



A Two-Generation Approach to Ending Poverty in Utah

The research is clear that poverty is the single greatest threat to a child's well-being. Children who grow up in poverty are more likely to be poor as adults, while those who grow up in more affluent families are more likely to be affluent later in life. While even a few years in poverty can have a significant impact on children's economic trajectories, the risks are particularly severe for those who experience many years of poverty.

Voices for Utah Children worked with Senator S. Reid (R) to pass S.B. 37 Intergenerational Poverty Mitigation Act in the 2012 General Session of the Utah State Legislature. The legislation required the Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS) to establish and maintain a system to track intergenerational poverty-related data to identify at-risk children and other groups, identify trends, and to assist case workers, social scientists, and government officials to study and develop plans and programs to help individuals and families break the cycle of poverty.

Following passage of the legislation, Voices for Utah Children began working with DWS to help define the data that would be included in their first report which was released in September 2012.

Currently Utah is the only state in the nation that requires the gathering of data through the establishment and maintenance of a system to track intergenerational poverty.

Voices for Utah Children continued working with Senator Reid to draft follow-up legislation, S.B. 53 Intergenerational Welfare Reform for the 2013 General Session. The legislation, which passed unanimously and was signed by the governor, created an Intergenerational Poverty Commission and an eleven member Intergenerational Poverty Advisory Committee.

The Commission is made up of the Executive Directors of the state agencies serving Utah families — the Departments of Workforce Services, Health, and Human Services; the Superintendent of the State Office of Education; the state juvenile court administrator; and the chair of the Intergenerational Poverty Advisory Committee. The purpose of

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the Commission is to collaborate in sharing and analyzing data and information regarding intergenerational poverty and use this information to implement data-driven policies and programs addressing “poverty, public assistance, education, and other areas as needed to measurably reduce the incidence of children in the state who remain in the cycle of poverty and welfare dependency as they become adults.” (S.B. 53)

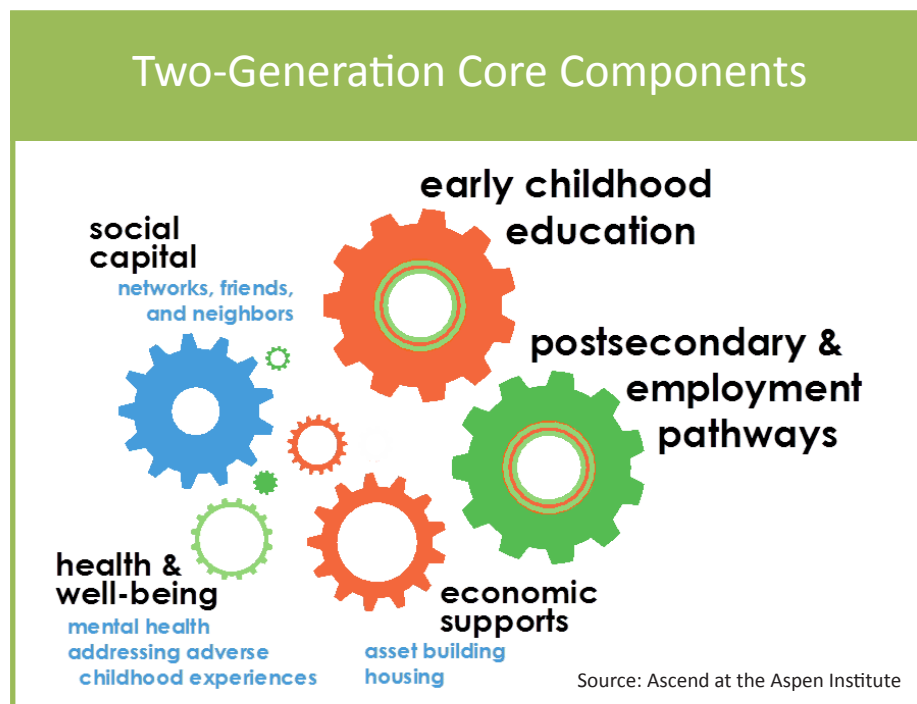
The Intergenerational Poverty Advisory Committee includes representatives from advocacy groups, academic experts, faith-based organizations and local government representatives. The role of the Advisory Committee is to formulate recommendations for consideration by the Commission. Voices for Utah Children serves as a member of the Committee. S.B. 53 also requires the creation of five and ten-year plans, which are to be updated annually, and that contain measurable goals and benchmarks for decreasing the incidence of intergenerational poverty among children in Utah.

