

# Engaging Parents, Developing Leaders

A Self-Assessment and Planning Tool for Nonprofits and Schools

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION



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The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private philanthropy that creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).

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## Introduction

Parents have the greatest stake in their children's well-being and are invaluable partners for organizations striving to improve the lives of kids and families. Many community nonprofits and schools seek ways to better engage families and help them foster child development. These organizations want to more effectively reach parents,<sup>1</sup> provide services they need and want and make sure they have the tools and skills necessary to support their kids.

Organizations aim to work with parents in a number of ways. A simple but powerful framework is to consider four categories based on an organization's focus — or the entry door through which organizations come to work with parents. Organizations often begin with different goals. Some seek to build the skills of families, working to influence parenting and the interactions between adults and children. Others strive to deepen a family's engagement with a program or organization, working to influence parental behaviors and interactions with programs and institutions serving their children. Organizations also aim to build the overall capacity of families, often providing the tools and resources they need to achieve financial stability and foster their children's development. Finally, some focus on building family advocacy and leadership skills, strengthening parents' ability to advocate and change public systems on behalf of themselves and their children.

To be sure, many organizations focused on improving the lives of families and children work in several of these areas at the same time. In fact, they may span one or more of these categories; using one category as an entry point typically leads a family to services in another category. Family engagement is a dynamic field with lessons spanning many of these areas.

Yet we know that leaders seeking to improve family engagement and parent participation in programs often face several challenges, including knowing where to start and figuring out which among the myriad possible approaches and strategies to undertake. Indeed, most organizations fall on a continuum when it comes to parent engagement, doing some things really well and needing improvements in other areas. Most leaders struggle to find time to assess what is working and determine the best next step.

This tool aims to address these challenges by enabling a variety of nonprofit leaders to assess their organization's family engagement and capacity-building activities. It also provides suggestions on realistic next-step strategies. We have grounded all of the provided suggestions in proven or promising practices identified through extensive research by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, as well as insights from leading organizations and parents themselves.

This tool is also informed by the Foundation's commitment to ensuring [racial equity and inclusion](#) and our investments to create opportunities for low-income families through [two-generation](#)

approaches, which address the needs of children and parents at the same time so that both can succeed.

In addition, we recognize that parents are by no means a homogenous group and come from various perspectives and contexts — from young parents to grandparents raising grandchildren to parents of children with special needs to those who are immigrants or refugees. Parent engagement strategies should factor in each family's strengths and characteristics, rather than applying the same approach to all.

This resource represents a collaborative effort to take the best information from a variety of sources and develop a tool that could be used among organizations advancing two-generation approaches to address the needs of families. Gary Romano of Civitas Strategies and Shelley Waters Boots of SWB Strategic Solutions drafted the tool. Gail Hayes, former director of the Casey Foundation's Atlanta Civic Site team, was an integral thought leader on this project, providing important insights on content and framing throughout the development of the tool and conducting pilot tests with staff and parents at two organizations. Patrice Cromwell provided overall leadership for the project with input and assistance from a number of Foundation colleagues, including Leah Austin, Rosa Maria Castañeda, Kweku Forstall, Arin Gencer, Bob Giloth, Cindy Guy, Patrick Hain, Gena O'Keefe, Irene Lee, Amoretta Morris, Kimberly Spring, Nonet Sykes, Danielle Torain and T'Pring Westbrook. Expert advisors and consultants Karen Murrell and Kellie Magnuson provided additional input and advice.

Finally, as the Foundation developed this tool, we collaborated with LaShawn Chatmon and Hugh Vasquez of the National Equity Project, a nonprofit that provides coaching on advancing equity in schools, communities and organizations. They assisted in a team review of the tool to ensure it provided leading practices and clear language around inclusion and equity, in addition to helping articulate Casey's goals for working with families using a racial equity lens. The Foundation outlined five key principles — integrated into this tool — that we aim to bring to all of our work:

1. We believe in engaging families based on their strengths.
2. We believe in the primacy of parent, family and community voice.
3. We believe in and foster co-creation and co-ownership of solutions.
4. We acknowledge that there are institutional, systemic and structural barriers that perpetuate inequity.
5. We commit to transparency and to sharing accountability for the results we seek.

