

# Two-Generation Strategies in Public Housing:

Promoting Success for the Whole Family



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## Introduction

**F**ragmented service delivery systems and siloed policymaking often fail to produce programs that address the needs of low-income individuals and families holistically, negatively impacting outcomes and resulting in costly inefficiencies. When systems partner, they can better meet these needs and improve life outcomes. Two-generation, or dual-generation, initiatives, which work to address the needs of both parents and children, are examples of effective, collaborative efforts. These strategies strive to simultaneously improve outcomes for low-income children and their parents through the provision of job training, post-secondary education, strengthening parenting capacity and/or economic supports for parents, and high-quality early care and education opportunities for their children. By working with the whole family, multiple challenges can be addressed concurrently, creating a better environment for success.<sup>i</sup>

Many of our nation's most vulnerable children and families reside in public housing. Research shows that housing stability can decrease the risks of bad health and poor educational attainment.<sup>ii</sup> By using housing as a foundation to connect these individuals to other crucial services, we can increase positive educational, economic, and health outcomes. These siloed systems work with the same populations on the same goals; collaboration emphasizing shared resources and coordinated efforts will strengthen and increase impacts across systems. These case studies provide a framework for implementing or replicating promising approaches to use two-generation initiatives specifically with housing authority residents as means to improve life outcomes.

This report features communities in San Antonio, Texas and Durham, North Carolina to examine the key components of two-generation initiatives: social capital; early childhood education; post-secondary education and workforce development; economic assets; and health and well-being. The goal is to achieve progress for financial stability, children meeting developmental milestones, and families able to support and engage in their child's development.<sup>iii</sup>

# Featured Communities



## San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA)

**KEY PARTNERS:** Alamo Community College, Catholic Charities, City of San Antonio, Goodwill, United Way, Workforce Solutions Alamo, San Antonio Independent School District

**2-GEN WORK BEGAN:** 2008

**MAIN FUNDING SOURCE:** Annie E. Casey Foundation, Choice Neighborhood, Promise Neighborhood

**PHILOSOPHY:** "We can't completely change a neighborhood in five years, but we can create the spark to stymie the problems caused by years of disinvestment." – Henrietta Munoz, United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County



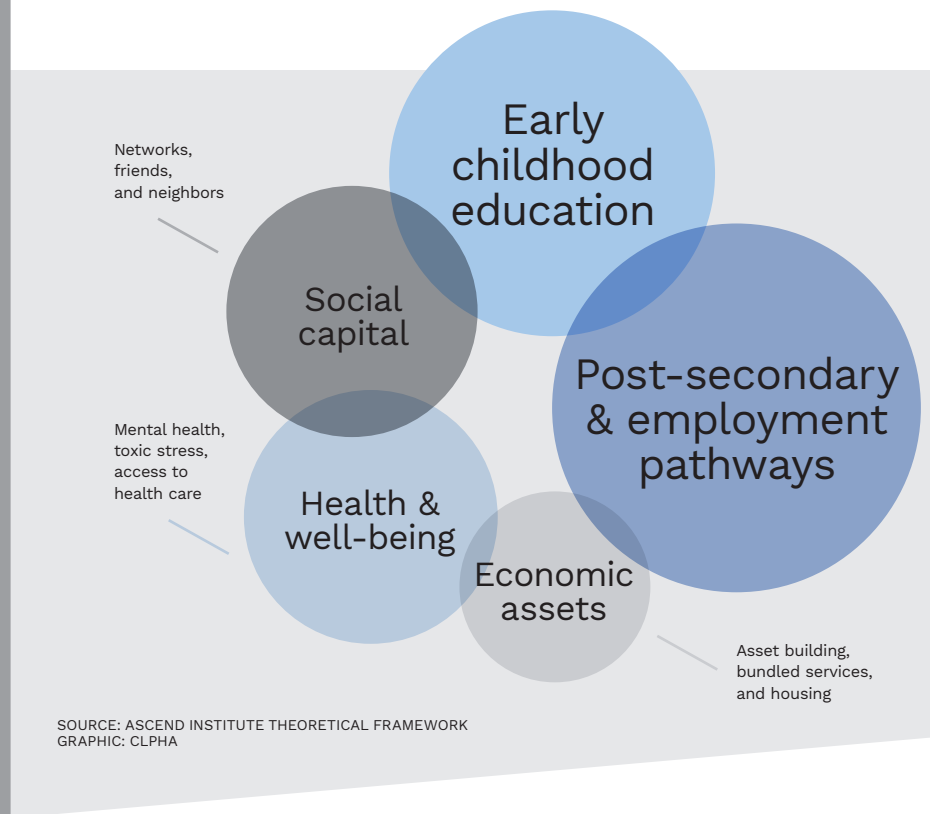
## Durham Housing Authority (DHA)

