [Nurse-Family Partnership \(www.nursefamilypartnership.org\)](http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org) (NFP). NFP is a maternal and early childhood health program that fosters long-term success for first-time moms, their babies, and society. NFP has almost 40 years of research and evidence demonstrating outcomes. Goodwill strives to enhance the dignity and quality of life of individuals and families by helping people reach their full potential through education, skills training, and the power of work. Running alongside NFP in Central Indiana are Goodwill's Excel Centers, which provide adult education and drop-in child care. The mission of The Excel Center is to provide adults the opportunity and support to earn a high school diploma and post-secondary education while developing career paths that offer greater employment and career growth opportunities. In two of 14 sites, NFP nurses are colocated within Excel Centers, making it easy to help parents move forward with their education and maintain an ongoing relationship between families and their nurses. In focus groups elsewhere in the country, NFP parents have said they would value having support continue beyond the two years each parent spends with their NFP nurse. Goodwill offers the opportunity for longer-term wrap-around support as families build their economic security. This model has proven results for economic and educational attainment, ensures access and use of health care and prevention, and engages the families in the larger community.

Finally, [HOST has developed strategies](#) to bring a range of home visiting models to public housing. The Chicago Housing Authority piloted a Parents as Teachers program in Altgeld Gardens, its largest remaining traditional public housing development.

3. Use a trauma-informed approach and address mental health needs of children and parents together using evidence-based approaches

The work being done by [MOMS Partnership \(Mental Health Outreach for MotherS, in New Haven, CT\)](http://psychiatry.yale.edu/moms) (<http://psychiatry.yale.edu/moms>) is an example of successful trauma-informed work that is partnered with public housing. MOMS Partnership is structured around key tenets on brain development, early care and attachment, and the impact of stress and brain development on child outcomes. MOMS Partnership focuses on increasing the capacity of caregivers through life skills coaching focused on increasing executive functioning, work readiness, and interventions that reduce depression. The core foundation is lifelong health and learning and is the “bond” between an infant/child and caregiver.

Why is this important? Because trauma is known to undermine executive function and self-regulation, MOMS Partnership recognizes that the same core life skills that they seek to build for parents are heavily influenced by a mothers' experience of trauma. Parents who have experienced trauma often isolate themselves because trauma affects the formation of social ties, and results in deficits in self-esteem, optimism, goal attainment, emotion regulation and inhibitory control, and less effective interpersonal skill development. Children growing up in adverse environments have been shown to have significantly weaker social connections in adulthood and childhood as well as more negative and distrustful tendencies in perceiving others and future possibilities. MOMS Partnership specifically focuses on improving

social connectedness among mothers through group meetings, community hubs, and the use of a specialized mobile app to promote and incentivize social engagement. A few of the 2Gen outcomes include:

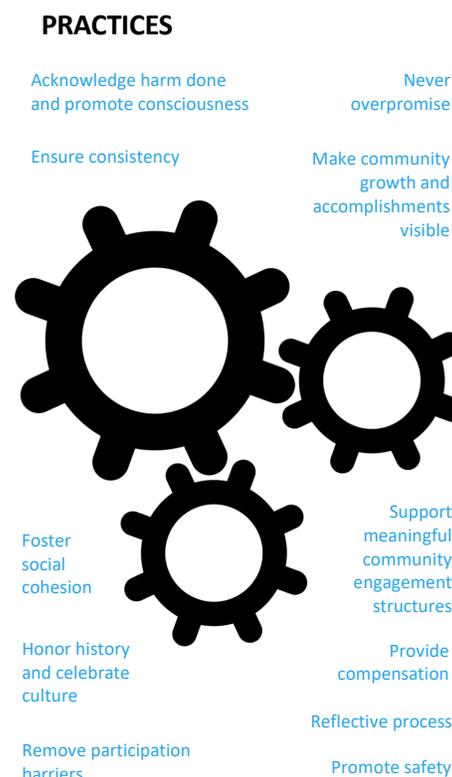
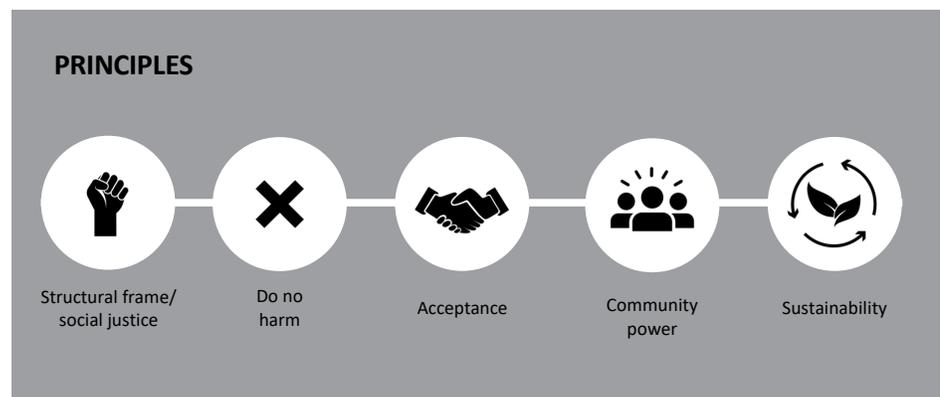
- 93% of the Community Mental Health Ambassadors who are parents in the program are still employed 12 months after their date of hire;
- 78% of participants complete the program compared to average of 30% nationally of a similar population who adhere to their mental health treatment;
- Children of participants attend six more days of school compared