## How to Use This Tool

### STEP 1: GATHER AT LEAST FIVE PEOPLE FROM YOUR ORGANIZATION

This tool is primarily for staff — including leadership — of family-serving organizations. We recommend teams going through the assessment include your executive director, principal or chief executive officer. Perspectives from frontline staff are also important to assess. Finally, we strongly recommend you include input from at least two parents or caregivers, especially on how they experience the first three domains, as their perspectives are crucial and might differ from staff and leadership. Getting through the tool should only take about three hours, but for larger groups, you may want to plan on four hours to ensure everyone has time to talk about his or her answers.

### STEP 2: ENGAGE IN AN INTERACTIVE GROUP EXERCISE TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN THE FOUR DOMAINS

From a review of parent engagement literature, extensive one-on-one interviews with more than 40 leaders in the field, meetings with key parent engagement leaders and three focus groups of parents about this evolving field, several themes emerged. We identified four key areas of work that consistently appear when organizations effectively and authentically engage parents. These four domains represent critical aspects of parent engagement and building the organizational capacity needed to better serve parents. They specifically address the way your organization:

1. **Builds a culture of respect, inclusion and equity** to help shape all of the work your organization does with families. Lifting up racial equity is the first step in creating an organizational environment and culture that respects all families.
2. **Coaches parents on their competence and confidence in their roles**, working with parents instead of simply imparting information, and communicating and interacting with them in ways that build their confidence in their ability to address challenges themselves.
3. **Listens to and collaborates with parents**, from how you design programs and communicate with parents and caregivers to how you engage them in the leadership of the organization itself.
4. **Works with other organizations and communities to benefit parents** by not only helping parents navigate the system but also coordinating and collaborating with other organizations and government agencies to streamline programs and services and maximize the resources you have for families.

For each domain, we have organized the questions into three levels of how well your organization functions in each area, with the intention that the questions largely build toward increased engagement. The levels are primarily designed to help you quickly understand how to assess what you currently do and identify how to move your organization toward deeper engagement with parents that ultimately enables them and their children to thrive. To be sure, the levels are grouped and ordered subjectively. Still, the questions in each area serve to help organizations gauge where they have more work to do and acknowledge their areas of strength and improvement across each domain.

The sequencing of the domains is also important. The first, which focuses on building a culture of respect, inclusion and equity, acknowledges this foundational step is essential to all parent engagement efforts and activities. It recognizes that parents — and their particular experiences and realities — should be the guide for any organization looking to improve practices and policies and truly engage with parents as key partners. If you only have time to tackle one domain, we recommend this be your organization's top priority.

The second area is about coaching parents as they build their parenting skills and confidence. This area is a critically important step in helping families feel empowered in their own abilities and see their role in finding success for themselves. Moving from a case-management and service-provider orientation to co-creator with a coaching approach is a central theme of these organizational questions.

Third, as organizations go deeper in forming partnerships with parents, they begin to orient their leadership, staff and culture to allow parents to help shape and lead the work. Finding ways to build in partnerships with families as part of the myriad programs, funding sources and reporting requirements can be a challenge. We highlight here how organizations have successfully developed these partnerships while still meeting program mandates.

#### Domain 1: Building a Culture of Respect, Inclusion and Equity

- Level 1: Organization takes the first important steps in creating an organization committed to promoting racial equity.
- Level 2: Organization goes deeper and takes more steps to foster racial equity.
- Level 3: Organization excels at creating a racially inclusive organization for parents.

#### Domain 2: Coaching Parents on Competence and Confidence

- Level 1: Organization works on solid ideas to build parenting skills and confidence.
- Level 2: Organization goes deeper in coaching parents and providing parent leadership opportunities.