**KEY PARTNERS:** Kramden Institute, Inc., North Carolina Central University, Duke University, Durham County Health Department, Durham Financial Regional Center

**2-GEN WORK BEGAN:** 2014

**MAIN FUNDING SOURCE:** 21st Century Learning Grant, DHA

**PHILOSOPHY:** "...We think about how do we serve those who are vulnerable, those who are oppressed, those who are in need, those who are at risk, and Durham Housing Authority serves the population that we were founded to serve, and so it makes perfect sense to us to have a strong solid working relationship with them. As we look to bring about true change within the community, we need partners like Durham Housing Authority." – Dionne Moore, North Carolina Central University



## Social Capital

COMPONENTS OF TWO-GENERATION WORK

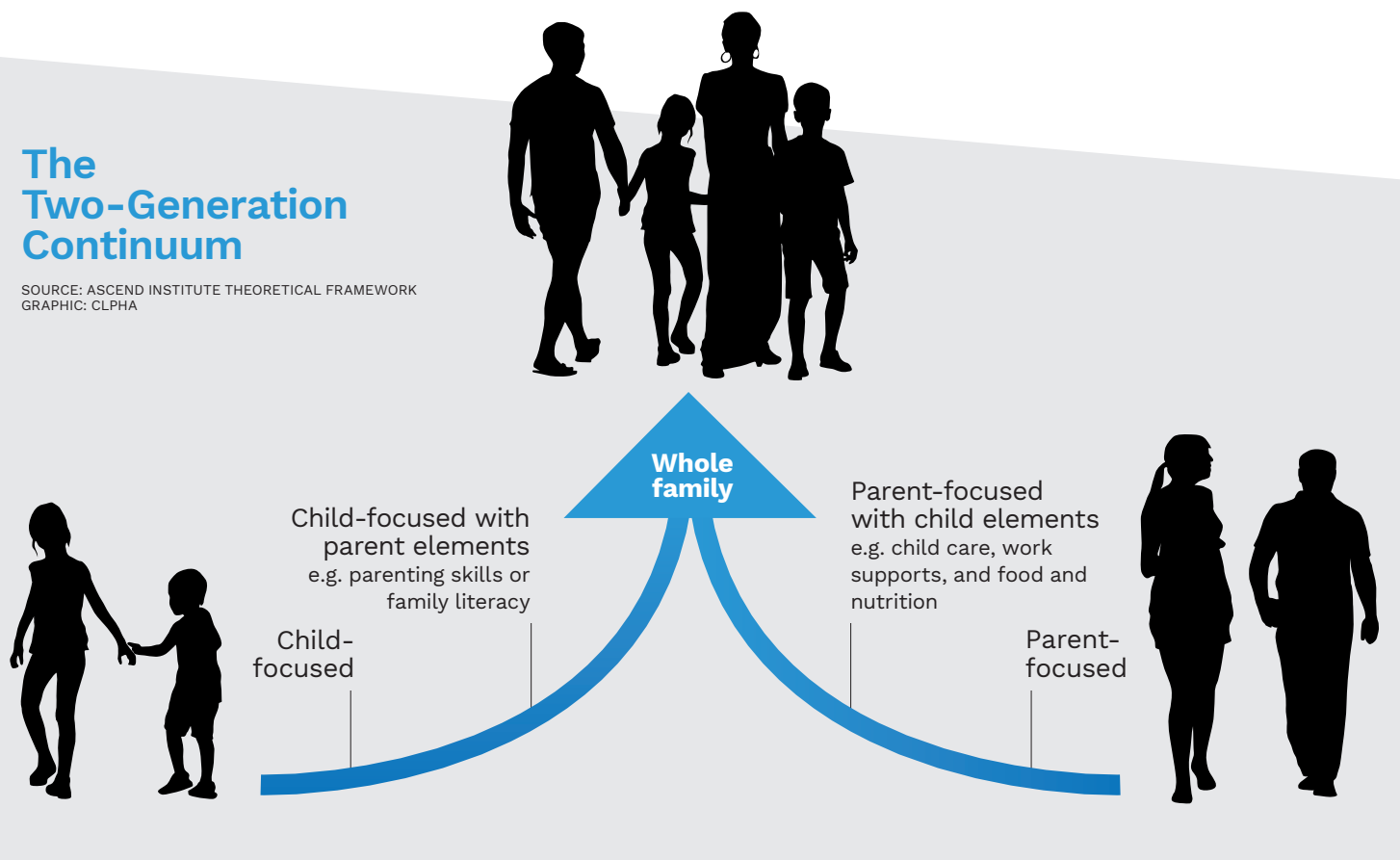
**A**scend at the Aspen Institute defines social capital as the component of dual-generation work that is comprised of peer support and community contacts like family, neighbors, school, workplace, case managers, mental health services, and other social networks. Research shows that social capital increases a family's strength and therefore their ability to move beyond poverty.<sup>iv</sup>

