



## Connecticut Two-Generational (2Gen) Initiative

Report to the Connecticut General Assembly, Pursuant to C.G.S. [Sec. 17b-112l](#)  
December 2022

Connecticut's [2Gen Initiative](#), structured as an advisory board with policy work groups, represents a diverse collaborative of executive, legislative, and judicial branch leaders; nonprofit and private sector partners; and parent leaders. Despite the ongoing challenges presented by the pandemic and departure of 2Gen coordinator Rosa Rada in 2021, the 2Gen Initiative advanced work in key areas. In late July 2022, Madri Hall-Faul was hired as Interim 2Gen Coordinator to replace Rosa Rada. Recognizing the changed economy and importance of re-evaluating the direction of 2Gen to fully support families, 2Gen conducted a landscape analysis of existing 2Gen work and facilitated an iterative consensus building process to determine the priorities for 2023 and beyond. The results of that process are highlighted in the final section of this document. Below are the pertinent updates from 2022.

### **Parent Engagement**

In summer of 2022, the number of active parents on the 2Gen Advisory Board decreased from 9 to 6. As required by C.G.S. [Sec. 17b-112l](#), one-fourth of the members of the 2Gen Advisory Board must be parent leaders with lived experience of poverty. As a result, the 2Gen Parent Engagement Workgroup co-chairs and 2Gen staff recruited 8 additional parents to expand parent voice on the advisory board beyond the required proportion. One parent has completed onboarding, and 7 additional parents will be onboarded before January 2023. This will bring the total number of active parents up to 15. All parents received or will receive training on the 2Gen Initiative, state government, and legislative process, and will participate as equal members in high-level policy discussions. All parents are compensated for their time and expertise.

Over the past 8 years, the Connecticut 2Gen Initiative has established a respected framework and infrastructure for parent engagement in state government. In addition to previous advising work on the creation of the Parent Cabinet for the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) and Resident Advisory Board for [Preschool through 20 Workforce Information Network \(P20WIN\)](#), 2Gen parents are working with the Connecticut Office of the Treasurer to establish a parent advisory board for [CT Baby Bonds](#). 2Gen Parent Engagement Workgroup co-chairs and staff presented the 2Gen model of parent engagement to the University of Georgia's 2Gen Academy in October 2022. The 2Gen Academy was attended by administrative leaders in Georgia who were interested in learning from Connecticut about integrating parent voice into their operations. 2Gen is formalizing our parent engagement work into a larger framework that promotes coordination of parent engagement initiatives across the state and develops plans for parents to advance to roles of mentors and consultants and obtain career advancement opportunities through their involvement in policy advising. This will be led by a parent consultant paid for with combined funding from the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) and 2Gen. Details of this ongoing work are in the Goals and Outcomes for 2023-24 section below.

## ***Recommendations***

In order to sustain parent engagement work in Connecticut long-term, a dedicated line-item in the state budget could ensure continued engagement and compensation to parents for their valuable work in shaping policies and programs that advance family economic mobility and well-being.

## **Benefits Cliffs**

The 2Gen Benefits Cliffs Workgroup, formed in June 2019, has led statewide efforts to address [benefits cliffs](#) through data collection and analysis as well as development of policy solutions. These efforts have made Connecticut a national leader in this work. In 2020 and 2021, the benefits cliffs workgroup worked in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta (Atlanta Fed) to create – at no cost to Connecticut - Connecticut’s Career Ladder Identifier and Financial Forecaster (CLIFF). The [CT CLIFF](#) tool illustrates the interaction between wages, public benefits, and tax credits in bringing (or failing to bring) families to economic stability. The CT CLIFF tool also demonstrates the significant taxpayer savings that result from career advancement. The CLIFF tool was piloted at six sites in 2021, and an evaluation of the pilot was completed by UConn SSW and submitted to the 2Gen Advisory Board in June 2022. The evaluation is attached. In 2022, the Atlanta Fed added two new tools to the suite of tools – an employer tool to help employers understand the impact of wages on benefits eligibility and a snapshot tool to assist families in reaching short-term income stability. In summer 2022, the Benefits Cliffs Workgroup Co-Chairs presented this work with the Atlanta Fed at an APHSA conference. The presentation was well-attended by state-level administrative leaders from across the country and focused on the creation, piloting, and evaluation of the pilot for purposes of future implementation of the CLIFF tool.