- Level 3: Organization excels in coaching for parenting skills and confidence.

### Domain 3: Listening to and Forming Partnerships With Parents

- Level 1: Organization has several good practices and policies in place to listen to parents and community members.
- Level 2: Organization goes further to understand parent and community needs.
- Level 3: Organization excels at building partnerships with parents.

### Domain 4: Partnering With Other Organizations to Serve the Whole Family

- Level 1: Organization effectively works across organizations to meet parent needs.
- Level 2: Organization goes deeper to link services for parents.
- Level 3: Organization works closely with partner organizations in the community to create change.

Finally, organizations can build bridges to others within the community in a number of ways to help create more programs and services that focus more holistically on the entire family's needs and strengths, rather than just one area. This work helps foster two-generation approaches to working with families, addressing child and parent needs at the same time rather than through different programs and funding sources.

#### *Group Exercise Option*

If you choose to do the assessment as a group, here is one way we suggest gathering input from several perspectives.

To begin, decide whether you will focus on just one domain, or have a meeting to assess the organization across all four categories. Then, place large sheets of paper (e.g., flip-chart pages) on the walls — one for each of the domains your group will discuss. Label each sheet with the domain name, and then create boxes for each of the questions within that domain.

Ask all participants to take five to seven minutes to go through each of the questions on their own and think through whether the answer to each question is that your organization does what the question describes “always,” “sometimes” or “never.” Have them mark “does not know” if they don't know whether your organization has that particular practice or policy.

Next, using green, red, yellow and blue sticker dots, have each participant record his or her answers on the flip-chart paper. This will provide the group with a fast way to see areas of overall agreement on strengths (all greens); things to improve (all reds); places where the answer is either more nuanced or the organization addresses some but not all of the issues the question



raises (many/all yellows); or issues for which staff do not know the organization's practice or policy (many/all blues).

Questions resulting in a mix of colors might also elicit conversation and discussion (e.g., if half of the dots indicate the organization always does something, while the other half say it never does, that would be an area for further exploration). Provide time for discussion on any questions that lack consensus before moving on to assess the level on which the group as a whole would put the organization.

Move on to review the level recommendations as outlined below in Step 3, and work together to determine action steps for the organization based on overall score and discussion on particular items. Repeat this process for each domain you have chosen to review.

### **STEP 3: ASSESS YOUR SCORE AND CHART A PATH TO IMPROVEMENT**

After you've completed the assessment tool, you will need to look closely at your "never" answers. Focus your efforts on areas for improvement or gaps in knowledge by identifying promising and transferable approaches and strategies described in the best practices section after the questions. We suggest only choosing two to three changes to pursue at a time. Improving how an organization operates or addressing some of these key organizational culture issues is not easy, so give yourselves time to make changes.

## The Assessment Tool

### BUILDING A CULTURE OF RESPECT, INCLUSION AND EQUITY

LEVEL 1		Always/Sometimes/ Never/Don't Know
Q1	Does your organization collect, break out and analyze outcome data by race and ethnicity in programs and operations?	
Q2	As an organization, do you have a stated policy to respect the diverse backgrounds of parents and caregivers, which may include but are not limited to race, ethnicity, immigration status, religion, sexual orientation, gender and socioeconomic status?	
Q3	Are staff culturally, racially and linguistically representative of parents and caregivers?	
Q4	Does the organization create a welcoming environment for all families? A welcoming environment includes respect for family culture and experiences, as well as for their knowledge and gifts.	
Q5	Is the relationship between staff and parents one of mutual respect?	
Q6	Have you translated all program materials into the languages of the families you serve, and are interpreters available for parent conversations with staff?	
LEVEL 2		Always/Sometimes/ Never/Don't Know
Q7	Do you evaluate all organizational practices and policies to ensure they are not creating or perpetuating inequities?	
Q8	Does staff work to meet families in their homes or in a place that parents choose in the community?	