The Durham Housing Authority (DHA) empowers their residents to achieve self-sufficiency through partnerships that enhance social networks and promote peer-learning opportunities. DHA's partnership with the Kramden Institute, a local non-profit that teaches computer literacy, has evolved over time to help program participants become leaders in their communities. The Kramden Institute guides participating DHA residents through a four- or six-week class where they learn essential computer skills. Upon successful completion of the program, participants receive a free refurbished computer. There are clear benefits for DHA residents who complete the program: some have been able to attain scholarships for post-secondary education in engineering, while others used the training to jumpstart careers in the tech industry. The partnership between the Kramden Institute and DHA, however, went further to extend the program benefits to



## The Two-Generation Continuum

SOURCE: ASCEND INSTITUTE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK  
GRAPHIC: CLPHA



teenaged youth. In addition, Kramden's Ambassador program engages DHA residents who complete their computer literacy program to become tutors in their communities. Kramden Ambassadors hold office hours for current Institute enrollees, much like a teaching assistant in a college setting. Ambassadors receive a stipend from Kramden for their work. Kramden Ambassadors are also able to develop skills in public speaking and peer training, and to further develop rapport with tech experts and residents in their community.

One of the San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA)'s main initiatives to work with residents on economic mobility is through the Jobs Plus program. Since this is a program focused on adults ages 18+, when SAHA committed to infusing two-generation concepts into their work, they had to modify this initiative from the traditional Department of Housing and Urban Development model. Today, in addition to helping adults with employment and career pathway development, SAHA is also serving

children ages 0-10. "We're not only serving adults, but ensuring that the children's needs are met and working with them as a family. It's a very, very different way of looking at our program," Aiyana Longoria, Director of the Jobs Plus Program at SAHA said. SAHA changed their focus so employment was no longer the main driver behind their efforts and moved from a workforce program to a "family transformation" program. With this shift, they were able to get more buy-in from residents and, in turn, achieve more success with participation and completion. As with many low-income parents across the U.S., SAHA residents' lack of access to quality childcare was a major barrier to success. Working through the dual-generation lens, SAHA has been able to make referrals and placements at childcare centers that are supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods Initiative that they knew had been designated as quality childcare and were able to ensure their parents received priority access to slots. This helped many families, but the need for quality childcare was immense. To help

**Research shows that social capital increases a family's strength and therefore their ability to move beyond poverty.**

parents focus on goals like employment, parents participating in training through Goodwill—one of SAHA’s partners—receive free childcare. SAHA also worked to cultivate a network of certified family, friends, and neighbors who could provide childcare in their homes, creating spaces for childcare that are close to parents while offering financial benefits for the providers. “This was something that United Way took the lead on to develop for us, but it was extremely beneficial because now there was an alternative to traditional childcare, or emergency childcare for our families that had, say, an interview. We had some place to send them that didn’t require them waiting on a list, or having to go through the rigors of being placed somewhere,” Longoria said. “Because a lot of times when opportunities strike, it happens very quickly.... They have to have a plan and they have to move when that opportunity happens. Being part of this collaboration, being part of that table, really allows us to be a little more nimble.” SAHA is also working with United Way to open a childcare center on-site to ease access for parents and says their two-gen lens “led to very deliberate infrastructure improvements”<sup>iv</sup> like this.

SAHA staff has also worked to improve their collaboration with partners and instead of simply making referrals, they now employ “warm hand-offs,” which are more akin to intense, joint case management than typical phone calls and emails. Longoria explains this approach further: “Being open, being accountable is a huge part of it.... When you are relying on a partner to deliver a service, or your partner is relying on you to provide resume building, soft-skill training, things like that, you really do have to deliver and be accountable for it. There is a level, again, of much more rigor about being involved with your partner with this particular program or looking at it in a dual-gen model.”



