

Question 1: How does a two-generation/whole family approach relate to the Community Action movement's vision and values articulated in the Community Action Body of Knowledge?

The two-generation/whole family approach aims to address the needs of both parents and children, recognizing that their well-being is connected. By integrating Community Action's vision and values, this approach can support Community Action advocates in fighting poverty and improving economic success for individuals and families with low incomes.

To effectively integrate a two-generation/whole family approach, Community Action Agencies (CAAs) must rely on *the collective efforts of the entire community and its institutions (BoK B.1.e)*. Community Action alone cannot fully implement this approach without strengthening and building partnerships. This is exemplified by the Two-Generation Practice in Maine, where the Community Caring Collaborative (CCC) held an annual visioning meeting that identified the need for both economic mobility resources and wrap-around social services for families. The CCC built partnerships with other local agencies and collectively received a planning grant from the Great Bay Foundation. This grant enabled CCC to expand its services to include employment and higher education support (*The Two-Generation Approach: Recommendations for Bridging Practice and Policy in Maine, John T. Gorman Foundation, pg. 6*). This example demonstrates how the two-generation approach significantly relies on collaboration and institutional support to be successful. Ultimately, the effectiveness of the whole family approach depends on the kind of multi-sector collaboration seen in Maine, where agencies work together to create opportunities for entire families to thrive.

Another key value of Community Action is the *ability to remove obstacles, fill gaps, and confront the causes/conditions of poverty (BoK B.2.a.4)*. Many communities face shortages in stable/affordable housing, jobs, emergency shelters, and transportation. For the two-

generation/whole family approach to succeed, CAAs must address these barriers so that families can develop new skills and support their children while moving forward. In Maine, for example, there is a worker shortage at nearly every level of the labor market. Parents who are currently not working due to a lack of support or job skills represent an untapped resource. In partnership with other local organizations, the Community Action network has created strategies to expand access to training and education, support career pathways, and offer coaching services that address needs like childcare, transportation, and employment (*The Two-Generation Approach: Recommendations for Bridging Practice and Policy in Maine*, John T. Gorman Foundation, pg. 14). This example highlights how Community Action's role in removing barriers is essential to implementing the two-generation approach. Parents who maintain employment have more resources and better opportunities, for themselves and for their children.

Community Action also holds that *systems and people have the potential for change* (BoK B.1.d). CCAs work to address the root causes of poverty by transforming programs, policies, and structures and by enabling individuals to drive change. This is clearly demonstrated in the resource, *A Two-Generation Human Capital Approach to Anti-Poverty Policy*, Teresa Eckrich Sommer, Terri J. Sabol, Elise Chor, William Schneider, P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Mario L. Small, Christopher King and Hirokazu Yoshikawa, pg. 122–123. It notes that many parents of Head Start children face common poverty-related challenges, such as limited education and low-wage or unstable employment. According to *Child Trends Databank (2015b)*, 42% of these parents have less than a high school education, 33% have only a high school diploma or GED, and 16% have some college education but no degree. These education gaps often result in family incomes falling below the federal poverty line. In response, Community Action and Head Start have developed multi-phased programs to increase parents' income and education levels

through a two-generational approach involving career exploration, certification and employment opportunities. This approach demonstrates how systems and people have the potential for change when equipped with the right support.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of the two-generation/whole family approach depends on the kind of multi-sector collaborations seen in Maine, where agencies work together to create opportunities for entire families to thrive.

Question 2: How can a two-generation/whole family approach be incorporated into the ongoing work of Community Action?

Incorporating a two-generation/whole family approach into the ongoing work of Community Action involves building partnerships with other agencies such as churches, schools/colleges, hospitals/clinics, and local businesses within the community to create a supportive network for families and children. Engaging with other community members and local businesses helps Community Action in building strong social networks. These social networks/partnerships can provide additional resources that Community Action Agencies (CAAs) alone may not have access to, such as transportation, clothing, gas, and mental health services.

Collaborations throughout the community, when combined with the two-generation/whole family approach, can also be incorporated into the individual family-level work of Community Action. One such instance is Head Start. CAAs could establish Head Start centers on college campuses. The Head Start centers would provide high-quality early childhood education to children while their parents pursue higher education. This partnership would then support the child's development and the parent's educational and career advancement. Integrating family-centered coaching into this model further enhances its effectiveness by

prioritizing the family's voice. Families using the Head Start center could access whole family coaching to work on goals, such as building a résumé, finding employment, or completing an Energy Assistance application. This concept aligns with the 2016 Head Start Performance Standards, authorized by the Administration for Children and Families. These were the most significant reforms to Head Start in nearly two decades and require that Head Start programs establish collaborative partnerships with other agencies and programs, including workforce developments, training programs, and postsecondary education institutions. The aim of these partnerships is to explore whether two-generation strategies improve outcomes for both children and parents beyond what each program can achieve independently (*A Two-Generation Human Capital Approach to Anti-Poverty Policy*, Teresa Eckrich Sommer, Terri J. Sabol, Elise Chor, William Schneider, P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Mario L. Small, Christopher King and Hirokazu, pg. 123–124).

CAAs can use community level, system change work to advance a two-generation/whole family approach by building partnerships with local organizations and businesses that support both the parent and the child - in other words advance *Community Strategies (BoK E.2.b.)*. CAAs can join together stakeholders from schools, medical facilities, County offices, and other community organizations to integrate programs and services, address community needs, and increase whole family support services while decreasing duplication of services. If families are surrounded by aligned, wrap-around services it will allow both generations to advance.

CAAs should also ensure that the voices of those being served are being heard. These individuals are the best experts on what they need to succeed; they know the barriers they face. Families should be involved in the design, planning, and implementation of program services and advocating for policy changes. This can be achieved through listening sessions, customer surveys,

one-on-one engagement, and collaborative planning meetings. CAAs can then advocate at the state and local levels for policies that support families overall and eliminate barriers to their self-sufficiency.