



Introduction

Being born healthy and into a loving family with the resources to help a child grow, develop and learn should be the norm in one of the richest countries in the world. Children need access to good health care, caring adults and educational opportunities that challenge them and set them on a path to success in adulthood. Families need the financial stability to provide the basics for their children but also the resources to encourage their growth and development. And parents need the time and skills to guide their child's social, emotional and educational experiences in positive and nurturing ways.

But parents struggle every day to create a better life for their children, and all too often, kids and their parents lack what they need to thrive. This is particularly true for children growing up in low-income families that are stressed by crises that disrupt the equilibrium of the entire household, whether it's financial insecurity, divorce, inadequate housing or costly health problems. As a result, these children often fail to meet social, emotional and educational milestones critical to building a strong foundation for their later success.

For decades, policymakers, advocates and service providers have tried to tackle family poverty and children's developmental needs as separate and distinct problems, with often marginal results. At the same time, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has long advocated for change in systems, institutions, policies and communities to promote child well-being and end the cycle of poverty. Despite these efforts, poverty persists in families and communities throughout the nation. The Foundation is now focused intently on exploring innovative approaches and creating new opportunities for children in families struggling to cope with such challenges, recognizing that a child's well-being is deeply tied to family stability and economic security and depends on the effective support of parents and other caregivers.

Faced with emerging research findings about the issues confronting children in poverty, Casey is developing and testing a new two-generation approach for children and families that can be expanded and sustained over time. Casey's two-generation theory is that when families have access to high-quality early education and supports for children, assistance to strengthen parents' caregiving skills and tools to improve their economic standing, the outcomes for both will improve — and even more so when they live in supportive communities with strong ties to other families and

interact with systems that are responsive to their needs. Such an approach would involve providing key services to support both children and parents in an intentionally coordinated and simultaneous manner.

This paper outlines Casey's thinking about this strategy, details its essential components and highlights examples of how the Foundation plans to test implementation strategies; expand successful approaches at the program, system and policy levels; and evaluate these new two-generation approaches.

New Findings on Early Childhood Development

For many years, Casey has focused on effective ways to support both children and families. For parents, that has often meant providing resources for workforce training, financial coaching and asset building and improving access to work supports, tax credits and other public benefits. For children, that has typically meant supporting high-quality child care, early learning opportunities and other services.

In recent years, Casey has looked increasingly closely at the growing body of research highlighting the critical role that parents¹ play in the development of young children. We have examined new findings about the particular struggles of low-income parents. For example, the growing body of neuroscience research on how extreme stress within a family affects child development is striking, highlighting how stress for kids in poverty affects long-term learning, behavior and mental and physical health. As Dr. Jack Shonkoff from Harvard University notes, "When a child grows up in adverse circumstances associated with any combination of the three most frequently documented risk factors associated with poor life outcomes — significant economic hardship, limited parent education and racial or ethnic minority status — the burden of the caregiving environment can be substantial."

Findings on the lasting effects of income and poverty on young children in particular are also remarkable. We know, for example, that poverty and family functioning and stability are key factors that affect child well-being. Children's developmental trajectory is primarily influenced by the cumulative impact of interactions and relationships with the important people in their lives. Their neighborhoods and environments further shape to their development: Critical resources such as high-performing schools, quality medical care and safe outdoor spaces are often out of reach for children living in high-poverty communities, and they are more likely to experience harmful levels of stress and severe behavioral and emotional problems.² Therefore, poverty, community and the instability and stress that result when basic needs are not met can have a lasting impact on the way children think, learn and adapt.

¹ We use the term "parents" to encompass any caregiver with the responsibility of raising young children, whether they reside with the child and whether they are the biological parents of the child. Parents may also include grandparents or other relatives raising children.

² KIDS COUNT Data Snapshot, "Children Living in America's High-Poverty Communities."

In addition, research from the mental and behavioral health fields, as well as growing evidence from parenting interventions, highlights other important aspects related to breaking the cycle of poverty. Paying increased attention to maternal depression, as well as parents' ability to make a strong connection with their children, guide their behavior, model self-control, delay gratification and provide appropriate responses to stress and anger is key to understanding family functioning and long-term child and family outcomes.

