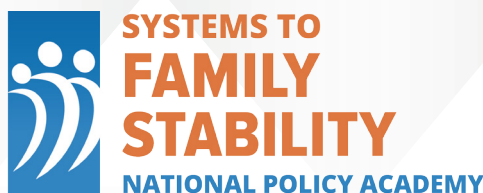




ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE
An Office of the Administration for Children & Families



Developing Whole Family Approaches in TANF Programs



Lessons Learned from the Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy

Acknowledgement

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Introduction

Researchers over the past decade have focused more on how low education levels, limited employment, and poverty among parents impact child development.¹ As awareness grows that these factors effect intergenerational poverty, state and local human service programs are delivering more services and support to parents (custodial and noncustodial) and children together.²

Workforce, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), child care, and early education systems are also testing whole family approaches. Their vision is to help parents attain economic stability while fostering children's healthy growth so families can achieve self-sufficiency. This brief shares insights from three Office of Family Assistance (OFA) Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy (Policy Academy or Academy) state TANF teams that designed whole family approaches.*

Serving All Members of the Family Together

A whole family approach focuses on parent and child needs together. It views their stability as intertwined and mutually reinforcing.³ Some states describe a whole family approach as multi-generation or two-generation.

Many suggest this approach requires several service components, including:⁴

- High-quality early childhood care/education.
- Education and employment training.
- Work supports for parents.
- Health and mental health care for parents and children.
- Economic supports including housing and transportation assistance.

Researchers find that delivering these services in an integrated way takes teamwork between service providers who primarily focus on children *or* adults.⁵

Lessons from Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy Teams

Teams from Connecticut, Utah, and Washington focused on whole family approaches during OFA's 2015-2016 18-month Academy. They hoped to improve case management practices, boost outcomes for children, and foster long-term economic self-sufficiency for families. While unique, the teams' approaches were all created using several common strategies:

- Create your coalition.
- Develop service partnerships.
- Pilot your approach.
- Enhance and expand service delivery.
- Build your staff capacity to apply and sustain a whole family approach.

Below is an overview of each team's Academy work related to whole family approaches. It is followed by team takeaways and experiences designing and implementing them.



Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS) (*state-administered*): Developed a whole family approach to include non-custodial parents (NCPs). DSS's pilot program for NCPs and their children combines early childhood and fatherhood programming.



Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS) (*state-administered*): Drawing from a three-cohort whole family pilot, staff built capacity across the TANF program to apply whole family approaches and family-focused case management.



Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) (*state-administered*): Supported local Community Service Offices (CSOs) in piloting whole family approaches. They also provided trauma-informed interventions and a plan to effect statewide TANF case management change.

*To learn more about the Policy Academy, see Appendix A. To read a companion brief on coaching and motivational interviewing practices, visit: <https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/content/establishing-coaching-and-motivational-interviewing-practices-tanf-programs>

Create Your Coalition

Academy teams created interdisciplinary coalitions of leaders from across government to integrate services for adults and children. Coalition members work in areas such as early childhood education and workforce development. They teamed to create systems to support their whole family work.

Connecticut

Prior to the Policy Academy, Connecticut formed the interagency Two-Generational Policy Work Group. The group explored integrated family services. The coalition created a simple vision: to foster parents' career success through education and training, and support children's school readiness through early childhood education.

State lawmakers quickly supported this core message. They passed a law supporting six whole family pilots. The law also formalized a two-generation implementation coalition (Figure 1).⁶ It created an Interagency Working Group that included the Department of Social Services (DSS).

