



ANTI-POVERTY PRACTICE
CASE STUDY SERIES

RURAL IMPACT: TWO CASES

Featuring:
Allegany County HRDC
and Family Futures
Downeast

ALLEGANY COUNTY
**HUMAN RESOURCES
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

Family Futures Downeast

Supporting the future of the families of
Downeast Maine

Two Cases of Rural IMPACT

November 2017

This document is intended for use by Community Action Agencies and other CSBG Eligible Entities within the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Network.

Publication Contributors

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Community Action Partnership

The Community Action Partnership is the nonprofit, national membership organization representing the interests of the 1,000+ Community Action Agencies (CAAs) across the country that annually help 15 million low-income Americans achieve economic security. Whether it's a Head Start program, weatherization, job training, housing, nutrition assistance, energy assistance, financial education, or any of the other 40 distinct programs, CAAs work to make America a better place to live.

Learning Community Resources Center (LCRC)

The purpose of the CSBG Learning Community is to analyze Community Action outcomes and identify effective, promising, and innovative practice models that alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty.

The Learning Community, a project of the LCRC, is an opportunity for Community Action Agencies to build capacity to increase impact by:

- Capitalizing on Peer Knowledge and Expertise;
- Creating Effective Strategies; and
- Promoting Promising Practices

The Learning Community is comprised of topical Learning Community Groups (LCGs) which consist of a cadre of agencies that are currently working on a program or service delivery strategy related to each of the LCG focus areas. Learning Community members meet bi-monthly, either virtually or in-person, and assist each other by discussing “what works”, sharing data findings, solving problems, and offering support for implementing new ideas.

The CSBG TTA Resource Center is also a project of the LCRC and serves as a wonderful compliment to **The Learning Community** as it is the “clearinghouse” for a broad array of resources to assist Community Action with its important anti-poverty work. The Resource Center allows for electronic submission of requests for T/TA, ensures the coordination of resources, and allows experts to meet the T/TA needs of the CSBG Network. It hosts a consultant bank; a resource bank which provides a broad array of evidence-based, evidence-informed and exemplary program practice models; a shared calendar; and a discussion forum. A valuable tool, the Resource Bank includes information, toolkits, webinars, articles and other information focused on a full range of services to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities served by the CSBG Network.

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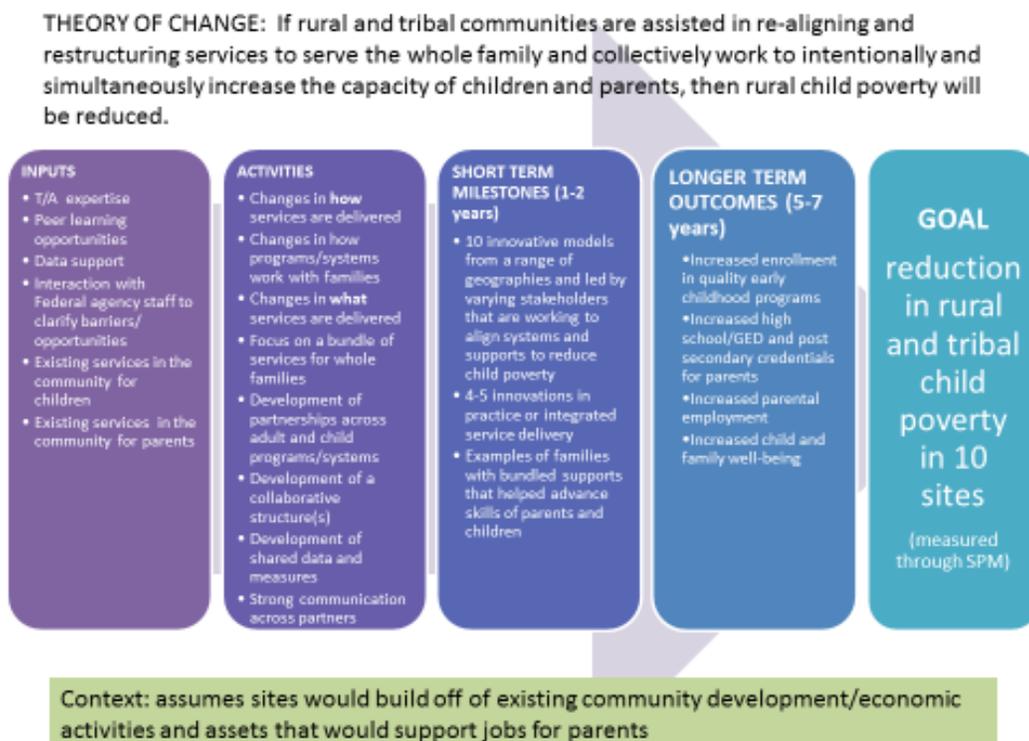
The Learning Community

