



3rd Annual Report of the Two-Generation Family Economic Security Commission

*Pursuant to §2-301, 2-601 through 606
Human Services Article, Annotated Code of Maryland*

September 2023

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Summary

The Two-Generation Family Economic Security Commission, through its third annual report, reinforces and offers the following:

- A definition of 2Gen that can be used throughout the state's agencies and programs.
- A collective vision for what the 2Gen approach will achieve - economic security, healthy children, safe communities, and opportunities for youth.
- Preliminary shared measures for determining the effectiveness of the 2Gen approach without having to wait a full generation.
- Recommendations for coordinating services.
- Preliminary recommendations for state agencies to update their organizational readiness for 2Gen.
- Overview of the DHS 2Gen Grant funded MCAP Pilot and MCAP Report.
- Proposed framework for DSS 2Gen Program Coordinator Pilot-coordination of services and coaching for families in select jurisdictions.



Mandate and History of the Commission

Maryland continues to lead the national movement in advancing the Two-Generation (2Gen) approach. Early adopters and innovators at the local level have influenced work across the country for many years and sparked the possibility of an intentional statewide effort to adopt 2Gen.

In 2017, Maryland issued an Executive Order¹ creating a Commission to study using the 2Gen approach to transform how state agencies work with families. That Commission issued two reports² detailing its recommendations and its overall commitment to advancing a 2Gen approach as a state.

Since that work began, Maryland advanced several strategies through both the Executive and Legislature to improve the economic security and well-being of the whole family, including:

- Two major changes to the Earned Income Tax Credit (a proven tool for lifting working families out of poverty). The age minimum for claiming the credit was reduced from 25 to 18 and the income limit was expanded for single and married filers.
- Expansion of the Child Care Scholarship, which effectively doubled the income eligibility for a family of four.
- A three-month transitional benefit for families receiving Temporary Cash Assistance who go overscale due to employment or income.
- A pass-through of child support payments directly to the other parent for the benefit of the child, up to \$50 for one child and \$100 for two or more.
- Co-located services for families accessing both TANF and services under WIOA, in select areas.
- The creation of a Two-Generation Coordinator position serving the state.
- Pilot programs coordinated between two or more agencies, such as the Moravia Park program providing English language instruction and peer supports for mothers and high quality early childhood education for their children (coordinated by the Maryland Office of Refugees and Asylees through the Judy Center), and the MD PROMISE federal grant program providing enhanced and coordinated services and supports to Maryland youth ages 14-16 who received Supplemental Security Income benefits, and their family members (coordinated by the Maryland Department of Disabilities and the Allegany County Local Department of Social Services).³
- Pilot testing of the MD THINK integrated data system and development of new modules.

¹ Executive Order 01.01.2017.03, "Two-Generation Family Economic Security Commission and Pilot Program."

² See Interim Report on the Two-Generation Family Economic Security Commission and Pilot Program (December 2017 and Final Report of the Two-Generation Family Economic Security Commission and Pilot Program (December 2018).

³In the March 11, 2021 meeting, the Two-Generation Coordinator offered a preliminary inventory of more than 50 statewide and state-funded initiatives using a whole family approach.

In 2020, the Maryland State Legislature passed HB 1363,⁴ creating a Commission within DHS.

The Commission is advisory in nature and its legislative mandates are:

1. Investigate **policy** challenges, opportunities, and recommendations regarding the mitigation of multigenerational poverty.
2. **Identify state services and policies that can be coordinated** to support a multigenerational approach to addressing poverty.
3. **Identify program and service gaps** among federal, state, and local policies.
4. Identify, test, and recommend **best practices** at the federal, state, and local levels.
5. Solicit information and guidance from external sources with **direct knowledge and experience** in addressing multigenerational poverty.
6. Identify **tools** to measure and predict the impact of the benefit cliff on an individual family basis.
7. **Measure the impact** of multigenerational programs.
8. **Collect data** to be used in evaluation of the effectiveness of programs.

In 2022, the Maryland State Legislature passed HB 1026,⁵ which expands the Commission membership to include one member appointed by the Secretary of Human Services who lived in and experienced poverty in Maryland. This newly appointed member must have been a recipient, within 3 years prior to appointment to the commission, of public assistance based on the individual's poverty. This newly appointed Commissioner will add invaluable feedback and recommendations based on lived experiences.