All these elements are further compounded by the fact that these children and families can live in places where racial inequalities have created a persistent and pervasive lack of resources and supports, along with environmental hazards that make it difficult, at best, to grow up healthy. The combination of these factors — especially when they are experienced by very young children — leads to negative impacts that remain with children throughout their lives. Therefore, tackling the systemic and institutional inequities inherent to various systems that affect kids and families, and tailoring programs, services and policies to respond to their unique situations, are critical to significant and lasting improvements in their economic and educational outcomes. Providing all families of young children with a set of effective economic and social supports will reap immediate and long-term benefits. We must address these interconnected, intergenerational challenges if we are to help children reach their potential and become economically successful adults.

The idea of serving children and their parents holistically is not new. Dating as far back as the settlement movement in the early 1900s, several organizations and efforts have had deep experience delivering effective supports to parents and children. However, such programs rarely addressed parents' economic stability, focusing instead on literacy or parenting rather than many of the underlying issues of poverty. Even those that did combine adult economic and early childhood services struggled to integrate these services for families in a way that was sustainable. Rarely did these programs focus on strengthening the ability of parents and caregivers to reduce toxic stress and build child coping skills. And typically, organizations were not able to deliver services on a large scale in communities across the country.

Despite these challenges, there is renewed energy and interest in developing, strengthening and evaluating more holistic two-generation efforts from government, philanthropy and the service-delivery sector.

Developing a Two-Generation Approach

Based on the research as well as its own investment lessons, the Casey Foundation's Center for Community and Economic Opportunity has refined its two-generation intervention strategy to encompass three critical elements.

First, the approach must intentionally address the needs of children and their parents at the same time. This simultaneous and integrated approach has proven difficult to implement and sustain over

time as funding and policy priorities shift.³ But it remains integral to a true two-generation approach; families are interconnected, and so are their needs.

Second, the approach must be family-centered and responsive to changing family needs. For example, the needs of families with infants and toddlers are different from those of families with school-aged children. The strategy also needs to give families opportunities to make their own decisions and choices, collaborate with family-service experts and take action to achieve desired goals and outcomes. The Foundation's strategy will include efforts to build parents' skills to support healthy child development and provide mental health interventions and other resources to help parents thrive in their caregiving role. Over time, this approach allows parents to build confidence, become leaders within their communities and help develop the strong social networks that are vital to healthy communities.

Third, the strategy must include a special focus on interventions to reduce family poverty, a set of supports not often brought into past two-generation efforts. The Foundation will build off lessons from these efforts and bring to this work experience from its family economic success (FES) endeavors over the past dozen years. This experience points to the importance of a package of integrated supports focused on training and workforce development; financial stability and asset building; and improving parents' access to the Earned Income Tax Credit and other public benefits in addressing family economic stability. Combining these supports with investments in early childhood education will be a unique component of the two-generation services Casey will explore in the coming years.

The following table (see p. 5) outlines the integrated set of three support services that are critical to this two-generation approach.

³ In one recent example, MDRC's recent evaluation of family economic success interventions for parents of Early Head Start programs found that few parents opted to enroll in the adult services being offered, demonstrating the challenge of creating truly simultaneous and intensive service delivery systems for families.

FES Strategies Core Features	Capacity Building for Parents and Caregivers Core Features	Early Care and Quality Education Core Features
<p>Interventions directed to parents that aim at addressing their economic success through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training, education, job assistance and other workforce development and career-enhancing strategies that lead to family-supporting work • Access to public benefits and work supports • Financial coaching, asset building, financial education and access to non-predatory financial products and services 	<p>Interventions directed to parents that engage them as both parents and workers through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of parents' executive function skills enabling them to improve their decision making, problem solving, executing and evaluation plans. • Development of parents' confidence and agency, increasing their empowerment so they can fulfill their role as their child's best advocate • Development of parents' social networks of support as both a parent and worker 	<p>Interventions for their children through high-quality early educational supports through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-quality early education programs (either center-based or home-based) • Successful transition to elementary school • Quality elementary school experiences • Effective teaching across all ages • Trusting relationships with parents • Comprehensive services and supports for children, parents and families, such as health, nutrition, mental health
<p>SERVICES BUILT ON POLICIES, SYSTEMS AND COMMUNITIES THAT ENHANCE THE LIVES OF FAMILIES</p>		