The Learning Community is comprised of topical Learning Community Groups (LCGs) which consist of a cadre of agencies that are currently working on a program or service delivery strategy related to each of the LCG focus areas. The Rural IMPACT (Integrated Models for Parents and Children to Thrive) LCG is composed of representative agencies from 10 rural communities that are engaged in a collective impact effort to implement two-generation approaches to combat rural childhood poverty and improve outcomes at the community level.

The Rural IMPACT Initiative

In 2015 the federal government, led by the White House Rural Council, launched Rural IMPACT as a part of a broader cross-agency initiative to combat childhood poverty and improve economic mobility for rural and tribal communities. Rural IMPACT was designed as a demonstration project to support 10 rural sites as they develop and test two-generation approaches for serving low-income families in their communities. The planning, design, and implementation of the Rural IMPACT project over the past two years has been guided by this *theory of change*: **if rural and tribal communities are assisted in re-aligning and restructuring services to serve the whole family and collectively work to intentionally and simultaneously increase the capacity of children and parents, then rural child poverty will be reduced.**

A depiction of this Theory of Change is seen below:



Introduction

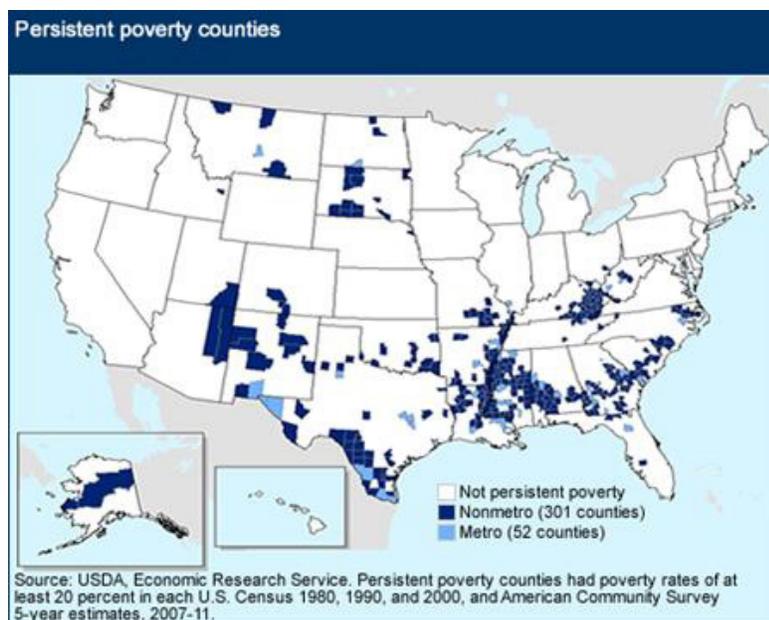
The Problem

Childhood Poverty

In 2015, childhood poverty in the United States had an impact that will carry throughout a lifetime. A wide body of research has demonstrated that individuals who experience poverty at a young age are significantly more likely to face negative outcomes as an adult. These outcomes range across a number of indicators, from education, health employment, and ultimately, economic self-sufficiency. Additionally, the risk of experiencing negative outcomes later in life increases for individuals who are exposed to long durations of poverty at an early age. These difficulties are then passed down to the next generation, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and leading to a phenomenon known as *persistent poverty*.