to children of non-participants and demonstrate improvements in key domains of child executive functioning such as working memory and self-regulation.

- MOMS Partnership has also shown an increase in lease compliance for families in Section 8 housing. See the publication [Two Open Windows](#) for more information.¹⁰

Many low-income housing communities have experienced decades of disinvestment and segregation that have led to high levels of violence, crime, and other forms of trauma. HOST made providing access to mental health services a core principle. Recognizing the critical importance of building

URBAN INSTITUTE Trauma-informed Community Building And Engagement Model



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trust with residents—many of whom have experienced badly managed public housing and indifferent service providers—HOST demonstration sites brought the providers to the communities. Case managers built relationships with families and when they identified a need, introduced them to the on-site clinicians who provided counseling, support groups for adults and children, and advocacy. The Chicago HOST site developed and piloted [an approach to incorporate mental health clinicians into a home visiting model](#).¹¹ And the new HOST partners at Bangor Housing are now partnering with a provider who is offering on-site clinical services for both adults and children.

4. Engage residents as leaders in designing and implementing new support systems or programs to enhance social capital, ensure services reflect families' needs and goals, and contribute to the sustainability of the efforts.

In addition to ensuring that mental health supports and other programs and services are implemented with a trauma-informed lens, engaging residents as leaders promotes healing from past individual and community-level trauma. Operating with a trauma-informed lens allows stakeholders to better understand and acknowledge community experience and implement strategies that help communities have ownership over initiatives and better incorporate results in a meaningful way.

Why is this important? A community-based approach introduces a stronger accountability process and balance of power among community members and stakeholders with more traditional sources of power such as policy makers, social service agencies, researchers, and other institutions such as the police, schools,

or health care providers. Engaging residents as leaders in supportive service models ensures that the model is addressing the right needs and priorities, builds community capacity and contributes to the sustainability of the program, service, or policy.¹²

Early childhood programs, including Head Start and Early Head Start, have long identified Parent Policy Councils as an important mechanism for supporting families to strengthen programming, provide continuous feedback, and ensure families' expertise and experiences inform program changes and developments. Housing organizations can strengthen the family engagement component of on-site case management and outreach by structuring program requirements to include social capital-building components for parents and provide access to family coaches who support children and their parents as they work to achieve educational success. This will help civic engagement, encourage formal and informal mentoring, and increase the commitment of parents to their children to thrive both at school and at home. An important example of this is at Springboard to Opportunities. To ensure that public benefits are being tapped in the most effective and efficient ways possible, Springboard has developed a human-centered design approach to supporting families' needs, ensuring that services are both iterative and responsive, and creating opportunities for families to connect with one another on-site through policy meetings and potlucks. There is a deliberate focus on equity, ensuring that services meet families where they are, including addressing mental health needs and the impact of asset limits.

Like Springboard, there are a number of innovative, evidence-informed approaches that are working to conduct research and evaluation to better understand the best practices and policy implications for their work as well as impact on families. A few key research questions that remain on these efforts include:

Does resident or participant engagement:

- Contribute to supportive service and program effectiveness?
- Influence the terminology, approach, and assumptions behind public policies?
- Lead to policies and systems that are more equitable and inclusive?

5. Support long-term stability by ensuring families have time to build assets and address economic challenges, including acknowledging and addressing steep declines in benefits as they transition off assistance

Why is this important? Unlike other safety net programs, [housing assistance in the United States is not an entitlement](#) and serves only about one in five eligible households. For those who are lucky enough to receive it, it provides an important benefit, helping to guarantee stable affordable housing. Both because of the limited supply and the costs of assistance, there is increasing interest in strategies to help families become self-sufficient. However, the reality is that affordable housing is in short supply and [even people who are working full-time cannot afford the rent](#). In fact, there are no cities in the U.S. where a worker making the minimum wage can afford a two-bedroom apartment.¹³ This situation means that people face a decline in benefits (commonly referred to as the “cliff effect”) when they leave