Broad Family Economic Success Interventions

Recent research suggests that experiencing poverty as a young child has lasting effects, including reduced earnings and poorer health, and explains how both the lack of resources and added stress of family economic hardship hurt the developing child in significant and profound ways. Studies by Greg Duncan and colleagues suggest that adding \$3,000 to \$4,000 to the incomes of families with young children between ages 0 and 5 for several years can improve the children's educational attainment and earning capacity as adults. Casey's extensive experience in this area — especially through the Centers for Working Families — makes clear that a bundled set of economic supports makes a critical difference in helping families succeed. Stabilizing families through public benefits, work supports and programs and services geared toward mental health; addressing their education and workforce needs; and then helping them develop assets are core components proven to work best as a package.

Interventions That Help Adults Become Better Parents and Workers

Emerging research better explains the important role that caregivers play in fostering children's ability to learn how to self-regulate, focus, plan ahead and delay gratification — all critical skills for success later in life. High-quality early care and education programs build this into their interactions

with children, but parents and caregivers need to reinforce these abilities, including planning skills, problem solving and discipline. There is an opportunity to work with parents of young children as they contemplate their parental goals and hopes for building a better future for their children and themselves. Many of Casey's investments will pursue evidence-based interventions that provide parent support, training and peer-to-peer support.

Similarly, research from the workforce development field finds that some low-income workers need to improve their own planning and problem-solving skills as well — though these are often called “soft” or “job-readiness” skills. Findings from the mental and behavioral health fields demonstrate additional lessons that help address how adults can change patterns of behavior and learn coping mechanisms to help them succeed at home and on the job. How to show up on time, focus on tasks and remain calm in stressful situations are all skills that are vital in the workplace. Outside of it, the social safety net often requires participants to have such skills to navigate the web of appointments, paperwork and other requirements to access the support they need.

These findings suggest the need for new approaches that help parents build their parenting and job-readiness skills and, ultimately, enhance their confidence to become advocates for themselves and their children. Over time, these will help parents become advocates and leaders both in their families and in their communities.

Finally, the Foundation will support efforts that focus on interventions bringing together promising, data-informed programs from the health, behavioral health and family economic success realms. Parental mental and behavioral health, including maternal depression, smoking cessation and stress management, will be necessary components to add, for some parents, to this array of two-generation interventions.

High-Quality Early Learning and Education

Research shows that early learning and parenting education can have significant impacts on children's long-term success. Emerging brain research likewise confirms that when children are young (especially through age 5), there is a critical window to influence their learning and future outcomes. A host of longitudinal studies show that good early childhood services can help children from low-income families overcome barriers, develop resilience and catch up developmentally to their more affluent peers. To achieve the greatest impact, these interventions must encompass high-quality early care and education addressing children's cognitive, social and emotional learning; effective teaching; strong family engagement; and comprehensive services and supports.

This learning doesn't stop at age 5 but continues through kindergarten and the early years of elementary school.⁴ Even with the best learning environment and instruction, if children do not

⁴ The Casey-supported Campaign for Grade-Level Reading confirms the importance of good teachers, positive learning environments, low absenteeism, high-quality summer experiences and continued parent engagement in their children's education as critical to ensure children are reading proficiently by the end of third grade. Most students who fail to reach this critical milestone falter in the later grades and often drop out before earning a high school diploma.

continue receiving consistent support and high-quality education through the early grades, they are at greater risk of developmental delays and falling behind academically. A carefully planned transition between preschool and elementary school is critical for students and their parents.

For many children from low-income families, elementary school is especially critical to their academic and social-emotional development. The K-3 grades must prepare children so that they have the skills necessary to read but also encourage reading for learning about other subjects and for their personal enjoyment. In addition, all subjects must be taught in a way that both connects to children but also expands their intellectual curiosity.

Together, early childhood and early elementary interventions are one of the best ways to prepare kids for school, help close the academic achievement gap and begin to reduce poverty, providing children from low-income families with the skills necessary to achieve upward mobility.

