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A new era of family policy in Tennessee begins with two generations | Opinion

Anne Mosle and Marjorie Sims - Sep 20

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We are at a moment in the nation, and in this state, when a paradigm shift is in reach to update ineffective, top-down systems to be more responsive, effective and equitable for all families.

Today, the [American Rescue Plan \(ARP\)](#) provides unprecedented resources to improve the lives of families who are still reeling from COVID-19 and its [economic impact](#) as well as the longstanding inequities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Now Congress is debating a \$3.5 trillion budget resolution which, if passed, will increase these resources even more. Luckily, a bold, pragmatic and proven strategy is already in place that can serve as a model: the two generation, or 2Gen, approach.

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The two generation approach targets families dealing with disparities

For the past 10 years, Ascend at the Aspen Institute has embraced the 2Gen approach to accelerate family prosperity. In our most recent report, the state of the field: two-generation approaches to family well-being, illustrates how the 2Gen mindset can drive forward-thinking, actionable policies that advance economic mobility for all families.

It's a modern approach to governance that invests in the potential of all people across race, gender, ability, income and geography. 2Gen fosters human development and potential, and if done well, will not only allow us to live up to our highest values, but will also yield tangible, pragmatic benefits. It provides a proven blueprint for moving forward.

The 2Gen approach defines well-being holistically, just as parents do. As a mom told us, "Well-being is happy, healthy and safe and family well-being is having a balanced life."

2Gen strategies are shaped by [parents' voices](#) and lived experiences. and meaningfully work with families in five key areas: early development, physical and mental health, postsecondary and employment pathways, economic assets and social capital.

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Advancing racial and gender equity is central to the 2Gen approach. Over the past decade, the 2Gen approach has shown that it is both transformative and practical.



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2Gen leaders and practitioners have wrestled conceptually with what it means to place racial and gender equity at the core of our work. We then applied those big ideas with purpose in pragmatic, tangible ways, from changes to intake forms to increase access to services to shifts in program titles and imagery to attract and welcome more fathers to parenting programs.

In the process, 2Gen leaders have listened and learned a lot about how to support and engage families in ways that foster and unleash their potential for health, wealth, and well-being.



Tennessee's 2 Gen approach is apart of the rebuild

The modern, equity-centered 2Gen approach is being explored, implemented and advanced by the Ascend National Network of over 440 partners across the country, including 9 partners in Tennessee.

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To date, 12 states, including Tennessee, have implemented 2Gen approaches to align and coordinate their agencies, strengthen programmatic supports for families, adopting new models of home visiting and creating effective parent and child supports as states seek more effective and equitable outcomes for children and families.



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The 2Gen approach has provided state agencies with a pragmatic and purpose-driven way to drive equity and well-being by shifting and aligning the gears of early childhood, [K-12 education](#), postsecondary success, [physical and mental health](#), economic as



It's time to place family well-being at the center of our national agenda.

With new resources from ARP and possible additional investments from the budget resolution, we can pursue opportunities on what is actually working and open up a better way of serving parents and children together.

As Tennessee rebuilds, let's make sure parents and families have the tools they need to be unstoppable.



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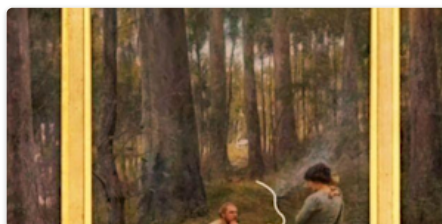
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