Persistent Poverty at the Community Level

At the community level, the Economic Research Service (ERS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture defines a *persistent poverty* county as one in which 20% or more of the population has lived in poverty over the last 30 years. In 2015, there were 353 persistently poor counties in the United States. Of those counties, 301, or over 85%, were located in rural America. This means that a rural child is twice as likely as an urban child to live in or near an area of persistent poverty. In these places, the perpetual cycle of poverty goes beyond the individual and family level, as the communities and institutions meant to serve them are challenged with long-term disinvestment, and financial difficulties. Under these conditions the opportunity for economic mobility faces the greatest limitations.



Rural Poverty

What has caused this lag of economic mobility in rural communities compared to the rest of the country? Rural communities often lack the economic and educational structures that create pathways to opportunity. As a result, rural residents are left with few options for employment and education. Furthermore the underdeveloped infrastructure of these sparsely populated counties limits families' access to essential community supports such as transportation, health care, social services, and child care. In the worst circumstances, some rural and tribal communities struggle to meet even the most basic needs of fresh food, clean water, and electricity. These added barriers in rural communities lead to greater physical and social isolation amongst families, further exacerbating the number of challenges that parents already face raising children on a poverty-level incomes. With families navigating this web of complexities in communities that offer few opportunities, it becomes clearer why rural communities are struggling to find pathways toward economic mobility.

The Solution

The Two-Generation Approach

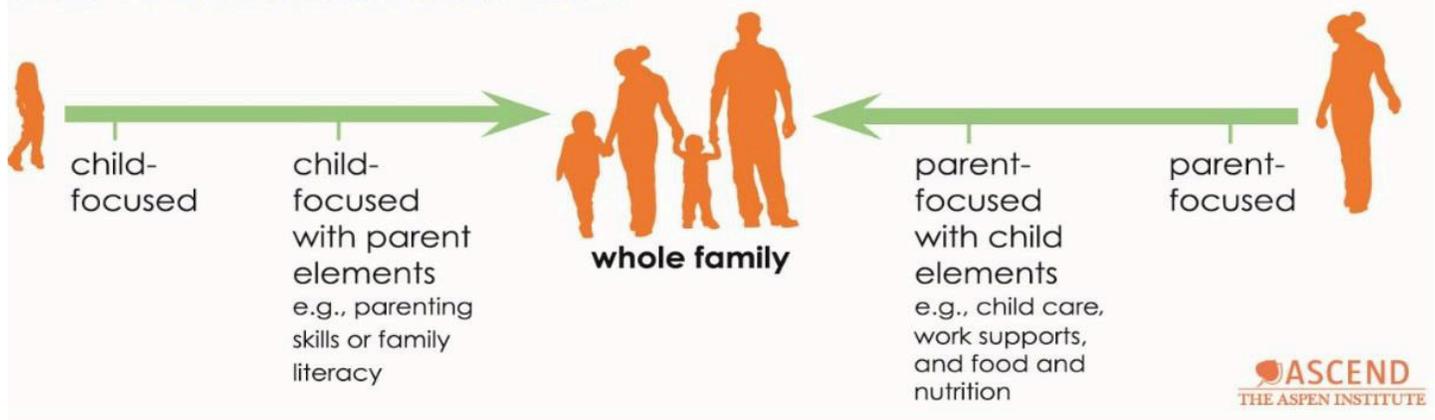
Persistent poverty demands a multi-faceted solution that can penetrate the complex web of barriers preventing rural Americans from the opportunity to achieve economic mobility. There are a number of anti-poverty programs that exist to assist either parents or their children, and taken separately research has documented that these approaches can have promising returns. When children receive high-quality early education, they are more likely to achieve positive outcomes as an adult, and have also been shown to serve as motivators in leading their parents towards educational success. Similarly, parents who obtain a college degree significantly increase their family income over a lifetime, and improve their children's chances for economic mobility. However, research also shows that when these services and programs are offered separately, they show limited returns in moving

families out of poverty. For instance, many postsecondary education and workforce training programs see a significant drop in participation from individual in need of additional supports like transportation and childcare.

“Children cannot be the only change agent in the family... and often times adult education programs have weak outcomes. A two-generation strategy combines these threads to engage children and parents together to build mutual motivation to achieve educational outcomes.”