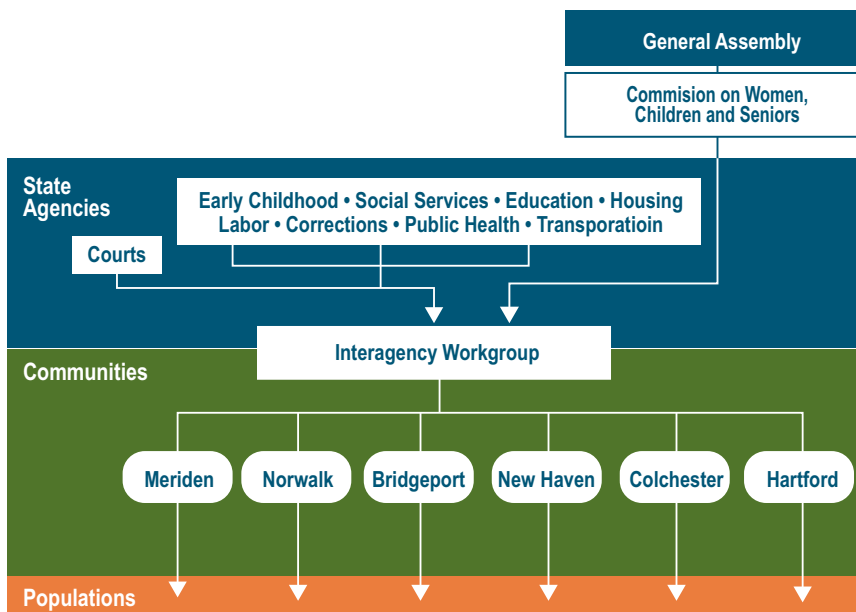
DSS saw the new law as a chance to integrate Connecticut's Fatherhood Initiative into the whole family approach. DSS used the state two-generation coalition as a model to create a diverse Policy Academy team to champion its approach. The team included each government branch: early childhood education, TANF, child support enforcement, the legislature's Commission on Children, and the United Way. It also adopted a simple message. To maximize resources for children, Connecticut needed to focus on both parents' economic situations and parenting skills. This message resonated with lawmakers, who changed the state's two-generation law to include non-custodial parents (NCPs) in pilot services. The DSS-led Policy Academy team then developed its own pilot focused on NCPs and their children.

Tips on Creating Your Coalition

- Build a broad, interdisciplinary coalition across government branches and agencies.
- Establish a shared vision and goals across the coalition.
- Identify a lead agency to champion the group.
- Develop a simple, strong message to use with internal and external stakeholders.



Figure 1: Leadership Structure for Connecticut's Legislative Pilots



Utah

Like Connecticut, Utah passed two-generation legislation prior to the Policy Academy. Utah's law aimed to reduce intergenerational poverty. It created an Intergenerational Welfare Reform Commission that included:

- The Department of Workforce Services, which leads the Commission and oversees Utah's TANF program.
- The Department of Health.
- The Department of Human Services.
- The State Office of Education.
- The State Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- The State Juvenile Court Administrator.

Washington

Unlike Utah and Connecticut, Washington's exploration of whole family approaches was initiated by its TANF agency, DSHS. Through the Policy Academy, DSHS partnered with the state's early learning and child support agencies. DSHS encouraged local CSOs to create their own coalitions through local piloting efforts. DSHS is identifying its promising practices across CSO pilots. It will use their outcomes to garner support for and establish a whole family coalition.

Tips on Developing Service Partnerships

- Map current and potential community partners that meet both children's and parents' needs.
- Leverage networks to conduct outreach to potential partners.
- Convene meetings with all partners to build a partnership framework.
- Develop systems, relationships, and defined partner roles that back effective teamwork and shared accountability.



Develop Service Partnerships

Families need many diverse services to achieve self-sufficiency. Providing them requires a broad partner network. Social services must combine with economic self-sufficiency supports and resources for healthy child development. Relationships among service providers must be carefully developed, maintained, and strengthened.

Utah

Utah's two-generation pilot, Next Generation Kids (NGK), was created before the Policy Academy. It relies on extensive partnerships to serve families. In creating NGK, Utah's DWS focused on building relationships with community service providers. It also leveraged existing systems and supports to holistically serve families.

DWS partners with school districts, Head Start, Child Protective Services, and health, mental health, and housing agencies in the three communities where NGK operates. These partnerships give NGK staff added expertise and resources to serve families experiencing intergenerational poverty. School districts are especially helpful. They help staff to monitor children's academic performance and support families.