## Early-Childhood Education

COMPONENTS OF TWO-GENERATION WORK

**R**esearch has shown that the nation’s youngest children are at highest risk of experiencing poverty,<sup>vi</sup> and that the achievement gap between rich and poor children is not only substantial, but also increasing.<sup>vii</sup> Studies demonstrate that the first five years of life are a time of critical learning because of how the brain develops. Since poor children are disadvantaged from the start compared to their more affluent peers, and since gaps will only widen without action,<sup>ix</sup> it is vital that interventions occur early. Doing so will help decrease the harmful effects of poverty while saving money that otherwise would have been spent on outcomes associated with impoverished youth like benefits for teenage mothers, substance abuse programs, and/or incarceration programs.<sup>x</sup>

Public housing authorities are uniquely positioned to leverage the social supports offered by scattered neighborhood resources. When the Durham non-profit Operation Breakthrough (OB) began utilizing DHA property to deliver its Head Start and self-sufficiency programs to the city, staff were surprised to find that DHA residents were not taking advantage of the opportunity. OB provides free Head Start education to low-income children between 2 and 4 years old, and particularly targets the at-risk child population that DHA serves. The challenge, staff discovered, was based on inconvenience.

↑  
Learning at  
Ella Austin  
Garden in San  
Antonio.

While a DHA family may have enrolled a child in OB's programming, they were often placed in classrooms at other OB campuses instead of the campus located at DHA's Oxford Manor property. "Who wants to have to take their child on a bus at six or seven in the morning all the way across town when you can walk across your neighborhood and then make your way to work or school?" said DHA Education Program Manager Tammy Jacobs. DHA and OB staff addressed the placement mismatch by creating a policy to ensure that DHA children who enrolled in OB were also placed in the location closest to home, thus removing transportation barriers to improve access to early childhood education opportunities.

As part of their two-generation efforts, SAHA knew that interventions for families with children ages 0-5 were especially crucial. "Within this last year and a half, we took an even more laser-focused approach and we're able to better see how much engagement a parent has with their child," said Longoria.<sup>xi</sup> In addition to helping parents have access to quality childcare, SAHA also focuses on family engagement with the approximately 130 families with children ages 0-10 in their household. When thinking about their programs for adults, SAHA first targets these families and tries to convey that they are a "family transformation program." As Longoria puts it, when families join SAHA's Jobs Plus program, they're "actually gaining access to an entire table, a network of partners through our services, so don't let it limit you that you think you're just enrolling with us, you're actually enrolling in something much, much bigger than us." SAHA says this has helped increase enrollment in the program and helped improve family engagement: "Again, when they move into a community and we knock on the door and say 'Hi, we're Jobs Plus,' we don't want them thinking, 'Oh great, I'm going to have to get a job right now or else I'm going to lose my housing.' It's rather more about saying, we can help your children, or we can help you as a family."<sup>xii</sup> SAHA also works with Catholic Charities to provide parenting classes and help prevent interactions with Child Protective Services.



## Post-Secondary and Workforce Development

COMPONENTS OF TWO-GENERATION WORK

**P**artnerships that advance dual-generation programs aim to improve post-secondary education and workforce development opportunities so families may achieve long-term self-sufficiency. The Durham Housing Authority is a part of Durham, North Carolina's esteemed eight-county region known as the Research Triangle. The region is unique because of its high density of colleges and universities, including large public research universities like Duke University and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) like North Carolina Central University (NCCU). Colleges and universities have been recognized as anchor institutions that are "magnets for economic development and serve as engines of urban renaissance."<sup>xiii</sup>

To further their post-secondary education objectives, DHA decided to extend the scope of an implementation grant aimed toward improving high school graduation rates among its residents. DHA staff worked within their communities and local schools to encourage high school students to pursue post-secondary education by conducting college tours in the Research Triangle. After a college tour at Livingstone College, a four-year private HBCU in Salisbury, NC, the school's faculty offered DHA residents the opportunity to apply to Livingstone's summer Bridge & Beyond

↑  
Duke University nursing student holding one-on-one at DHA's Oxford Manor property.

→  
DHA residents taking digital literacy classes taught by Kramden Institute. Upon completion of the classes, they each received a computer to take home.



program. The program offers a second chance for students who did not meet college admissions standards. Six DHA residents participated in the intensive 6-week residential course, and one resident matriculated in the Fall 2013 semester as a first-year college student.