Commission meetings are open to the public and meeting minutes are published on the DHS website. Future meetings in 2024 will focus on investigating the benefits cliff, tools, and strategies; incorporating family voice and experience into systems; continuing to hear from those with direct knowledge and experience addressing multigenerational poverty; and establishing the framework and implementation of a statewide, jurisdictional, 2Gen Coordinator position pilot.

The 2Gen Commission has a virtual home. 2Gen Commission meeting agendas, meeting minutes, and other resources can be easily accessed at [DHS.Maryland.Gov](https://dhs.maryland.gov). Just click on the "About DHS" tab and navigate to "Initiatives." Having a virtual platform will enable all stakeholders to easily access and follow the progress of the 2Gen Commission.

⁴ See [HB 1363](#) for the bill text and history.

⁵ See [HB 1026](#) for the bill text and history.

Membership of the Commission

Commissioners

Cory Fink	Regional Director, Maryland Department of Juvenile Services
Delegate Mike Griffith	Delegate, Cecil and Harford Counties
VACANT	One member appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Delegates
Dr. Bryan Newton	Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services, Wor/Wic Community College
Dr. Shelly Choo	Director, Maternal Child Health Bureau, Maryland Department of Health
Emily Bauer	Two-Gen Program Officer
Erin Roth	Deputy Assistant Secretary, MD Labor
Gloria Brown Burnett	Director, Prince George's County Department of Social Services
Jade Gingerich	Director of Employment Policy, Maryland Department of Disabilities
Katharine Tate	Representing the Public
Rafael López (chair)	Secretary, Maryland Department of Human Services
Neveen Kurtom	Representing Parents
Robert "Bob" Stephens	County Health Officer, Garrett County
VACANT	One member of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, appointed by the President of the Senate
VACANT	One member appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate
Stuart Campbell	Director, Office of Community Services, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
Sylvia Lawson	Deputy Superintendent, Maryland State Department of Education
Toni Walker	Commissioner

Staff to the Commission: Emily Bauer, 2Gen Officer

Defining 2Gen

Also called the “whole family approach,” the Two-Generation (2Gen) approach is not a program, but an intentional philosophy toward how systems, programs, and services engage with families.

A 2Gen approach seeks to support one or more of the building blocks of a stable family - social capital, postsecondary education & employment, health & well-being, economic assets, K-12 education, or early childhood education - while equally privileging the experiences and well-being of the whole family through the promotion of 2Gen principles.

In coming to consensus on one statewide definition of 2Gen, it was important to the Commission to include the following:

- Recognition that “family” includes more than parents and young children and may include multiple generations living under one roof, caregivers across the lifespan, older youth including those who are parents themselves, and fictive kin;
- Acknowledgement that “family” historically has not expressly been defined by systems to include fathers or father figures and that any reference to “family” under a 2Gen approach should be father-inclusive;
- Equal importance placed on the well-being of each family member (as opposed to prioritizing a parent or child, or combining all members together into one group when they may have different needs and priorities);
- An approach that is narrow enough to set a “high bar” for what constitutes 2Gen, with fidelity to one set of principles; and
- An approach broad enough that it could be used not only to update how systems engage families but also how existing programs and services do.

Several Commissioners expressed that while a primary goal of the 2Gen approach is to mitigate multigenerational poverty, the approach ought not be limited to certain subsets of families that interact with state programs. If the state is committed to 2Gen as a way of improving family economic stability and well-being, then all families would be better off under this approach, whether they are experiencing poverty, disabilities, adverse childhood experiences, contact with child welfare or juvenile services, or otherwise interacting with the state system.

Identifying 2Gen Strategies

The Commission embraced the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework in its discussions on how to approach making group recommendations for a statewide 2Gen strategy. Developed by Mark Friedman⁶ and utilized by several state and local agencies in Maryland, RBA encourages leaders to begin forming strategies by first identifying the result or ultimate outcome that they want for families.

The Commission selected four outcomes that best described whole family well-being.

- 1. Families will be economically stable.**
- 2. Babies will be born healthy.⁷**
- 3. Communities will be safe for children, youth, and families.⁸**
- 4. Youth will have opportunities for employment and education.**

These selections emphasize the interconnectedness of the Commissioners' work with the whole family. No one agency or program can achieve multigenerational well-being on its own. But by understanding each other's contributions and working collectively to support them, state partners can achieve these outcomes.

The working theory of this Commission is that if state agencies working with families use 2Gen principles to update their work, the result will be better economic stability, healthier babies, stronger outcomes for older youth, and safer communities.