The two-generation approach is an anti-poverty strategy that utilizes a whole-family framework to provide the necessary supports to serve both children and parents **together**. As stated by the Aspen Institute's Ascend, these necessary supports include, education, economic assets, health and well-being, and social capital. To achieve this, two-generation approaches seek to remove silos and integrate programs, streamline services, and engage families in developing a service delivery models that make sense for both parents and their children. The framework of the two-generation approach is well designed to support rural families as they navigate the numerous barriers that exist in their communities.

The Two-Generation Continuum



Project Overview

Design

In 2015, the disparity between the rural and urban child poverty rate in America had been steadily increasing. At the same time, the body of evidence for the two-generation approach as an effective anti-poverty practice was growing. Within this context, the White House Rural Council and national partners designed the Rural IMPACT initiative, guided by this theory of change: **if rural and tribal communities are assisted in re-aligning and restructuring services to serve the whole family and collectively work to**

intentionally and simultaneously increase the capacity of children and parents, then rural child poverty will be reduced.

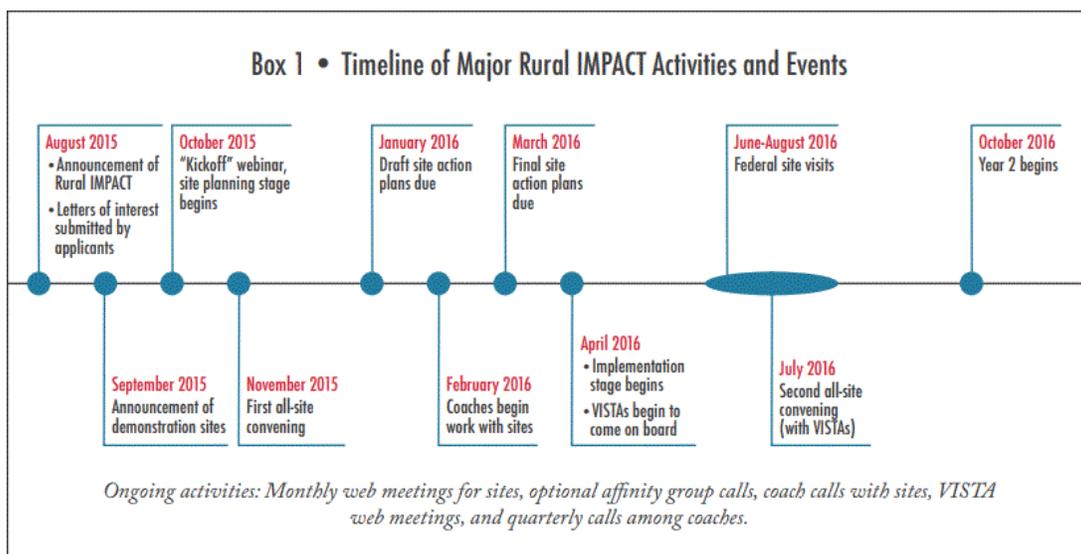
The Rural IMPACT demonstration was designed to provide federal support for community-driven efforts working to create systems change to improve the way low-income families are served at the local level. Federal partners selected 10 rural and tribal communities for the Rural IMPACT demonstration project to develop and test two-generation models that work for rural communities.

Over the course of the project, federal partners provided the 10 sites with intensive training and technical assistance, both separately and as a cohort, as they designed and implemented two-generation approaches in their communities. The training and technical assistance these sites received included the participation in a peer learning network, the Rural IMPACT *Learning Community*, that convened both virtually and in-person to facilitate the sharing of best practices among sites facing similar opportunities and challenges. Additionally each site had the guidance of a subject matter expert to provide customized technical assistance to meet the specific needs of each site. Some sites also received the support of up to two AmeriCorps VISTAs, who helped build local capacity for the implementation of the two-generation projects. Along the way, the sites had access to a federal interagency team that helped to identify and address barriers to cross-programmatic work.