While the initial success of DHA's partnership with Livingstone College was small, the experience inspired staff to seek more opportunities for university-community partnerships. In 2014, DHA began working closely with North Carolina Central University School of Nursing after a student called to enquire about the authority's resident characteristics for a class project. The conversation led to the nursing student sharing her education path with young mothers in DHA's McDougald Terrace community. She and seven of her classmates visited DHA's monthly community resident council meetings. Residents attended the nursing classes for the spring for what became a semester-long session where they discussed personal experiences on pertinent subjects like intimate partner violence and the importance of sexual health and environmental health, and received access to healthcare. Beyond the on-site health sessions, participants were afforded the opportunity to sit in on NCCU Nursing School classes. Additionally, NCCU Nursing students gained academic credit by performing health screenings for any interested public housing residents. At the end of the Spring semester in 2014, DHA awarded six residents with certificates of completion of their participation that they could use when applying for jobs in the healthcare industry. Four of the six graduates continued their learning in a 40-hour, weeklong Peer Support Specialist class funded by DHA. The other two graduates later became peer support specialists at DHA, where they received a stipend for leading the health workshops of which they were once a part. The community health classroom model has now grown in scope to partner Duke University School of Nursing students with residents of DHA's Oxford Manor.



**It's a family transformation program. When families join, they gain access to an entire table, a network of partners through our services. They're enrolling in something much, much bigger than us.**

To help adults achieve self-sufficiency and prepare youth for future endeavors, SAHA offers several initiatives for residents who are looking to improve skills and obtain employment. The housing authority maintains a college scholarship award for graduating youth, as well as returning college students. They also operate a summer youth employment program where households involved in the Jobs Plus or Family Self-Sufficiency program get priority. Adrian Lopez, Director of Community Development Initiatives at SAHA, explains, "If Mom or Dad is enrolled in those programs and are either pursuing their education or in training or working, we give preference to their kids who are applying for the summer youth employment so we can try to

bolster that household even more." For parents, SAHA works with partners to provide the education and training that many residents are looking for. Of the families that SAHA is working with from a specific dual-generation lens, the majority are pursuing their "career pathway," as SAHA puts it, meaning they are working toward a GED or high school diploma or are in training for different industries. One of SAHA's partners, Goodwill, not only provides training to residents, but they also provide childcare so that is not a barrier for parents who wish to gain new skills. Like DHA, SAHA recognizes that transportation is also often a barrier for residents and are working on making many of their partnership opportunities located on housing authority property.



## Economic Assets

COMPONENTS OF TWO-GENERATION WORK

**P**roviding economic supports, including transportation, asset-building, food assistance, and housing is another critical component of dual-generation work.<sup>xiv</sup> With this crucial asset, housing authorities give low-income families the stability they need to be successful in the goals of two-generation efforts.

The economic support of housing is a vital piece of two-generation initiatives and a driving force to engage housing authorities in this work. United Way was interested in partnering with SAHA because “when you think of big societal responsibilities: housing, education, transportation, health are needed to be socially responsible. Housing has to be a part of that. And SAHA has a big footprint in targeted neighborhood areas,” said Henrietta Munoz, Vice President of Grants Research and Evaluation for United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County. Stabilizing families with housing is the critical first step so they can make strides in other areas. By then intersecting housing with other systems like education and health, families can be more successful in their goals.

Collaborating with a coalition of partners also provides a continuum of economic supports. Through their efforts to ensure parents’ and children’s needs are being addressed, such as providing childcare during job training programs, SAHA works with its partners to holistically provide implicit and explicit

economic assets to its residents. Such collaboration becomes even more critical for communities that may not have funding from a federal source like a Choice or Promise Neighborhood grant. San Antonio believes they have been able to expedite their process and outcomes because of this funding stream, but are resolute that other communities can do this work even without such financial support. “There is no doubt our community has benefited because of the influx of federal funding in these neighborhoods, so you can’t dismiss that,” said Munoz. “But, if you don’t have a Promise or Choice or a big federal grant for neighborhood redevelopment, I believe the work can still get done because what we’ve been able to do is compound the federal dollars because of the level of integration. The key components are that you do have to have a leader to champion the work. And then find the right players who want to do place-based work. It’s about a neighborhood and redirecting resources to a neighborhood for a period of time to have a particular outcome.” Despite an increasingly austere federal funding environment, DHA continues to prioritize improving the economic potential of their residents so they may achieve long-term self-sufficiency. Committed partnerships with local institutions, especially institutions of higher learning, have been critical to their efforts. “We have tried to introduce our adult residents in particular to partnerships that they may not have considered otherwise,” said Tammy Jacobs.