The Foundation's Investment Approach

Casey's two-generation strategy continues to inform its investments around the country and is primarily focused in three key areas: advancing research and knowledge development; demonstrating two-generation practice and further building evidence through on-the-ground programs and initiatives; and influencing changes in policy and systems.

Advancing Research and Knowledge

As the Foundation continues exploring and developing its two-generation strategy, it aims to translate new research in neuroscience and other areas into concrete tools and practices that can be integrated into national policies and federal funding priorities — and into workforce development, financial management and early child education practices on the ground.

Frontiers of Innovation

The Foundation is pursuing a partnership with Frontiers of Innovation (FOI), an ambitious national effort led by the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University that seeks to encourage greater impacts in the lives of young children by drawing upon new knowledge in the biological, behavioral and social sciences. Casey is supporting a number of working groups, including one on parent and adult caregivers, on-the-ground pilot projects, neighborhood strategies, documentation and policy and system change. Casey is also supporting FOI states such as Georgia and community partners such as the New Haven MOMS Partnership.

New Haven MOMS Partnership

Among the efforts informed by Frontiers of Innovation is the New Haven Mental Health Outreach for Mothers (MOMS) Partnership. Casey plans to collaborate with this community-academic partnership, which provides a range of services to pregnant women and mothers. The program uses input from families and providers to develop public health approaches to help women achieve the

highest possible standards of mental health and well-being. Services for women in the community will focus on economic security, mental health and parenting skills.

Crittenton Women's Union

Casey is supporting research by Crittenton Women's Union (CWU), a Boston-based nonprofit that helps low-income women achieve economic independence. CWU is conducting independent research, building on new developments in neuroscience and its unique one-on-one mentoring model. CWU will publish a policy brief that examines innovative approaches to economic mobility and advocates for policy change to support women on the road to self-sufficiency.

Creating Opportunities for Young Parents

Finally, within Casey, we are looking for ways to bring two-generation policy and systems change to existing work. So, for example, the recent publication of the KIDS COUNT *Youth and Work* policy report in 2012 helped Casey focus on the challenges facing the 1.4 million young parents who have a child but are neither working nor in school. The Foundation and its partner, the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, are particularly interested in creating a road map these young parents can use to become more economically successful, with a focus on providing support to young parents and their children at the same time. The Foundation is exploring ways to help these young parents further their education, move into work and careers and build their parenting skills while giving their young children access to good education options.

Demonstrating Two-Generation Practice on the Ground

In addition to advancing research on effective programs and services for children and their parents, the Foundation is supporting various efforts to implement two-generation strategies throughout the country, ranging from its own neighborhood work in Atlanta and Baltimore to other community and housing initiatives to a new program that seeks to link early childhood .

The Atlanta Civic Site

The Atlanta Civic Site represents Casey's most comprehensive use of the two-generation approach. The civic site invests in partners using a variety of strategies to promote family success in a community southwest of downtown known as Neighborhood Planning Unit V (NPU-V). The strategy recognizes that children are far more likely to thrive in stable families.

The site works with two key partners to address child and parent outcomes. The Center for Working Families Inc. offers parents the chance to take advantage of workforce training and coaching, assisted access to obtaining public benefits and asset-building programs. The goal is to give parents the tools to succeed in the workplace, improve their finances and build assets that give their families more security. For children, the state-of-the-art Dunbar Learning Complex provides high-quality early childhood and elementary education on one campus. The complex's early learning school, called Educare Atlanta, is managed by a highly regarded early education provider, Sheltering Arms, and

focuses on ensuring children develop with a strong foundation of cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional skills and are fully prepared to transition to elementary school. Parenting classes and support groups help parents build their skills, while the civic site also supports health care services and other efforts to help families succeed.

The two-generation approach in Atlanta has produced good results as measured by several indicators, including the number of parents who took advantage of child care and found work, vocabulary assessments for young children in the early learning school and the near-universal rate at which children received developmental assessments and health care services through the school. The site is also working on emerging results for parents' financial stability and, in the coming years, will have robust data to inform two-generation practices.