Timeline

Rural IMPACT was initially designed to be a year-long project, divided

into a six-month planning period, and a six-month implementation period. During the course of the project, the implementation period got expanded to run for an additional two years, allowing sites to focus on long-term sustainability and evaluation. The six-month planning period included intensive training and technical assistance with a focus on developing a strong peer learning structure, development of site-specific Action Plans, and access to the nation's top experts and leading two-generation program designers on a range of topics encompassed within two-generation interventions. Following the planning period, the first year included a six-month implementation period, where sites implemented their Action Plans, with the continued guidance of technical assistance from the Rural IMPACT peer learning network, coaches, subject matter experts, and a team of federal partners. Rural IMPACT is now in its third year, and the sites are continuing to implement and test their models, as they aim to formalize an evaluation of the overall project.



Case 1: Family Futures Downeast (FFD)

Background

Family Futures Downeast (FFD) is located in Washington County, Maine: home to 32,000 people, including 3,600 members of the Passamaquoddy Tribe. Washington County is very rural; industry is primarily natural-resource based (e.g., lobsters, blueberries, Christmas wreaths), seasonal, and physically demanding. The overall poverty rate in Washington County is 20%, and the child poverty rate is at 30%. Washington County has the lowest educational attainment in the State, with only 28.5% of residents holding an Associates' degree or higher.

Two-Generation Project

Family Futures Downeast is comprised of seven partnering programs: Washington County Community College, Child and Family Opportunities, Inc., the Community Caring Collaborative, the University of Maine at Machias, Axiom Education and Training Center, the Maine Department of Labor, and the Sunrise County Economic Council, which serves as the fiscal partner. Sunrise County Economic Council also employs the FFD Director and coaches. The seven partners are governed by a single memorandum of understanding and meet monthly as an Advisory Board, which includes two parents from each of two program campuses (Washington County Community College and the University of Maine).

FFD's two-generation approach follows a two-step model of removing barriers and enhancing support for adult and child success. Parents receive campus-based coaching to identify and attain educational and employment goals, and are provided with supportive services like extended childcare, and transportation throughout their participation. As parents attend classes, children receive high-quality childcare through an on-campus Head Start. This is a key intervention, because often times the lack of access to child care prevents families from pursuing higher education.

An initial cohort of 21 families - totaling 71 individuals - was enrolled in the Family Futures Downeast program last year. FFD has capacity to serve up to 32 low-income parents and their children each year. A second cohort of 24 families (67 individuals) is preparing for academic enrollment in the coming year.

The cohort structure of the program helps families provide peer support and build social capital. Each cohort has a private Facebook group, which allows for communication and sharing of rides, babysitting, and resources among the families. Each cohort also has access to a campus family room, where they can bring their children and meet with tutors and coaches. Family meals are provided at the childcare center, to provide space and time for families to gather and share a meal before children transition into the educational program.

Outcomes

Each of the enrolled adults in the first cohort earned a 15-16 credit hour Family Studies Certificate, with only one family missing an academic milestone. Cohort persistence is 85%: equal to that of other students at the University of Maine and higher than the average at Washington County Community College. 10 IMPACT parents are enrolled in Bachelor's programs, 4 are in Associate's programs, and 4 are in certificate programs. 70% of IMPACT students at University of Maine made the Dean's List in the fall semester; 66% did so in the spring. Goals for their children's achievement, including increased language, literacy and access to services, have also been met. In addition, parents are reporting excellent results from the children's programming.

Partnerships have proven to be the backbone of the Maine IMPACT program; the programmatic

contribution of each partner is outlined in the MOU. Partners have helped the program connect with State and Federal agencies, who have worked with FFD to develop their 2-Gen approach, which is now under consideration for adoption statewide.

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Family Independence, has signed a 17-month contract with FFD, which provides 55% of the program budget through a blend of funding from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Education & Training, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), and other sources. This funding supports coaching, early childhood education, barrier removal, clinical supervision, and college transitions. Funding from a private local foundation allows transitional coaching as the initial families move into their second program year.