Both Durham and San Antonio also recognize the importance of involving residents in the process. For DHA, they solicit feedback from residents and work with partners to see what programs tenants are not utilizing to discern any disconnects, and then better align efforts and eliminate barriers for access. SAHA and United Way agreed that resident voice and agency is a key value and was part of why the initial partnership between the two agencies was a good fit.

↑ Jackie opens the door to her new unit. Stable housing is an economic asset that housing authorities provide.





## Health & Well-Being

COMPONENTS OF TWO-GENERATION WORK

**P**hysical and mental health are also a component of dual-generation work and families' ability to succeed.<sup>xv</sup> For example, over the past several decades, research has shown that low socio-economic status hinders children's development and school-readiness.<sup>xvi</sup> Cognitive, social, and emotional development, as well as environment, all have an effect regardless of socioeconomic status, but low-income children are more at-risk for poor development.<sup>xvii</sup>

Durham Housing Authority's established educational partnership with North Carolina Central University helped a family avoid homelessness and teach valuable life skills. After a few site visits to DHA rental units, an undergraduate in the school's Department of Social Work noticed that some households did not meet DHA property sanitation standards, and were thus at risk for eviction. The student designed a home hygiene workshop as a health intervention to the challenges some DHA residents faced. The workshop, with financial support from a private sector partner, provided cleaning supplies and household organization lessons to families. "For a family on the verge of eviction, [the home hygiene workshop] was a huge deal," said NCCU Director of Field Education and Clinical Instructor Dionne Moore. "Mom could develop these skills, apply these skills, and teach her children how to maintain a clean and tidy home," Moore continued. DHA hopes to further develop their partnership with NCCU's Social Work department to provide more mental health and clinical counselling, as well as involve students in community policing efforts.

In addition to providing social-emotional capital through offerings like case managers, SAHA also works with their partners to better assist residents with physical and emotional health needs. Wheatley Middle School, within the Eastside Promise Neighborhood, coordinates health, mental health and social services, counseling, and other supports to enhance family life by building upon individuals' strengths and skills.

↑ Residents learn at a health fair at the Wheatley Promise Neighborhood in San Antonio.

## Conclusion

**P**ublic housing authorities are uniquely positioned to advance dual-generation approaches for low-income families. Along with ensuring the most vulnerable a place to call home, housing authorities often are strategically engaged in cross-sector partnerships, particularly with education and health organizations, to maximize the impact of social investments for their residents.

While these efforts may not be specifically categorized by housing authorities as two-generation, agencies like the Durham Housing Authority and San Antonio Housing Authority have purposefully integrated the anti-poverty theory so essential to the two-generation approach: that family success is achieved when the needs of both children and parents within a household are considered. SAHA and DHA's efforts of provide insight about the differences in scope and scale of dual-generation approaches. Despite dissimilarities in resources like grant funding and staff time, both agencies have asserted a role as conveners, bringing together local institutions with shared goals in service of low-income families.

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# **Best Practices** for Two-Generation Work



## **Co-location of Services**

Healthcare and educational services—either provided by the housing authority or a partner—that are located within housing authority communities reduce barriers many residents face, such as transportation and childcare, and allow housing authority staff to more readily coordinate with their partners to optimize service provision.

## **Partnerships**

Cost-constrained housing authorities augment the impact of two-generation resident services when they partner with committed organizations that share their values, goals, and responsibilities in service provision. By combining resources and efforts, partners are much more effective. Partners remain engaged and accountable when they employ a “warm hand-off” tactic that emphasizes a teamwork approach to resident success. Many housing authorities benefit from partnering with other anchor institutions such as their school district, library, or university.



## **Strategic Planning**

Housing authorities should work carefully with their partners to cement joint goals and design a plan that identifies specific approaches, data, funding, and expectations in their two-generation work. Strategic planning before service implementation can safeguard against gaps in resources and assure the services provided are the ones residents will utilize.

## **Evaluation**

Ideally, evaluation will be built into the initial plan of action, but partners should—at varying time points—consider if programs should be replicated, scaled, or if changes should be made to initiatives to make them more effective. Evaluation should be through data analysis, as well as input from residents. Having built-in time and resources for evaluation will also likely help with securing future funding while contributing to the knowledge base.



## **Committed Leadership**

Many initiatives benefit greatly from having a key leader, such as the mayor, championing the work. To help maintain efforts, staff must have buy-in, which will also help to institutionalize the efforts and keep them going even if there are staff changes. Frequent communication between partners is also essential.



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