housing assistance. The evidence about what happens when people leave assistance is limited, but what information we have suggests that [even those who succeed in earning their way off assistance can end up struggling to maintain stable housing](#). Today’s affordable housing crisis—the worst in generations—likely means that the “cliff effect” for people who leave housing assistance is even more severe. In this climate, helping families successfully leave assistance means ensuring they have enough time to build assets -- for example, using the five-year Compass FSS approach is one effective solution allow families to accumulate savings. Compass FSS is an enhanced family self-sufficiency model that provides coaching and support as well as supports participants in setting goals and creating an escrow account. The impact evaluation showed participants earned more and were less reliant on government benefits.¹⁴ It also likely means follow up and perhaps a smaller subsidy to ensure that families remain stable as they transition. It means addressing the reality that the highest-need families who have the most barriers to overcome will need long-term assistance and support.

6. Identify and develop partnerships with early childhood, K-12, and postsecondary school systems to increase trust and engagement and address attendance and social-emotional learning.

Why is this important? Partnerships between housing organizations and the education systems that serve children and their parents are vital to ensuring that families have the supportive pathways to develop, learn, and thrive. As noted in a 2017 Urban Institute brief on the partnership between the Seattle Housing Authority and Seattle Public



School System, “Partnerships may take many forms, from relationships between two service providers with common clientele (e.g., cross-agency partnerships) to multi-partner initiatives with complex community change goals (e.g., collective impact efforts). Underlying each partnership model are efforts to fundamentally change how organizations and their employees approach service delivery and interact.”¹⁵ By partnering with education systems, from early childhood through postsecondary, housing organizations can identify and address challenges families may face, including truancy and health instability; conversely, while education systems have non-academic staff to support needs of children and young adults who may be facing crises or challenges, a lack of staff time and resources can make it difficult to fully address families’ needs. By combining resources, housing organizations and education systems can support families’ needs more holistically and with potentially better results.¹⁶

Since 2013, the Council for Large Public Housing Authorities (CLPHA) has embarked on a scan, development of best practices, and technical assistance to housing authorities

and school system partnerships, with support from the Urban Institute. The primary elements of effective housing and education partnerships emerged from that work include:

1. Shared goals and joint strategies;
2. Effective leaders and staff members;
3. Partnerships with strong service providers;
4. Flexible funding sources, promising programs and services;
5. Data for decision-making, and systems and protocols for coordination.¹⁷

As a result of identifying and integrating these key pieces, housing authorities are better able to develop relevant and timely interventions for families, as well as coordinate enhanced services alongside education leaders.

Recognizing the importance of creating opportunities for homeless students, the Tacoma Housing Authority launched in 2016 a partnership with Tacoma Community College (TCC). A public-private partnership with the Kresge Foundation, the Tacoma Community College Housing Assistance Program provides rental assistance to homeless students who are enrolled at TCC. TCC identifies students for this program who would not be able to complete their college education because of a lack of affordable housing; THA’s rental assistance lasts for up to three years. Students must make adequate academic progress during that time, and TCC provides services such as access to mental health services, designed to help students succeed so they will graduate ready to be independent of public support.¹⁸ With an evaluation underway by Temple University’s Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab, the program

also requires participation in a family literacy program prior to completion. Using HUD's Moving to Work program to allow for flexibility in a housing subsidy, results from the program could inform broader efforts across postsecondary institutions and housing organizations to promote pathways to credentials and degrees that lead to living wage jobs for families.

CONCLUSION

Centering residents of low-income housing in the strategies to support their goals means prioritizing strength-based, whole-family, comprehensive approaches. The examples provided in this brief demonstrate that doing so ensures that place-based efforts to support residents are practical and dignifying, leverage existing resources, and are sustainable.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

2Gen Approach: A mindset for designing programs and policies that serve children and their parents simultaneously.

2Gen Strategy: Aligning and/or coordinating services with other agencies and levels of government to meet family needs.

2Gen System: Providing services and supports to both children and adults simultaneously to achieve population level outcomes.

Assisted housing: federally-funded programs funded run by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that provide deep rent subsidies for families with low-incomes. These include public housing, Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8), Project-Based Section 8 and Project-Based Rental Assistance. Source: <https://>

www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/assthsg.html

Child-Focused: An intervention that is primarily focused on the child, age 18 and under. For example, early childhood care and education and/or after-school care.

Cliff effect: also called the "benefits effect," occurs when a family's income increases above the income eligibility for financial supports. Income requirements force parents to choose between the needs of their child(ren) and income increases, leading to the potential loss of critical supports including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), child care assistance, health care coverage, subsidized housing, and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Comprehensive Services: Service delivery systems that identify family strengths and needs and connect families with a wide range of relevant services and supports.

Economic Security: When families are able to obtain jobs that pay good wages and are able build both short- and long-term assets that allow them to consistently meet their daily living expenses and support their children's healthy development and academic success, while also building assets that enable them to handle unanticipated expenses or a temporary loss of income over time.