Baltimore Initiatives

In East Baltimore, Casey and others have supported a cutting-edge school and new early childhood center that will integrate early care and education for children. Parents will have access to programs that help them improve their parenting skills and finances and provide other family-strengthening services. This new complex, scheduled to open in early 2014, will serve as a community hub, meeting the needs of children and parents at the same time.

B'More for Healthy Babies is a two-generation, citywide initiative to reduce infant mortality and promote maternal health and well-being. By working closely with existing systems, it supports health, parenting and literacy programs and services for mothers and babies from prenatal stages to early childhood. This initiative has also led public health campaigns on issues such as safe sleep for babies and the risks to babies from tobacco, alcohol and drugs.

Family Economic Success and Early Childhood Education

A new Foundation effort seeks to blend financially focused supports for parents, parenting-support strategies and early childhood programs targeting very young children of low-income parents. The effort will focus on programs delivering federal Head Start services and promote integration of parent services and/or partnerships with others within the community who can help parents achieve financial stability. Four sites are now participating in three-year demonstrations.

Implementing partners include the Educational Alliance (New York City), the Garrett County (Maryland) Community Action Committee, Sheltering Arms Early Education and Family Centers and The Center for Working Families Inc. in Atlanta and the Tulsa Community Action Project. These partners will work on expanding their two-generation approaches and will be part of a forum to share and learn best practices across sites.

The Foundation will support evaluations of the implementation process and the two-generation approaches used in the sites. Over time, Casey and its partners will support the expansion of successful approaches and promote systems and policy changes that will help sustain and spread

promising strategies. For example, sites often have challenges blending the various sources of funding for early childhood programs to provide high-quality full-day care. One of the Foundation's policy goals might be to help encourage state and federal program alignment so that funding streams can be combined in ways to meet the needs of both children and parents.

Family-Centered Community Change

Casey's Family-Centered Community Change strategy supports community development efforts in low-income neighborhoods by helping to foster programs that focus on healthy development, growth and education for children, as well as services that concentrate on parenting, job skills and financial stability for adults.

The Foundation has partnered with three local initiatives in New York, Ohio and Texas that have already shown promise in their work to transform low-income neighborhoods into thriving communities. The Foundation aims to help them develop the resources necessary to support both generations, drawing on its experience from more than two decades of working to improve vulnerable communities for the children and families living in them. The three local partners are the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood in Buffalo, N.Y.; the Weinland Park Collaborative in Columbus, Ohio; and Eastside Promise Neighborhood and the Choice Neighborhood initiative in San Antonio.

Housing Platforms Advancing Two-Generation Approaches

Several additional investments will build on the Foundation's housing and mobility investments at the Foundation. For example, Urban Strategies Inc., a public housing and community redevelopment organization that Casey helped fund to create a comprehensive two-generation set of services for residents of Harmony Oaks, a housing development in New Orleans. Grantees such as Urban Strategies will provide useful insights to this two-generation work, and the Foundation aims to engage these other efforts into a broader learning network. Additionally, Casey will work with the MacArthur Foundation and the Siemer Institute for Family Stability to continue looking at the intersection between mobility, housing and educational outcomes. A key question within this work is how two-generation approaches can stabilize housing and improve educational outcomes for children in low-income neighborhoods. Finally, HOPE SF is an ambitious civic effort to address poverty in distressed public housing developments located in the Bayview, Potrero Hill and Visitacion neighborhoods of San Francisco. It is an integrated, comprehensive approach that works with children and families in the context of housing revitalization. Casey's investments are particularly focused on economic mobility and evaluation.

Influencing Policy and Systems

We acknowledge that working from the "bottom up" on implementation challenges to two-generation approaches only addresses half the battle in moving to more holistic services. We must also address change from the top, working to change practice on a broader scale. Therefore, the Foundation also aims to promote changes in policies and systems that will facilitate collaboration among child and

adult service providers, and to incentivize more programs to work together to serve the needs of families as a whole, rather than in silos.