A complex question, not only for Maryland but also for 2Gen practitioners across the country, is how to measure the effectiveness of the 2Gen approach. While the long-term goal of the 2Gen approach is to prevent multigenerational poverty, it is necessary to have benchmarks for success that do not take a generation to measure.

The Commission selected some preliminary indicators to measure progress toward the desired Results. Each indicator may not be relevant to all agencies but promote collective investment in one shared vision - the whole family's economic security and well-being. These indicators will help to determine whether the state is moving in the right direction toward reaching the desired result. Disaggregating indicator data by jurisdiction, race, ethnicity, age, gender, or other factors will also draw attention to inequitable outcomes.

Babies Born Healthy	Families are Economically Stable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of preterm births 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of children under 18 in poverty
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of deaths to infants per 1,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of families spending 35%+ income on rent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of women with 1st trimester prenatal care 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of babies born under 2500 grams 	

⁶ Friedman, Mark. *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough*. Fiscal Policy Studies Institute, 1995.

⁷ While this phrasing is commonly used in our state and others, some Commissioners suggested that the more appropriate phrasing may be "as healthy as they can be," so as to be inclusive of babies born with disabilities.

⁸ As one presenter to the Commission noted, the Urban Institute has published substantial research of late demonstrating the value of place-based 2Gen approaches. See also Anderson, et al, "Developing Place-Based Partnerships." Urban Institute. February 18, 2021.

Communities are Safe

- Child maltreatment indicated findings per 1,000
- Percentage of youth under 6 with elevated lead

Youth Employment & Education

- Percentage of youth 16-24 not working and not in school
- Percentage of youth 16-24 in the labor force

An effective statewide 2Gen implementation plan will begin with the results and work backward to strategies. It will be critical to keep in mind the principles of the 2Gen approach. In Maryland, our shared baseline values for 2Gen come from these guiding principles. The 2Gen principles were presented and adopted in the Lieutenant Governor’s Commission. They were developed by Ascend at the Aspen Institute⁹ and are commonly used by organizations such as the United Way, the National Community Action Partnership, and countless foundations.

If a strategy conflicts with these principles, then the strategy will not be a 2Gen

approach. The 2Gen principles are:

1. Measure and account for outcomes for both children and parents.

Dual outcomes help to measure how well programs and policies are serving the whole family.

2. Engage and listen to the voices of families.

Families determine what success looks like for them and systems support them in creating the pathway to get them where they want to go. Systems, programs, and staff engage with families as partners, valuing their input and expertise. Families’ lived experiences help to inform policies and programming.

3. Ensure equity.

The 2Gen approach looks for and addresses disparities in how programs and systems serve families. Programming, funding, and engagement reflects demographic realities.

4. Foster innovation and evidence together.

Policies and programming should be informed by research and best practices. Organizational culture should promote innovation and evaluations of effectiveness.

5. Align and link systems and funding streams.

There may be a need to braid or blend single funding streams to fully address the needs of families. Systems may align eligibility standards, performance benchmarks, or administrative structures to promote more effective services for the family.

⁹ See “Two-Gen Guiding Principles,” available online at <https://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/two-generation/guiding-principles/>

Identification of Opportunities for Coordination

The Commission is mandated to identify opportunities for coordination of state programs and policies for the benefit of the whole family. However, attempts to standardize one approach across all jurisdictions created some frustration. Several Commissioners voiced that one statewide approach may not make sense, because jurisdictions often face different challenges and have different needs. Additionally, others voiced that creating one statewide approach would be counter to the 2Gen principle of including families' voices in the creation and execution of strategies, and that local collectives that included a variety of local families would be more in line with this principle.

Rather, the Commission endorsed a statewide adoption of 2Gen philosophy, or a "2Gen lens" across agencies that would in turn create an environment where local jurisdictions may identify opportunities for coordination and innovation that reflect the communities that each serve. To create this environment, it is necessary to identify coordinating bodies at the local level that can convene multiple services for children, youth, and families, understand community needs and local priorities, administer funding, and promote collaboration among multiple state and local stakeholders, parents, and youth. At the same time, these coordinating bodies would need to serve as a connection point to the state, be able to advance the 2Gen Commission's identified Result areas through shared measures and be held to a similar standard for meeting 2Gen best practices according to the framework set by this Commission.