Washington

In Washington, new service partnerships were key in piloting whole family approaches. Like many Washington CSOs, Moses Lake identified and connected to a small group of "core" partners early on. Through networking, the group quickly grew. Initially, Moses Lake hosted bi-weekly partner meetings to discuss service processes and family progress. These meetings stopped due to scheduling conflicts. However, the partnership processes and relationships formed during the meetings remained. With no formal meetings, collaborative case management was integrated into daily practice. Moses Lake staff worked with partners by phone to quickly coordinate services for TANF participants and their families.

Connecticut

Connecticut's DSS focused on service partners that could help strengthen the connection between NCPs and their children. DSS knew that its core partners must include an early childhood education provider and a fatherhood program. The team searched for an organization that offered these services near a strong, local

Figure 2: Pilot Process for Identifying & Engaging Children, Custodial Parents, and NCPs



DSS agency with child support and TANF staff. They chose New Opportunities, a community action agency, in Waterbury, Connecticut. New Opportunities has both an early childhood center and a fatherhood program. New Opportunities and DSS added local philanthropic partners and job programs to their service network. The group meets regularly to discuss partner roles and responsibilities, which are put in contracts. The partners have also outlined a referral pathway (Figure 2). They will use it to recruit NCPs whose children attend New Opportunities' early childhood center.

Pilot Your Approach

Piloting helps providers develop new service approaches. It allows for quick testing on a small scale with minimal investment. It is particularly useful in exploring whole family approaches. These approaches must be carefully tailored to communities' systems, assets, and needs.

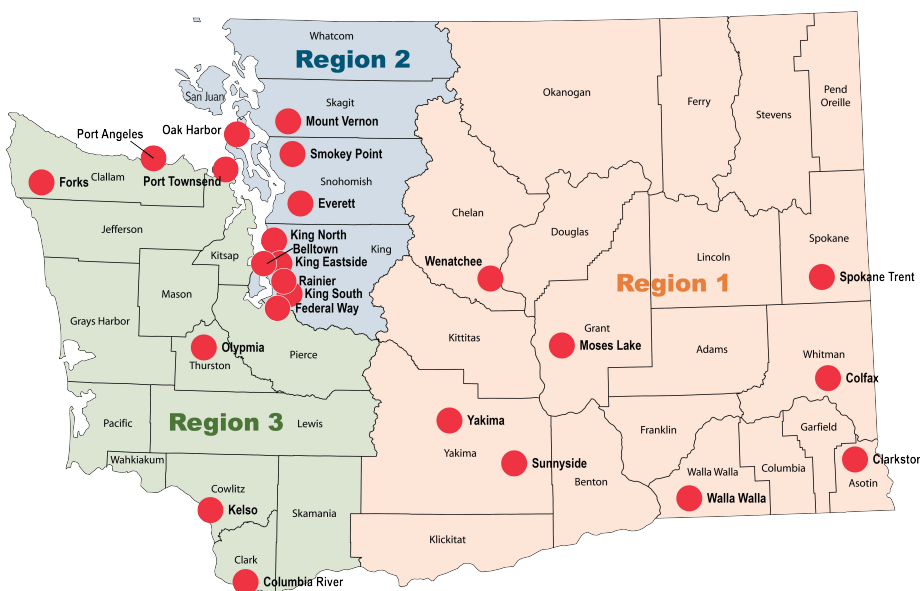
Washington

The National Policy Academy technical assistance model inspired Washington's Policy Academy team. The team used the model to offer coaching and peer learning to local agencies seeking to pilot whole family and other new approaches (Appendix A).

DSHS invited CSOs to propose 12-month pilots tailored for their communities. No additional funding was offered to support pilots. CSO staff were driven by the chance to create their own pilot designs. Sixteen pilots were approved across 25 sites (locations shown in Figure 3). Several featured whole family approaches.

After selection, CSOs prepared roadmaps or logic models for their pilots. The CSOs were assigned state-level coaches who helped them maintain and update their roadmaps during the pilot. Throughout implementation, CSOs engaged in rapid-cycle learning. This helped CSOs to quickly identify and make needed changes to their pilots.⁷

Figure 3: Washington Pilot Site Locations



Tips on Piloting Your Approach

- Tailor approach to community contexts.
- Engage staff in pilot design.
- Develop a theory of change and logic model.
- Consider rapid-cycle learning to make timely adjustments to service delivery.



