



ENSURING NONCUSTODIAL PARENT, FATHER-INCLUSIVE LENSES ARE APPLIED TO DECISION-MAKING

Anchored in racial equity and informed by families' lived experience, 2Gen approaches build upon the power of education, early care and learning, health, and employment systems to ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities for entire family units. Policymakers and practitioners at city, county, and state levels continue to embrace the 2Gen approach, and the field is encouraged by ongoing bipartisan commitment at the federal level. The [Two-Generation Economic Empowerment Act](#) and the [Pathways to Health Careers Act](#) are two positive and concrete steps toward ensuring that prosperity passes from one generation to the next.

But too often — at all levels — leaders fall short of ensuring that custodial and noncustodial, resident and nonresident, father-inclusive lenses are applied to their decision-making. Regardless of intent, this results in harmful consequences that undermine the economic security, health, and well-being of children and the adults in their lives.

We saw this at the onset of the pandemic with Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act guidelines for exempting cash assistance from federal tax offsets. While offsets to pay taxes, educational loans, and other government debts were granted exemptions to ensure cash flowed to families, the act did not exempt direct cash payments from offsets to pay child support arrears. This meant that across the country, as many as 2.1 million noncustodial parents — most of whom are fathers — in the child support program did not receive full cash assistance because they owe child support arrears assigned not to families but to states to pay back Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance received by families.

If — as is the case in this example — the intention is to ensure that children and families have access to resources to meet their basic needs, we must intentionally, explicitly, and consistently apply noncustodial parent, father-inclusive lenses to decision-making.

THE OPPORTUNITY

As leaders at all levels, in public and private sectors, plan and execute immediate and long-term efforts to ensure families bounce back stronger, now is the time to embed father-inclusive, noncustodial parent lenses into platforms and processes.

Opportunities to do so include:

- Incorporating a gender analysis into decision-making processes
- Disaggregating data around race, gender, and parental status
- Explicitly identifying noncustodial caregivers and fathers as target populations within family-supportive policies and programs
- Revisiting eligibility requirements based on residential status (i.e., whether or not caregivers live in the same household as their children)
- Training staff on implicit bias
- Operationalizing father-friendly principles and practices

THE EXAMPLE

[Strengthening Families for Success Act](#)

Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member Ron Wyden (D-OR), Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), and Representative Danny Davis (D-IL) have introduced legislation to improve federal programs designed to promote healthy co-parenting and financial stability for families with low incomes. To ensure that families receiving TANF benefits get as much of the money collected through child support payments as possible and help caregivers maintain healthy co-parenting relationships, the legislation would:

- Modernize child support by eliminating cost recovery for TANF, Title IV-E foster care maintenance payments, and Medicaid birth costs by fiscal year 2026 while providing bridge funding to help states implement these changes.
- Reauthorize the Healthy Marriage Promotion and Responsible Fatherhood grant program through fiscal year 2025, establish infrastructure for grantees to measure outcomes and receive technical assistance, and ensure continuity of services during a public health emergency.
- Address the COVID-19 public health emergency's impact on the child support program and families by providing emergency flexibility during the pandemic and exempting 2020 Economic Income Payments from the CARES Act from reduction or offset.



“I DON’T KNOW ANY DADS WHO DON’T WANT TO BE THERE FOR THEIR KIDS.”

– Demetrious Jones, Father, Center for Urban Families

Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative Assessment Guide on Father-Inclusive Practices

A tool to guide state agencies in assessing their capacity to effectively engage fathers for child and family well-being, Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative's Assessment Guide is intended to help staff identify the extent to which their operations and systems are able to meet the needs of male caregivers. Organized into seven domains, the guide asks respondents to gauge perceived desirability, feasibility, and affordability across the following measures:

- *Organizational Philosophy: Agency clearly promotes the importance of father inclusion.*
- *Physical Environment: Agency promotes an environment welcoming to fathers. Environment reflects a male presence in waiting areas, program spaces, workrooms, offices, and classrooms.*
- *Policies and Procedures: Agency has policies and procedures in place that explicitly address fathers as clients.*
- *Staff Orientation and Training: Staff communicate a workplace message that fathers are important and capable. Staff also communicate an attitude that agency services should be routinely available to fathers.*
- *Program Content: Selected programs and services are designed to specifically and explicitly address needs of male caregivers.*
- *Marketing: Agency's marketing plan includes content signaling positive approaches to engaging fathers.*
- *Outreach Efforts: Agency's outreach strategy explicitly includes male caregivers.*

Alameda County Fathers Corps

In 2013, First 5 Alameda County, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, and Alameda County Social Services Agency launched the Alameda County Fathers Corps to support male caregivers' meaningful engagement with their children and families. The Fathers Corps' integrated approach combines support for fathers, service providers, systems, and communities by promoting father-friendly and father-specific programming for families in communities with low incomes, convening learning communities and developing tools and trainings to build provider capacity to engage fathers, convening systems leaders through an interagency workgroup, elevating fathers' voices at decision-making tables nationwide, and promoting positive, 21st century narratives of fatherhood.

In 2014, the Fathers Corps Learning Community developed a set of [Father-Friendly Principles](#) to offer agencies and programs guidance to more effectively support male caregivers. The principles were adopted by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors the following year. The Fathers Corps has since offered training and technical assistance on implementation of the Father-Friendly Principles to local, state, and national stakeholders.

The City University of New York Fatherhood Academy

Launched in 2012 at LaGuardia Community College, the City University of New York (CUNY) Fatherhood Academy prepares young un- and underemployed fathers for postsecondary educational opportunities. A core component of the 2Gen approach, ensuring pathways to postsecondary success for parents unleashes prosperity for families. Parents who complete a college degree double their incomes, and parents' levels of educational attainment are a strong predictor of child outcomes. The CUNY Fatherhood Academy provides a suite of services to support educational attainment, economic stability, and personal development. Participants also learn skills for effective parenting, financial literacy, and how to cultivate healthy relationships regardless of family structure. The CUNY Fatherhood Academy is funded by the New York City Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity and the New York City Young Men's Initiative.