Several Commissioners noted that these coordinating bodies already exist in every jurisdiction and Baltimore City. Local Management Boards were created in the 1990s to fulfill many of these purposes. In 2007, the roles and functions of Local Management Boards became codified within Maryland law.¹⁰

Charging these existing bodies with executing a 2Gen approach on a local level would still permit some jurisdictions to co-locate services as appropriate or to pursue specific innovations but would not mandate that all jurisdictions comply without building a body of evidence that activities would be promising for all the state's families.

¹⁰ See Title 8 of the Human Services Article.

Maryland Community Action Partnership (MCAP) 2Gen Pilot

The Commission elected to support the Department of Human Services (DHS) entering into a \$950,000 grant agreement with Maryland Community Action Partnership (MCAP) to continue to fund a Two Generation Pilot through their member agencies- Community Action Agencies (CAAs). Agencies began implementation and evaluation phases in 2022, which included piloting two-generation approaches, assessing, and tracking data on parent, child, and family outcomes. MCAP provided training and technical assistance to increase the capacity of Agencies to provide two-generation approaches. Each CAA continued the work of building a local two-generation model that integrates early childhood services, postsecondary training, housing assistance, family-centered coaching and other services provided by CAAs and local partners to effectively address the needs of the entire family.

Throughout the pilot, agencies tested program designs and strategies on 2-4 families to determine strategies for continuous improvement. Agencies began to embed learning and evaluation in program design and strategies, gathered data that can be shared for enhanced outcomes, and continued to build internal capacity by ensuring staff are knowledgeable about two-generation learning and evaluation methods and tools.

The two-generation approach strives to coordinate services and supports, takes the responsibility for coordination off the family and places it on the agency and eliminates existing program silos. The two-generation approach should not be considered a 'program,' rather it is a mindset that builds supports, systems, and practices that place children and their parents at the center. Agencies, along with their partners, must work holistically together with families to provide and expand opportunities for and meet the needs of children and their parents.

Collaborating with partners in each county within the state, CAA's launched collective impact efforts to improve the communities' support of parents, children, and families. Effectively serving families together requires different partners and different types and levels of partnership.

Community Action Agencies are working with local DSS offices in each community to implement two-generation approaches across the state. Partnerships will involve planning and collaboration for uniform assessments, intake, and referral processes, while seeking to align opportunities and programs offered by DHS to enhance the power of two-generation efforts.

MCAP has provided the [2023 MCAP 2G Pilot Report](#) that outlines their two-generation efforts.

Recommendations for All State Agencies Serving Families

2Gen population outcomes will require organizational change within all state agencies that serve families - whether children, youth, adults, older adults, or all of these.¹⁰ To be “2Gen ready,” agencies have applied 2Gen principles to their own processes and updated their internal practices as needed. Building an internal structure that promotes a whole family approach may require updating:

- *Organizational culture and climate*, such as mission and vision statements; staff morale, understanding of 2Gen, and buy-in; and leadership’s commitment to advancing results for the whole family.
- *Engagement and partnerships*, such as the way that staff work across programs internally; existing and new external partnerships; and effectively welcoming parents and family members as partners with staff in accomplishing the work at various stages.
- *Knowledge and skills*, such as staff and leadership competencies; use of analytics and evaluation; and change management and implementation.
- *Infrastructure*, such as existing and new policies; human resources; administrative structures; quality improvement and evaluation; service arrays; communications; data systems; and training.
- *Resources*, such as staffing; funding; informational materials; and reputation.

The Commission continues to identify a 2Gen Quality Team that can carry out the recommendations of this Commission within their individual agencies.

Commissioners have been asked to gather their own agencies’ strategies for promoting self-sufficiency and identify areas of intersection where programs could coordinate.

The Commission is working on adapting a single statewide survey tool that can be used to measure individual state agency readiness for 2Gen. This survey tool will help measure agency 2Gen readiness and to continually evaluate areas for improvement and progress.

¹⁰ The Commission discussed “[Making Tomorrow Better Together: Process Outcomes and Measurements for 2Gen Organizational Change](#).” Ascend at the Aspen Institute. October 2020. This report recommends a variety of process measures and tools for organizations seeking to become “2Gen ready.” The Department of Human Services has also adapted a simple checklist from Minnesota called “2Gen Principles to Practice” that may be informative.

Proposed DSS 2Gen Coordinator Pilot

The Commission voted in November of 2022, to continue to fund an external pilot program in lieu of developing and implementing an internal DHS pilot in 2023. The Commission awarded 2Gen grant funding to Maryland Community Action Partnerships (MCAP) to continue their 2Gen work for the 2023 fiscal year.