Connecticut

Connecticut's Policy Academy team also purposely engaged local staff in pilot design. It invited staff from DSS and Connecticut's government branches to brainstorming sessions. The sessions got staff to think about how whole family approaches could improve child well-being in their programs. Programs included TANF, child support, fatherhood, and early childhood. The sessions also helped to secure DSS staff and other stakeholders' buy-in.

Utah

Like Washington and Connecticut, Utah's DWS ensured that its NGK pilot reflected the community context. DWS leveraged its experience serving low-income Utah families to create a NGK logic model. The model addresses education, family economic stability, and health. Model indicators are shown in Figure 4 below. Utah's evaluation partner, the University of Utah's Social Research Institute, provided rapid-cycle feedback during implementation. This helped the Utah team to make pilot adjustments. It also provided insight into additional staff training needs.

Tips on Enhancing and Expanding Service Delivery

- Prioritize relationship building between case managers and TANF participants.
- Use a comprehensive family assessment tool and service plan template that addresses health, employment, education, and social capital.
- Leverage service partnerships to serve families more holistically and efficiently.
- Identify and track whole family outcomes.



Enhance and Expand Service Delivery

Shifting how staff and TANF participants interact is important for whole family implementation. Policy Academy teams prioritized building relationships and trust with TANF participants. Participants who trusted their case managers shared more information about their families. Teams then used enhanced assessments, service planning, and partnerships to expand services to the whole family.

Utah

DWS adopted a comprehensive family assessment tool for NGK families. Components of it were used to enhance an existing individual assessment to gather information on the family. Results are used to create a comprehensive service plan that includes early childhood development, education, family economic stability, and health services. These services are coordinated by a family coach. They are delivered in community centers, schools, and families' homes. This minimizes time that families spend identifying, applying for, and securing services.

The child well-being indicators identified for NGK are shown in Figure 4. They include youth education, adult employment, and family health measures. Utah determined that this blend of youth academic achievement, family economic stability, and health results in childhood and lifelong well-being. DWS and the Social Research Institute track these indicators across service providers.

Washington

Washington's Moses Lake CSO and other pilot sites also created assessment tools. These tools centered on assets and barriers of TANF participants and their families. They used assessments to prepare service plans that addressed core issues. Such issues include housing, child care, transportation, health, social support, education, and employment.

Figure 4: Utah's Whole Family Child Well-being Indicators



To deliver services outlined in families' plans, CSOs adopted practices such as whole family case management and interagency joint case staffing. The Columbia River CSO used whole family case management (offering supports to multiple family members), supported by joint case staffing and home visits. In Wenatchee, the CSO adopted whole family coaching and is working to develop partnerships with local schools. In Spokane Trent, the CSO developed a multifaceted case management approach targeting 18 to 24-year-old young parents. They offered age appropriate employment and educational referrals, financial literacy supports, and life skills training. They also offered peer support groups for young parents to build social capital and enhance parenting skills.

Partners helped CSOs deliver family services more efficiently. Moses Lake engaged in interagency joint case staffing with its network of service partners. Staff often linked families with needed services by a phone call to a partner agency. Case managers gradually empowered parents to make calls themselves. Staff remained in the room to offer support. Ultimately, Moses Lake secured a co-located, dedicated child care agency specialist. This person served as an on-site point of contact for eligibility approval and child care provider matching.

Build Staff Capacity to Implement and Sustain a Whole Family Approach

Staff who implement a whole family approach must be armed with tools and training to enhance the way they work with TANF participants and their families. Tools should build their understanding of and relationships with the families they serve. Staff also must learn how to assess and address the whole family's needs, including children. Prior to and during whole family approach implementation, Policy Academy teams spent much time and resources training and supporting staff in implementing new strategies.