Economic Stability: When families can meet their daily living expenses as well as build and protect financial assets that will enable them to handle unanticipated expenses or a temporary loss of income over time.

Evidence-Based: The degree to which an activity, intervention, program, or strategy is based on rigorous evaluation research, typically an experimental or quasi-experimental

evaluation of more than one effort that has been peer reviewed and determined to generate unbiased estimates of the causal relationship between the intervention and the outcomes of interest.

Family: The legal definition of family varies for the different public health and human services a family may access. The two-generation approach recognizes the diverse structures of families today and views family as a child or children and the individuals parenting the child or children. Individuals in a child's life who fulfill the parenting role may be grandparents, aunts and uncles, foster parents, step-parents, and others.

Home Visiting Program: A primary service delivery strategy that is offered on a voluntary basis to pregnant women or families parenting children ages 5 and under.

HOST Initiative: Housing Opportunities and Services Together Initiative, a project aiming to share insights and guidance about using housing as a platform for services to support and empower families living in subsidized housing. Source: Ascend & Urban brief

HUD: U.S. Department for Housing and Urban Development

Outcomes: The knowledge/insights, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that are targeted and thus expected to be achieved by a program.

Parent-Focused: Primarily focused on the parent/caregiver (e.g., adult education or occupational skills training).

PHA: public-housing authority

Racial equity: Racial equity is the substantive alternative to structural racism. The goal of racial equity is to produce fairness and social justice – race would no longer be a factor in the assessment of merit or in the

distribution of opportunity. Source: Aspen Roundtable on Community Change, "Constructing a Racial Equity Theory of Change" <http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/Roundtable%20on%20Community%20Change%20RETOC.pdf>

Residential services: supportive services provided in conjunction with housing to address factors such as trauma and mental health, food insecurity, substance abuse, discrimination and other barriers to stability and independence for families. Source: <https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/metropolitan-housing-and-communities-policy-center/projects/host-initiative-action>

Section 8 housing: A tenant-based program that supplements what low income families and individuals can afford to pay for housing in the private market. The assistance enables recipients to choose moderately priced housing of the type and in the location that best meets their needs. Section 8 is administered by local and state housing agencies under contract to the federal government. Source: <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/section-8-mobility-and-neighborhood-health/view/full-report>

SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

TANF: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

All terms and definitions without listed sources came from: <http://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/legacy/resources/20170306%20CO%202Gen%20Action%20Guide.pdf>

END NOTES

- ¹ According to the NCCP, parent employment is defined as the employment level of the parent in the household who maintained the highest level of employment in the previous year. Parents can either have no employment in the previous year, part-year or part-time employment, or full-time, year-round employment. Part-year or part-time employment is defined as either working less than 50 weeks in the previous year or less than 35 hours per week. Full-time, year-round employment is defined as working at least 50 weeks in the previous year and 35 hours or more per week.
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- ³ Adapted from the Center for Social Inclusion. "What Is Racial Equity?" <https://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/our-work/what-is-racial-equity/>
- ⁴ Early, Dirk W. and Carrillo, Paul E. and Olsen, Edgar O., Racial Rent Differences in U.S. Housing Markets (June 18, 2018). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3200655> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3200655>
- ⁵ Popkin, S. (2018) *EnVision Centers: Insights from Research on Past Efforts to Promote Self-Sufficiency among HUD-Assisted Households*. Urban Institute. Retrieved August 2 from <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/envision-centers-insights-research-past-efforts-promote-self-sufficiency-among-hud-assisted-households>
- ⁶ *Children and Families at the Center*. (2017) Ascend at the Aspen Institute. Retrieved from: <https://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/resources/children-and-families-at-the-center/>
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- ⁸ *Ages & Stages Questionnaires*. (2018) <https://agesandstages.com/>
- ⁹ Black, R. and Sprague, A. (2017) *Becoming Visible Report – New America*. <https://www.newamerica.org/family-centered-social-policy/policy-papers/becoming-visible/>
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- ¹² Arena, O., Falkenburger, E., and Wolin, J. (2018) *Trauma-Informed Community Building and Engagement*. Urban Institute. Retrieved from: https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/98296/trauma-informed_community_building_and_engagement_0.pdf
- ¹³ Airgood-Obrycki, W. (2018) *Even Fully-Employed and Moderate-Income Households Struggle to Pay the Rent*. Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. Retrieved from: <http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/blog/even-fully-employed-and-moderate-income-households-struggle-to-pay-the-rent/>
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- ¹⁸ Tacoma Community College Housing Assistance Program. (2013) Tacoma Housing Authority. Retrieved from: <https://www.tacomahousing.net/content/tacoma-community-college-housing-assistance-program>



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