

## Peer TA: Director's Den

### *Does 1 + 1 = 3? Two-Generation Approaches to Family Economic Security*

April 2015



The Director's Den is a special section of the Peer TA website that was created to facilitate communication between the Director of the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) and TANF program stakeholders. Periodically, the OFA Director will provide timely insights and useful information. I welcome (and encourage) your feedback and communication through [peerta@icfi.com](mailto:peerta@icfi.com).

When I am introducing our work at the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) to new audiences, I often say "I lead the Office of *Family* Assistance – not the office of *adult* assistance or the office of *child* assistance." My goal in making that statement is to signal our interest in whole family or *two-generation approaches*, which provide opportunities for and meet the needs of children and their parents together. Human services programs traditionally target either job preparation and employment for parents, or early childhood development for children. In contrast, two-generation approaches deliver services to parents and their children at the same time, to increase a family's overall economic security and well-being. A two-generation framework provides a means for unifying our grant programs across the Office of Family Assistance, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG), and Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood (HMRP) grants.

In my role, I often find myself in the position of simplifying the complex. So, when I consider what we at OFA and our state, tribal, and community partners are trying to achieve in designing and experimenting with two-generation approaches, I distill it down to this: Can we make  $1 + 1 = 3$ ? That is, can we achieve better outcomes by working across silos—providing opportunities for and meeting the needs of vulnerable children and their parents together?

OFA seeks to identify and examine programs and policies that take an innovative approach to tackling poverty across generations, and to highlight these approaches to promote knowledge sharing and learning among our grantees and stakeholders. I wanted to take this opportunity to share a few examples that our team recently identified from across our grant programs:

- **TANF:**
  - By design, the TANF block grant provides flexible funding to states and tribes that can be used to develop two-generation approaches that address the needs of parents and children simultaneously.

- Utah's TANF program has been piloting an initiative called Next Generation Kids, which targets families in which the parent(s) received cash assistance as children *and* as adults. The program assists parents with employment and intensive services that benefit the whole family.
- Washington state's TANF program is launching a program to provide evidence-based home visiting services (using funds from the state TANF budget) to families receiving TANF cash assistance. Intended outcomes include increased child and family well-being and improved parental employability.
- **HPOG:**
  - HPOG provides education and training to TANF recipients and other low-income individuals for occupations in the health care field that pay well and are expected to either experience labor shortages or be in high demand.
  - CAP Tulsa, an HPOG grantee, created CareerAdvance, one of the most well-developed two-generation models in the country – which simultaneously provides career pathways training in high demand health occupations for parents and high quality early childhood services (including Head Start and Early Head Start) for their children.
  - In addition, virtually all HPOG grantees across the country assist participants who are pursuing career pathways in health to access child care and other support services.
- **HMRF:**
  - HMRF grantees help participants to build and sustain healthy relationships and marriages, and to strengthen positive father-child interaction.
  - The Capital Area Community Services Head Start program, a Responsible Fatherhood grantee in Lansing, Michigan, has worked to integrate fatherhood programming into Head Start activities and to address the challenges faced by both fathers and their children.
  - Creciendo Unidos, a Healthy Marriage grantee in Phoenix, uses “Todo es Posible” (Everything is Possible) curriculum to support improved parenting skills, communication, and family strengthening for parents and their children. Creciendo Unidos provides wrap around and support services to address employment, child care, and domestic violence, as well as referrals to human services agencies.

OFA will continue to examine how best to support our grantees to design and implement programs that to improve outcomes for parents and children together. This is a time of real excitement as new examples of two-generation programs show promise and potential. I am interested to hear your thoughts and reactions. Can we make  $1 + 1 = 3$ ? How is your organization thinking about your work through a two-generation lens?

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*Please keep an eye out for more information from PeerTA on an OFA webinar upcoming in May: “Breaking the Poverty Cycle and Opening Doors to Opportunity for TANF Families: Developing a Two-Generation Approach”.*