Utah

In piloting NGK, DWS aimed to improve outcomes for participating families. They also hoped to identify effective whole family approaches that could be applied across Utah's TANF program. This drive to use scalable, evidence-informed strategies and tools drew Utah to the Policy Academy and helped DWS add key NGK practices to Utah's TANF case management model. Through NGK, Utah learned that two practices were most effective in a whole family approach: motivational interviewing and family-focused case management. Utah could not afford to scale NGK statewide. But by using NGK as a lab, it identified the most impactful practices. These sustainable practices could be extended to help improve all TANF participant outcomes.

Utah created and implemented a robust training program, the Family Employment Program Refocus Academy. Designed during the Policy Academy, the program trains TANF staff to apply motivational interviewing and family-focused case management. It trained supervisors to support and foster these new practices and further embed their philosophies into the organization. A work group prepared a curriculum, content, supporting materials, and a training evaluation plan. The Refocus Academy began in February 2016. Staff delivered six courses on motivational interviewing and family-focused case management. Courses were held at nine locations over 10 months (see Figure 5). In early 2017 the Refocus Academy offered courses on executive functioning, the cognitive processes underlying time management, multi-tasking, and other functions, and trauma. Utah plans to continue to develop and deliver new training through the Refocus Academy to TANF and other DWS programs.

Tips on Building Staff Capacity to Implement and Sustain a Whole Family Approach

- Deepen staff understanding of the families they serve.
- Provide extensive and ongoing training in new policies, practices, and programs.
- Equip staff with cheat sheets, resource guides, and other tools to support better implementation.
- Consistently communicate with staff about piloting efforts through progress reports, success stories, and upcoming changes.

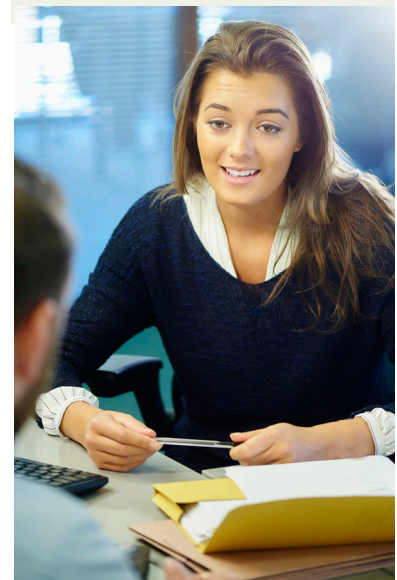
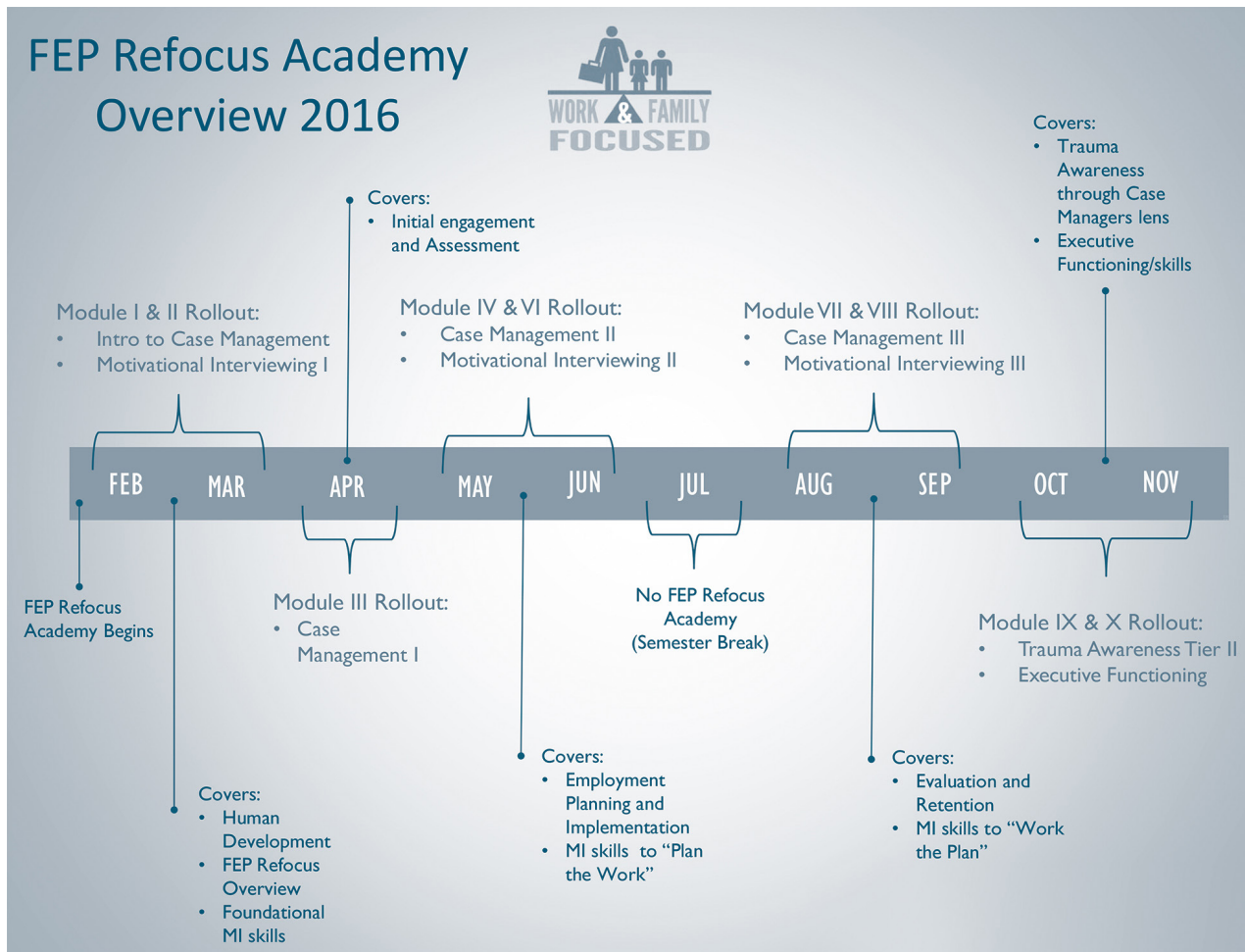