Case 2: Allegany County Human Resources Development Commission (HRDC)

Background

Alleghany County Human Resources Development Commission, (HRDC) is located in one of the two westernmost rural counties in Maryland. The other, Garrett County, is home to Garrett County Community Action Committee (GCAC), the partner agency to HRDC for the Rural IMPACT initiative. Western Maryland is in the heart of Appalachia, and faces the same challenges that have plagued the

rest of the region - loss of economic opportunity, low educational attainment, outward migration of young people, contracting populations, and increasing opioid addiction. These trends have contributed to a cycle of persistent poverty for the area, with the current poverty rate for the region at 16%, and a child poverty rate of 22%. The poverty rate in the region is 14-16%.

Two-Generation Project

HRDC's two-generation project is a three-pronged approach working to improve outcomes across three channels: macro-economic, community capacity, and families and individuals. At the family level, HRDC's target population is their 315 Head Start and Early Head Start families. HRDC has made efforts to provide core services to families in an integrated manner. Children receive high-quality education and wrap-around services such as health care through Head Start. At the same time parents have access to a coach to guide them through various family economic success services. Coaches work with parents to provide basic financial supports, budget and asset building training, and career pathway planning to map out a plan for economic success.

Much of the programmatic aspects of HRDC's approach had been in place at the agency, before they entered the Rural IMPACT demonstration. During their time on the project they focused their efforts on implementing a Management Information System, called

EmPower, to help facilitate program integration, and better track outcomes, and ultimately better serve families. EmPower allows the tracking of all services provided to a family or child, across programs, and measures and tracks outcomes along the way.

Outcomes

Through EmPower, HRDC has been able to successfully partner with outside community agencies. To capitalize on this success HRDC is working to develop common data standards and data mapping, as well as strategies for reporting from different data systems.

In conjunction with GCAC, HRDC has been able to build on the success of its two-generation efforts, by advancing the approach from a regional to state level. With support from their VISTA and guidance from the subject matter experts, HRDC devised a legislative briefing book, and proposal that resulted in Maryland's Governor issuing an Executive Order to convene a Two-Generation Commission in Maryland.

Conclusion

The Rural IMPACT Learning Community has continued to be a successful initiative for the participating sites, and their efforts to improve family outcomes in their own communities, and for the Community Action and greater social service network as a whole. The initial goal of the Rural IMPACT project, was to demonstrate that two-generation approaches can effectively meet the needs of parents and children, and help to interrupt the trends that lead to cyclical persistent poverty.

What a study of Alleghany Human Resources Development Center and Family Future Downeast's Rural IMPACT demonstration project shows is that two-generation models are successful because they require that the design of the program to be directly responsive to the needs of the community being served. Because of this, the programs developed by FFD and HRDC are not models in themselves, but have provided a framework and a set of best practices for other rural communities to build off and form to meet the specific needs of their own communities. Ultimately, the work of Rural IMPACT to develop two-generation programs that intentional respond to the needs of the communities helps the Community Action Network live up to its promise.

Thank you to our case study participants:

Family Futures Downeast

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<https://www.familyfuturesdowneast.org/>

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Questions? Let us know!

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For More Information

View the Learning with the Learning Community: Rural IMPACT Webinar Presentation

<https://lcrweb.com/2017/03/22/learning-with-the-learning-community-rural-impact/>

Resources Shared From the Rural IMPACT LCG

Community Leadership for 2-Gen Approaches

This brief details the process by which the Community Foundation embarked on its 2Gen efforts, key lessons and challenges that emerged from these efforts, results from 2Gen initiatives throughout the county, and examples of ongoing work.

www.lcrcweb.com/2017/03/16/communityleadership-for-2gen-approaches/

Pediatricians and Anti-Poverty Organizations

This presentation shows different ways that pediatricians can make the link between poverty and child health and how local and state anti-poverty leaders can build alliances with pediatricians.

www.lcrcweb.com/2016/10/04/pediatriciansand-anti-poverty-organizations/

Scaling Up, Scaling Out: Lessons from Goodwill of Central and Southern Indiana and Nurse-Family Partnership

This report summarizes the lessons learned from the partnership between Goodwill of Central and Southern Indiana and the National Service Office of Nurse-Family Partnership as they worked together to expand the reach of their services horizontally and vertically.