In addition, 2Gen staff continued to serve as a liaison between the Atlanta Fed and state agencies to model and understand the impact of program changes on benefits cliffs for families in Connecticut. At the end of 2022, 2Gen secured funding from the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA), as part of the regional Whole Family Approach to Jobs Initiative, to assist in staffing of the statewide rollout of the CLIFF suite of tools. 2Gen is working in partnership with the Governor’s Workforce Council and Office of Workforce Strategy to reach organizations and participants across the state. Plans for implementation are in the Goals and Outcomes for 2023-24 section below.

## ***Recommendations***

Lack of affordable housing and the threat of loss of housing benefits or subsidies as a result of even a minor income increase has been raised as a significant barrier to employment and upward economic mobility by 2Gen parent leaders. The 2Gen Benefits Cliffs Workgroup has explored an earned income disregard in the CT Rental Assistance Program (RAP) for young adults (18-24) in households up to 200% FPL regardless of school status. This would incentivize work for young adults while preventing their families from losing or facing a reduction in housing support.

## **Workforce**

In 2022, the 2Gen Workforce Workgroup identified transportation as a critical barrier to successful workforce participation for families. 2Gen commissioned a report from UConn to outline existing programs across the country that facilitate car donation or car loans for working families. While public transportation has and should continue to be an area for investment and expansion, paths to car ownership can alleviate transportation

barriers for those residents who lack access to public transportation. In Spring 2022, UConn completed the attached transportation report along with cost information to guide program planning in Connecticut. 2Gen and the Office of Workforce Strategy began conversations to pilot a program aimed at car ownership, loan, or, for those with a car, auto repair with the goal of piloting supports for participants graduating from CTConnect who need transportation to maintain their new employment. These conversations are ongoing and we expect will lead to the development of a Request for Proposals (RFP) in 2023 to pilot a car ownership and repair program in one region in Connecticut to inform larger scale policy and practice change.

### ***Recommendations***

The Workforce workgroup continues to note the importance of reforms to Connecticut's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, known as Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) in the state, to better advance economic mobility for families. The workgroup notes that several policy changes would support parents and families to have a smoother glidepath to economic mobility: an extension of the TFA time limit for assistance from 21 months to the federal maximum of 60 months; the elimination of asset limits; and increasing the earned income disregard. The workgroup also recommends continued alignment of child care and workforce needs to ensure that childcare is affordable and available where families live and work.

### **2Gen Interagency Plan and State Data Plan**

Pursuant to C.G.S. Sec. 17b-112l, the Office of Policy and Management developed a 2Gen Interagency Plan aimed at systems change in state government that addresses intergenerational poverty and supports for families in overcoming barriers to economic success.

P20 WIN (Preschool through 20 Workforce Information Network) is the state's longitudinal data system and is composed of 11 executive state agencies, higher education institutions, and non-profits. This data system has expanded to include more health and human service, education, and workforce agencies. With the addition of Department of Social Services, Department of Children and Families and Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness in 2021, and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services in 2022, and new agencies to be added in 2023, there are growing opportunities to evaluate outcomes of children and their adults in various programs as well as to understand the impact of 2Gen approaches.

Working with the Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP) as a participating state in the Equity in Practice Learning Communities, P20 WIN is developing the Resident Advisory Board, based on the work 2Gen has done to develop resources for parent engagement. Understanding the importance of community engagement, the Resident Advisory Board, to be launched in 2023, will advise Participating Agencies in earning public trust in the data sharing process, assist the data sharing process to ensure that P20 WIN promotes equity and that research, evaluation and data sharing efforts do not disparately impact consumers or families.

The Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) is a collaboration of 15 executive state agencies, the judicial branch, and nonprofit partners. Their strategic plan highlights data development as a priority and CFI has created a subcommittee tasked with creating data dictionaries and other data efforts in order to build a holistic view of how dads enter and receive state services and determine how engagement with dads can improve data collection and navigation of state services. CFI is also building their communication efforts and engagement with stakeholders to educate and expand awareness, improve services for dads, and facilitate data sharing to get an aggregate of the number of dads being served by the state as a whole.

## Regional and Federal Partnership

Connecticut is an active member of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) [Whole Family Approach to Jobs](#) public-private partnership across the six New England states and in collaboration with the American Public Human Services Association. Connecticut participated in regional work groups on racial equity, parent engagement, and benefits cliffs. Connecticut is playing a leadership role in the parent engagement learning community, co-chaired by Melvette Hill; and in the racial equity learning community, co-chaired by Steven Hernandez, both of the Commission for Children, Women, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity.

In November, Connecticut sent delegates to and was featured on the agenda at the annual Whole Family Approach to Jobs 6-state New England convening organized by ACF and APHSA to share best practices and learn from other states in the region.

## 2Gen Goals and Outcomes for 2023-24

During 2022, 2Gen worked across a wide set of stakeholders to gather input on the overall direction of 2Gen, with a focus on how to build upon work to date, and where new work could further the state's goal to offer economic opportunity and well-being for families. 2Gen met with the Advisory three times; with parents twice; with the Co-Chairs of Working Groups several times, and with each working group.

The Advisory will meet in January 2023 for a final review of the new and expanded direction of the work; 2Gen has worked to build consensus across executive, legislative, nonprofit, judicial, and parent leadership over the past five months.

The 2Gen theory of change developed during this period helps to ground the work and supported strategy development. The theory of change is: "By placing parents at the center in voice, policy and practice; by engaging a diverse set of stakeholders to advise on needed policy and program changes; and by engaging stakeholders with the authority to change policy, family economic mobility and family well-being will improve in Connecticut." Further, 2Gen has principles in which the work and strategies moving forward are grounded:

- **Parent voice** is integrated throughout our work, with significant input and insights informing our direction
- **Racial equity** is embedded in our strategies (this likely needs to be a body of work for us in addition to being a principle)
- 2Gen addresses the **holistic well-being** of families, including wealth building, health, community building, and social determinants of health
- 2Gen is **multi-generational**, including caregivers, parents, grandparents, children, and others who support and nurture families.
- We **balance** our work across community, executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

From this theory of change, the principles, and the consensus-building work across stakeholders, the following goals and strategies have emerged. 2Gen anticipates launching these in 2023, and continuing the work through 2024, knowing that achieving lasting systems change requires time and effort.

**Goal: Develop a 2Gen parent engagement strategy that coordinates engagement efforts and offers parents opportunities for advancement both within and outside of the 2Gen work.**

Parents developed an expanded parent engagement approach for the next two years that will increase the number of parents trained and engaged in 2Gen and other state agencies; will support state agencies with technical assistance in engaging more parents in advising, and ensure that parents are coordinating with each other across advisories and committees. The work will include new parent leadership training; development of an internship program (funding dependent) that would offer parents paid internships at state agencies as part of embedding parent voice across the state; expansion of the number of state agencies engaged with parents, and the development of a mentor program so that seasoned 2Gen parent leaders transition to new roles, while new parents learn from current leaders.

**Goal: Roll out benefits cliffs CLIFF tool statewide and sustain implementation; identify next stage policy options**

The Atlanta Federal Reserve Bank has now established a suite of tools that can be used by coaches, case managers, residents, and businesses to understand how increases in earnings impact benefits. During 2023, 2Gen, in collaboration with OWS, will roll out the benefit cliff tools throughout the state through organizations working directly with families, including CT Connect, community colleges, community action programs, and others. We anticipate 40 organizations and 10 employers using one or more benefit cliff tools and hundreds of residents receiving coaching.