Figure 5: Family Employment Program Refocus Academy Timeline



Washington

Washington provided Neuroscience, Epigenetics, Adverse Childhood Experience and Resilience (NEAR) training early on across many pilot sites. Staff learned how chronic adversity can impact functioning in all areas of life. The training changed many staff perceptions of TANF participant behaviors. It also helped staff to work better with families. Follow-up sessions supported staff in applying their training in their home offices, and like Utah, helped embed new concepts into organizational cultures. Washington's local administrators built on this base to train staff on pilot-specific tools and procedures. At Moses Lake and other CSOs, staff received training and resources, such as cheat sheets to support implementation. Ongoing staff support and engagement played a key role in sustaining staff buy-in for Washington's whole family pilots. The pilots required major changes in staff roles and agency procedures. Communicating pilot successes to staff and keeping them linked to the statewide piloting vision helped Washington maintain motivation and momentum.

Conclusion

During the Academy, the Connecticut, Utah, and Washington teams began to plan for, implement, and refine whole family approaches. Their goal was to improve outcomes for TANF participants and their families. Though their contexts and specific priorities varied, teams shared several common approaches. Others may also consider these when applying whole family approaches (Figure 6). If you are interested in applying whole family approaches in your program, OFA's PeerTA Network can help. To request technical assistance, visit: <https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/request-technical-assistance>.

Figure 6: Summary Takeaways from Academy Teams Designing and Implementing Whole Family Approaches

Create Your Coalition

- Build a broad, interdisciplinary coalition across government branches and agencies.
- Establish a shared vision and goals across the coalition.
- Identify a lead agency to champion the group.
- Develop a simple, strong message to use with internal and external stakeholders.

Develop Service Partnerships

- Map current and potential community partners that meet both children's and parents' needs.
- Leverage networks to conduct outreach to potential partners.
- Convene meetings with all partners to build a partnership framework.
- Develop systems, relationships, and defined partner roles that back effective teamwork and shared accountability.