www.lcrcweb.com/2017/03/16/scaling-upscaling-out-lessons-from-goodwill-of-centraland-southern-indiana-and-nurse-familypartnership/

Addressing Rural Poverty in Rural IMPACT – A Two Generation Demonstration

This presentation describes the White House Rural Council's Rural IMPACT Demonstration initiative, focusing on what the 10 Demonstration sites have accomplished and the lessons learned about linking services for children and families in a rural context.

www.lcrcweb.com/2016/09/08/addressingrural-poverty-in-rural-impact-a-twogeneration-demonstration/

What Works: Strategies to Improve Rural Health

This report helps communities identify and implement solutions that make it easier for people to be healthy in their neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. The 2016 Rankings include an in-depth examination of the differences in health between rural and urban counties.

www.lcrcweb.com/2017/03/16/what-worksstrategies-to-improve-rural-health/

Building a Two-Generation Approach to Improving Family Economic Security and Well-Being

This workshop offers an overview of the two-gen approach and the growing momentum behind it. Participants will be led through a series of activities, culminating in the development of a two-gen design tailored to their agency.

www.lcrcweb.com/2016/09/08/building-a-twogeneration-approach-to-improving-familyeconomic-security-and-well-being/

Crittenton Women's Union: Coaching for Economic Mobility Brief

This brief serves as a guide to the Mobility Mentoring platform which helps individuals move from poverty to economic independence.

www.lcrcweb.com/2016/08/24/crittendonwomens-union-coaching-for-economicmobility-brief/

Crittenton Women's Union Theory of Change: Bridge to Self Sufficiency

This chart outlines milestones and both short term and long term goals for several different service areas.

www.lcrcweb.com/2016/08/24/crittentonwomens-union-theory-of-change-bridge-to-self-sufficiency/

Making Tomorrow Better Together Brief

This report from the Two-Generation Outcomes Working Group is designed to set a foundation for how practitioners and policymakers consider the intended outcomes of two-generation programs and the pathways to achieve those outcomes.

www.lcrcweb.com/2016/05/26/makingtomorrow-better-together-brief/

Planning and Implementation of the Rural IMPACT Demonstration Brief

This report summarizes findings from an ASPE study of the first year of the White House Rural Council/HHS Rural IMPACT demonstration.

www.lcrcweb.com/2016/11/16/planning-andimplementation-of-the-rural-impactdemonstration-brief/

Putting Research into Practice: Two-Generation Approaches

This report provides an overview of two-generation programs and offers tips for developing and improving them. It also synthesizes research on two-generation programs into five categories.

www.lcrcweb.com/2016/05/26/puttingresearch-into-practice-two-generationapproaches/

Social and Decision Analytics Laboratory: Bringing the “All” Data Revolution to Communities

This presentation offers tools to help identify metrics, measure success and use data to reflect your community. An expert panel provides the best ways to gather relevant and substantive information from large amounts of data.

www.lcrcweb.com/2017/03/16/social-anddecision-analytics-laboratory-bringing-the-alldata-revolution-to-communities/

USDA Rural Development: Community Facilities Fact Sheet

This fact sheet summarizes the key parts of the USDA Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant.

www.lcrcweb.com/2016/08/24/usda-ruraldevelopmentrural-housing-fact-sheet/

Strengthening Support for Young Parents and Their Children: A Focus on Low-Income Rural and Suburban American Families

This report focuses on young parents and their children in rural and suburban poor areas.

www.lcrcweb.com/2016/08/24/strengtheningsupport-for-young-parents-and-their-childrena-focus-on-low-income-rural-and-suburbanamerican-families/

Transforming Communities: Advocating for Family Success – A 2-Gen Approach in Rural Settings

This presentation reviews the core principles and practices of Allegany County HRDC and Highland County Community Action agency who have been recognized by the White House Rural Council for their 2-Gen work.

www.lcrcweb.com/2017/09/21/transformingcommunities-advocating-for-family-successa-2-gen-approach-in-rural-settings/



The Promise of Community Action

*Community Action changes people's lives,
embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities,
and makes America a better place to live.*

*We care about the entire community,
and we are dedicated to helping people
help themselves and each other.*

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