Q9	Do you have staff training on racial equity to help provide language and space for staff to address issues within the organization?	
Q10	Are the unique strengths and challenges of the community you serve understood by and guiding the actions of staff?	
Q11	Is your organization partnering with parents to create an environment where different opinions are respected and where you work together to resolve problems and look for solutions?	
<b>LEVEL 3</b>		<b>Always/Sometimes/ Never/Don't Know</b>
Q12	As an organization, are staff committed to having the voices, needs and aspirations of parents, families and communities drive the work?	
Q13	Do staff listen to parents and caregivers and view them as unique and diverse individuals with multiple and dynamic roles who are experts in their own lives and the lives of their children?	
Q14	Is addressing racial equity and inclusion part of regular communication at staff meetings and explicitly built into performance reviews as part of all staff jobs, as well as the organization's policies and practices for serving families?	
<b>DOMAIN TOTALS</b>		
<b>LEVEL 1 (Always/Sometimes/Never/Don't Know)</b>		___/___/___/___
<b>LEVEL 2</b>		___/___/___/___
<b>LEVEL 3</b>		___/___/___/___

## COACHING PARENTS ON COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE

LEVEL 1		Always/Sometimes/ Never/Don't Know
Q1	Does your organization provide training for parents and caregivers on parenting and child development?	
Q2	Does your organization help facilitate peer groups and support among parents and caregivers through networking opportunities and other ways desired by parents?	
Q3	Do you offer opportunities for parents to build their parenting and other skills, and for sharing knowledge?	
Q4	Are workshops or training provided outside of a lecture format, allowing participants to control content and experiences to gain knowledge and understanding? In other words, do you provide workshops and training that don't rely on a paid professional but on the skills and abilities of the families you serve?	
LEVEL 2		Always/Sometimes/ Never/Don't Know
Q5	Do you provide opportunities for parents to connect with one another to build relationships, collaborate and support one another?	
Q6	Do parents have opportunities to practice the skills or knowledge shared in workshops or training?	
Q7	Does your staff understand the impact of stress and adversity on families, and are they familiar with strategies to reduce that stress?	
Q8	Does your organization offer services that help families take direct action to increase their financial stability?	

<b>LEVEL 3</b>		<b>Always/Sometimes/ Never/Don't Know</b>
Q9	Are parents encouraged to design their own workshops, events or other skill-building opportunities on their own and with other parents and caregivers?	
Q10	Does staff work in partnership with parents and caregivers to set long-term goals for their families and form ongoing, trusting relationships to realize those goals?	
Q11	Do parents and caregivers have the opportunity to share their knowledge with others through peer learning?	
Q12	Do you provide opportunities for parents and caregivers to learn about the impact of stress and adversity on their lives and the lives of their children?	
<b>DOMAIN TOTALS</b>		
<b>LEVEL 1 (Always/Sometimes/Never/Don't Know)</b>		___/___/___/___
<b>LEVEL 2</b>		___/___/___/___
<b>LEVEL 3</b>		___/___/___/___

## LISTENING TO AND FORMING PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS

LEVEL 1		Always/Sometimes/ Never/Don't Know
Q1	Does your organization offer services during nontraditional hours and provide child care and meals when necessary?	
Q2	Are there opportunities (such as the ability to drop in and talk with staff) for parents and caregivers to communicate with organizational leaders?	
Q3	Do you have a parent advisory board or similar body?	
Q4	Have your staff been trained on the strengths and challenges of the community you serve?	
LEVEL 2		Always/Sometimes/ Never/Don't Know
Q5	Do parents have access to space to use for their own meetings/resource needs (e.g., computers, printers)?	
Q6	Are there opportunities for parents and caregivers to observe classrooms (if the program serves children) and/or volunteer at the organization?	
Q7	Do you provide formal training for parents and caregivers to become community leaders?	
Q8	Do staff members visit some or all families at home (at least annually)?	
Q9	Do you collect and share data with families on the services they need and how they interact with the agency, including feedback on services and staff? Ways to share data may include in-person feedback, surveys, email or an anonymous suggestion box.	