Pilot Your Approach

- Tailor approach to community contexts.
- Engage staff in pilot design.
- Develop a theory of change and logic model.
- Consider rapid-cycle learning to make timely adjustments to service delivery.

Enhance and Expand Service Delivery

- Prioritize relationship building between case managers and TANF participants.
- Use a comprehensive family assessment tool and service plan template that addresses health, employment, education, and social capital.
- Leverage service partnerships to serve families more holistically and efficiently.
- Identify and track whole family outcomes.

Build Staff Capacity to Implement and Sustain a Whole Family Approach

- Deepen staff understanding of the families they serve.
- Provide extensive and ongoing training in new policies, practices, and programs.
- Equip staff with cheat sheets, resource guides, and other tools to support better implementation.
- Consistently communicate with staff about piloting efforts through progress reports, success stories, and upcoming changes.

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Appendix A: An Overview of the Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy

The 2015-2016 Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy (Policy Academy or Academy) was an 18-month initiative. It was sponsored by Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance (OFA). During the Academy, eight state and local teams designed and built systems to improve family economic security. The Policy Academy supported teams in:

- Aligning TANF and workforce systems.
- Improving business processes and system coordination.
- Enhancing case management through coaching, MI, and whole family approaches.

Support was grounded in implementation science principles¹ and evidence-based technical assistance (TA)² (Figure A-1).

In March 2015, OFA invited state, territory, and local TANF agencies to participate in the Academy. The Academy offered a timely chance for teams to reassess their programs. It also helped programs create approaches that build on new knowledge and opportunities. OFA received 23 applications from state and local agencies. Following a rigorous selection process, Colorado; Connecticut; Maryland; North Carolina; Ramsey County, Minnesota; Utah; Washington; and West Virginia were selected. Selection factors included organizational capacity, previous work toward intended goals, proposed approaches, and potential challenges.

The Policy Academy Approach

A Policy Academy is a strategic, intensive long-term TA approach. It focuses on leading change in human service systems. Academies provide an innovative and exciting process for state and community teams. They help teams create and build infrastructure for systems change and design new or improved policies. OFA has used the Academy model before in its Urban Partnerships (<https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/ofa-initiative/100>) and Rural Communities Initiatives (<https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/ofa-initiative/99>). Academies often offer dedicated coaching staff for each team. They also offer support from experts, individualized TA, peer exchanges, and intensive, in-person retreats. The model encourages programs to build strong collaborative teams to implement desired change. Participating teams often assign a team lead to garner buy-in from stakeholders and guide action plan development.

Systems to Family Stability TA Delivery and Timeline

Adhering closely to the Policy Academy model, this Academy included two in-person retreats. It offered in-person and virtual site exchanges, and webinars. It also provided team-specific print materials through an online resource hub (Figure A-2). Each team was supported by dedicated coaches. Coaches were experienced training and technical assistance providers with deep knowledge in state and local human service systems, TANF, workforce development, and business process improvement.

Dedicated Coaching

Coaches helped teams assess their readiness for change by completing readiness assessments with each team. These assessments asked teams about their exploration activities, justification for their Academy focus, existing organizational capacities, and proposed implementation activities. Coaches worked with teams to develop logic models to identify short and long-term goals. Coaches also supported creation of detailed strategic action plans. Coaches met virtually with teams monthly to refine and update action plans. They also discussed implementation challenges, and connected teams with expert consultants and peer teams.