In addition, 2Gen will continue to identify policy options that would alleviate the cliffs. This will include exploring a benefit cliff pilot that would demonstrate an approach to managing the cliffs for families, as well as a legislative hearing to brief legislators on the impact of cliffs and potential policy solutions. 2Gen will continue to work with regional partners and the federal government to identify where the federal government needs regulatory change to support families. Importantly, 2Gen will also explore how training and/or parent stipends impact benefits, and explore policy options at the state and federal levels to enable parents to fully participate in advising state agencies and to benefit from paid training options as they seek to advance their careers.

**Goal: Develop plan for scalable transportation pilot to be implemented in Eastern CT**

Building upon the work in 2022, 2Gen will finalize plans with OWS for a transportation pilot that can demonstrate if and how car-based solutions offer families greater mobility – both to retain work and to manage child care, school, and other responsibilities. The pilot currently under consideration would operate in one or more parts of the state where public transportation is scarce; would be open to graduates of OWS’s CareerConnect who will have a boost in income that would enable families to afford car ownership, and would be designed to explore how scale might occur in the future. The transportation pilot will be managed by OWS; it is anticipated that a modest amount of bond funds will be used for the pilot, which will also have an evaluation to understand how car ownership aids in job retention and family management. 2Gen and OWS will report to the Legislature findings each year; it is anticipated to be a 2-year pilot.

**Goal: Develop 2Gen Assessment/Framework to be used in legislature and executive agencies**

As 2Gen has gained widespread recognition as a critical strategy to place families at the center in policy, systems, and practice in order to offer greater economic mobility and well-being for families, 2Gen has identified the importance of a concrete set of tools to support state agencies in assessing their policies and systems, as well as a tool for legislators to evaluate whether relevant legislation has incorporated 2Gen considerations.

The framework will be developed by April 2023 as a beta document; 2Gen will work with the executive and legislative branches to roll-out the tools for testing during the spring and summer; we expect to finalize the tools in fall 2023. 2Gen staff and consultants will be available to provide technical assistance throughout the process. From this work, we expect 3-5 administrative policy changes to be identified in 2023 for implementation in 2023 or 2024.

**Goal: Organize a 1-day convening for commissioners to: learn about 2Gen; identify 2Gen work in their agencies; learn from parents about their priorities and concerns; and leave with a plan in place for collaboration with other agencies to improve 2Gen approaches.**

Building upon the development of the framework and assessment, 2Gen, in partnership with OEC, will hold a one-day convening of commissioners of relevant state agencies to introduce the assessment, elevate parent voice and advice in how to improve systems and policies, and to support state agencies in exploring avenues for improvement. From the convening, 2Gen anticipates an increase in cross-agency partnerships aimed at addressing family economic mobility and well-being, directly related to parent priorities.

**Goal: Engage legislature in 2Gen priorities in 2023 legislative session through informational hearing centered on topic areas related to family economic mobility and well-being**

Recognizing the importance of the Legislature to achieving lasting 2Gen systems and policy change, 2Gen anticipates holding 1-2 legislative educational sessions in early 2023. The session is likely to focus on the worker shortage, and how policy can support opening opportunities for parents to enter the labor force, given the current constraints for families in doing so (benefit cliffs, need for work supports, importance of stable housing for families, etc.). Parents will lead these sessions and we anticipate data-rich testimony from other stakeholders as well. 2Gen expects that the educational session will offer Legislators specific ideas for how to improve family economic mobility and increased labor force participation.

**Goal: Develop mechanisms for 2Gen to add value to initiatives related to family economic mobility and well-being through influence**

Across Connecticut, there are a range of initiatives and advocacy work that is related to 2Gen, though not the main focus of 2Gen. 2Gen parents, staff, and consultants will work together to identify where 2Gen can add value to existing work, including through parent engagement/voice. In addition, once the 2Gen strategy is finalized, 2Gen will work to identify new workgroups or a revised workgroup structure to ensure widespread input to the work ahead.

2Gen appreciates the support of the Legislature in advancing strategies, policies, and systems that truly put parents in the center, resulting in greater opportunity for parents, caregivers, and children – and in turn, supporting the economic stability and growth of our communities.