Building a Networked Field on Two-Generation Approaches

Through grants to policy and communications organizations, Casey will work to advance the messaging around two-generation approaches and the policy and systems changes needed to help ensure that more communities and programs use a whole-family lens in providing supports. For example, along with several other funders, the Foundation is supporting the Aspen Institute's Ascend project, which aims to provide a "hub for breakthrough ideas and collaborations that move children and their parents toward educational success and economic security."

In 2014, the Foundation also plans to engage its KIDS COUNT grantees — a network of 53 organizations working in each state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands — on child and family policies and its two-generation policy work through a new KIDS COUNT report. This policy report will highlight state and federal recommendations for helping to advance two-generation programs and services for families.

This work is in the developing stages and will grow as policy needs and solutions emerge from the Foundation's research and practice investments.

Evaluating the Strategy

New research and evidence point to the need for a more deliberate, integrated set of two-generation interventions — coupled with rigorous assessment and evaluation. Casey, along with others in philanthropy, remains committed to developing lessons about new interventions, practice and implementation and will continue to build evidence through evaluation.

In the coming years, we must work to determine how two-generation interventions are delivered and, ultimately, whether these promising approaches help families succeed. Key questions include:

- What is the best mix of services across the three key areas — early childhood education, parenting and caregiving skills and family economic success — to influence healthy development of children?
- What is the best way to deliver these services given that racial or ethnic minority status serve as a risk factor associated with poor life outcomes?
- What does it take to design, fund and implement effective two-generation approaches?
- How can we design and implement interventions that strengthen the self-regulation and mental health of low-income parents?

- How do these efforts change as they are expanded to reach larger numbers of families —within a community and across multiple communities?
- What outcomes are achieved by children and families participating in two-generation programs, how long does it take to see those results and can we expect to see ebbs and flows in those results?
- What are the unintended consequences of delivering two-generation supports and resources within communities?
- For which families is this approach the most effective and needed and how do we identify where this significant investment will bring the greatest benefit?
- What are the appropriate measures for gauging family economic progress?
- How can we sustain the investment made in young families, especially when children transition into the K-12 school system?
- How can we ensure that our approaches emphasize and add to families' strengths (rather than deficiencies) and apply appropriate coaching and case management that help them build on their successes?

Challenges and Opportunities

The Foundation will continue to focus on how to take this two-generation strategy to a broader scale. Several efforts, ranging from the federal Head Start and Promise Neighborhoods programs to the community schools movement, could provide platforms for delivering two-generation services. What we lack is a fully developed approach.

It's safe to assume that many challenges will emerge as program providers attempt to blend funding streams and offer support services and resources for both adults and children as part of this two-generation approach. These streams have policy restrictions that make it hard or impossible to blend funding and deliver interventions to children and their parents in a coordinated manner. And given the need, many of these programs are severely underfunded.

Casey will aim to expand and sustain successful efforts from the bottom up — through organizational networks such as Head Start programs and the nonprofit networks that operate them and community change efforts such as Promise Neighborhoods.

At the same time, it will be critical to have a top-down strategy that involves working to influence agendas at the federal, state and local levels to drive change through policy, regulation and practice. To that end, the Foundation has joined others in supporting the Aspen Institute's Ascend initiative,

which is working to articulate policy challenges and opportunities around two-generation approaches. Other grants in the months ahead will continue to advance a strong and emerging cross-sector field of two-generation leaders.

In summary, the Foundation is committed to developing a common approach to its two-generation work, using multiple strategies to serve diverse populations. Over the next several years, Casey expects its two-generation interventions will directly touch about 5,000 families. Thousands more could be impacted by changed systems and policies as efforts unfold.

Casey will also develop the following to advance its two-generation work:

- a core set of results, progress indicators and performance measures;
- coordinated evaluations, research questions, and systems to track data, costs and benefits;
- ways to build the capacity of service providers, with a focus on building parents' leadership skills;
- a system to share lessons from the work;
- an agenda to influence policy, supported by coordinated communications; and
- a network of two-generation leaders, practitioners, stakeholders and champions.

For More Information

To learn more about the Foundation's two-generation strategy and work, or to connect with members of its Two-Generation Work Group, contact [Patrice Cromwell \(PCromwell@aecf.org\)](mailto:PCromwell@aecf.org).

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