Figure A-1: Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy Framework

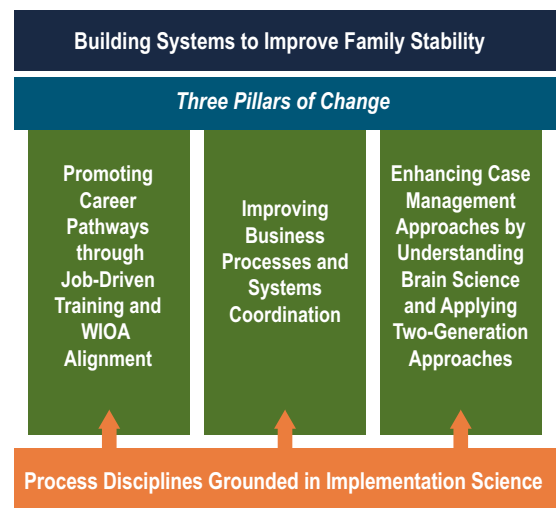
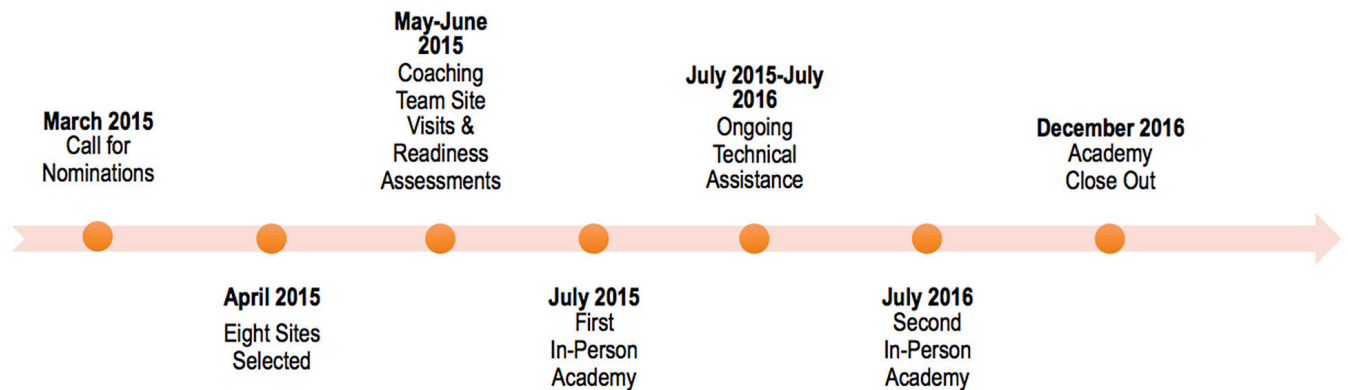


Figure A-2: Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy Timeline



In-Person Retreats

In July 2015, OFA hosted the first of two in-person Academy retreats. During the first retreat, teams continued to build their logic models and strategic action plans. Participants had access to Academy faculty with wide expertise to support team planning. Faculty provided learning opportunities through presentations and one-on-one TA as teams built their action plans. Faculty were also available throughout the Academy. They offered specialized in-person and virtual TA. In July 2016, teams met again to share progress. They reflected on their work, and mapped out future plans.

Expert Consultations

Sites received 21 expert consultations during the Academy. They included TA on:

- Rapid cycle learning and evaluation.
- Measuring success in whole family approaches.
- Using labor market information.
- Building organizational capacity.

Coaches developed specific products for teams. This helped to share information with team's stakeholder audiences, implement specific action steps, or connect with promising practices. These products ranged from infographics to customized curricula, promising practice abstracts, and instructional videos.

Systems to Family Stability TA Delivery by the Numbers

- 2** In-person All Team Retreats
- 5** Site Exchanges
- 17** Coaching Site Visits
- 5** Academy-Specific Webinars
- 22** Products Developed
- 21** Expert Consultant Engagements

Peer Exchanges

Coaches also facilitated virtual and in-person site exchanges between teams to advance dialogue and learning across similarly situated teams. Exchange topics ranged from whole family approaches and child support system engagement to motivational interviewing and staff training. Exchanges were further supported by five all-team virtual exchanges. This allowed teams chances to share progress, facilitators, and challenges.

Other Information Sharing

Teams also joined in five Academy-specific webinars, which matched teams' interests and implementation stages. Early topics focused on asset mapping and logic models. Later webinars addressed staff training and whole family assessments. OFA also created a Resource Hub (<https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/ofa-initiative/388>) on the OFA Peer TA Network (<https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov>) for Academy teams to access new and relevant literature and research. Coaching teams also distributed email alerts to teams sharing abstracts from relevant resources. Topics included: career pathways, community partnerships, and disconnected youth.

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