NEXT GENERATION KIDS PILOT PROGRAM

There is considerable evidence that children and parents do better when they both have every opportunity to succeed. In response to S.B. 37, DWS is in the process of implementing a pilot program to reduce “intergenerational welfare dependency.”

Utah’s Family Employment Program (FEP) has historically focused on employment goals. The NEXT GENERATION KIDS pilot will focus on the entire family by assisting parents with employment and intensive services that benefit everyone. The pilot project will target families with children twelve years and younger who have received financial assistance through FEP anytime during the last twelve months.

Recognizing that a two-generation approach has been shown to be the most effective method, the pilot will involve a whole-family service provision. Individualized services will be offered to parents and children to eliminate barriers to work and health care and also address other facets of self-sufficiency.



NEXT GENERATION KIDS STRATEGIES

The Department of Workforce Services is utilizing “Implementation Science” strategies in collaboration with the University of Utah Social Research Institute to increase the likelihood of achieving better outcomes over the long-term. Strategies for the NEXT GENERATION KIDS pilot project include:

- Using an intensive team approach.
- Building relationships through team-engagement with customers.
- Meeting families where they live — schools, community centers, residences.
- Promoting self-determination for families.
- Intensive training for team members.
- Building relationships with community partners and government agencies.
- Incentives for goals achieved.

“A major research finding is that the accident of birth is a primary source of inequality. Families play a powerful role in shaping adult outcomes, but it is not just through transmitting their genes. Parental resources, skills, and abilities matter greatly.”

-James Heckman. Nobel Laureate in Economics. White House Conference 2011

PILOT IMPLEMENTATION SEPTEMBER 1, 2014

The NEXT GENERATIONS KIDS pilot program will be implemented in the urban Ogden area. This first pilot location was selected based on cohort data from the DWS annual Intergenerational Poverty Report, as well as the following reasons:

- The largest concentration of intergenerational welfare dependent families reside in this particular demographic.
- The community is very interested in decreasing the number of families in poverty and assisting parents and children in being more successful in education and employment.
- United Way of Northern Utah has designated this area as one of their Promise Neighborhoods and is committed to helping families in poverty.
- The Ogden School District is interested in partnering with DWS to assist in working with families to decrease poverty and increase education. The District has offered space at an elementary school, which also has an on-site health clinic, to house the pilot program.

DWS also is planning to conduct focus groups with families whose cases were closed during the past twelve months to determine whether administrative barriers led to the closures and how those situations might be better addressed.

OTHER INITIATIVES

On May 1, 2014, the Department of Workforce Services announced STEMLink, a collaborative partnership with the Utah State Board of Education and the STEM Action Center that will provide two separate grant opportunities to develop, implement or expand STEM skills and activities for under-served youth. Both grants will be funded by surplus TANF funds.

STEMLink In-School Grant Opportunity – This grant will provide funding to school districts, individual schools and charter schools for STEM programs and activities in the classroom. Total funding allocated for the grant is \$1,000,000; projects are limited to \$100,000.

STEMLink After-School Grant Opportunity – This grant will provide funding to public and private schools, public or private nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, state offices and agencies, local governments, and Indian tribal governments. The grant is for after school, before school or summer programs for youth in Middle, Junior High and High School. Total funding allocated for this grant is \$5,000,000; projects are limited to \$300,000.

CONCLUSION

Children who grow up in poverty are more likely to be poor as adults, while those who grow up in more affluent families are more likely to be affluent later in life. While even a few years in poverty can have a significant impact on children's economic trajectories, the risks are particularly severe for those who experience many years of poverty. Utah's intergenerational poverty legislation with its emphasis on evidence-based strategies and interventions, was a critical step in creating a framework for the state to develop five and ten-year plans to address poverty.

Voices for Utah Children will continue working to develop strategies with policymakers to reduce poverty and bring the perspective of a two-generation strategy approach to the forefront of the discussion. In addition to serving on the Advisory Committee, Voices for Utah Children is also part of the Research Advisory Subcommittee that will help identify additional information that should be included in future reports. Additions to the 2014 report will include an analysis of Medicaid utilization and contact with child welfare services.

Voices for Utah Children is proud to be a part of the Aspen Institute Ascend Network. The goal of the Aspen Institute Ascend Network is to mobilize empowered two-generation organizations and leaders to influence policy and practice changes that increase economic security, educational success, social capital, and health and well-being for children, parents, and their families.

Learn more at <http://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/network>