LEVEL 3		Always/Sometimes/ Never/Don't Know
Q10	Do you have opportunities within the organization for family leadership (such as a formal leadership training program, a dedicated seat on your board or asking parents to become ambassadors on behalf of your organization)?	
Q11	Are there ways to compensate parents for their contributions to help the organization?	
Q12	Do you provide employment opportunities for parents in your organization?	
Q13	Do you have learning communities, a parent café, social gatherings or other similar activities where parents, caregivers and professional staff interact to help foster collaboration and share wisdom on multiple levels?	
Q14	In the last six months, have parents and caregivers ever come together to ask for a policy or practice change?	
Q15	Does your organization engage parents in the design and creation of solutions at the beginning of parent-focused programs and initiatives?	
<b>DOMAIN TOTALS</b>		
LEVEL 1 (Always/Sometimes/Never/Don't Know)		___/___/___/___
LEVEL 2		___/___/___/___
LEVEL 3		___/___/___/___

**PARTNERING WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TO SERVE THE WHOLE FAMILY**

<b>LEVEL 1</b>		<b>Always/Sometimes/ Never/Don't Know</b>
Q1	Do you know the organizations providing important parent and caregiver services in your community so that you can make referrals?	
Q2	Do your staff conduct a comprehensive assessment that identifies the strengths and needs of both parents/caregivers and children in the household?	
Q3	Do you connect parents and caregivers with requested services that other organizations provide?	
Q4	Do you follow up with either the families or the organization to which you've referred them to ensure they received a particular service?	
Q5	Do families have ways to easily find and connect with services during and outside of normal business hours?	
Q6	Do you follow up to ensure families are satisfied with the services from the partner organization and were treated respectfully?	
<b>LEVEL 2</b>		<b>Always/Sometimes/ Never/Don't Know</b>
Q7	Do you share your organization's professional development opportunities with partners by allowing them to attend?	
Q8	Does your organization create opportunities to exchange information, share lessons learned and partner with other organizations?	
Q9	Have organizations worked together to streamline services for families including shared intake forms, co-location of services and other family-friendly processes?	



Q10	Does your organization use written agreements to develop a common definition and goal for parent engagement with others as a means of coordinating resources and programming?	
<b>LEVEL 3</b>		<b>Always/Sometimes/ Never/Don't Know</b>
Q11	Does your organization create family-level data records to track outcomes for the whole family across organizational partners?	
Q12	Does your organization work with other organizations toward collective action around a common vision, shared data and complementary, coordinated activities across organizations?	
Q13	Does your organization take responsibility for coordinating resources and support services for families rather than placing that burden entirely on them?	
Q14	Do your key partners aid in communicating solutions advocated by parents to public agencies and decision makers?	
Q15	Does your organization seek out partners to address the needs of children and their parents — a whole-family approach?	
<b>DOMAIN TOTALS</b>		
<b>LEVEL 1 (Always/Sometimes/Never/Don't Know)</b>		___/___/___/___
<b>LEVEL 2</b>		___/___/___/___
<b>LEVEL 3</b>		___/___/___/___

## Assessing Your Results

### DOMAIN 1: BUILDING A CULTURE OF RESPECT, INCLUSION AND EQUITY

#### Strategies to Deepen Your Work

To truly serve families, organizations must start from a point of creating a culture of respect, inclusion and equity, a critical foundation for all parent-engagement strategies. A number of guides and resources are available to help organizations create this kind of culture and identify places to improve their work around racial equity. It is best to pick one or two areas to work on and move ahead slowly, assessing your progress and checking in with parents and staff along the way to determine how they perceive and receive the changes.

#### Level 1

If you scored few (i.e., two or three) “always” items in Level 1, you might consider starting with an assessment tool specifically focused on promoting racial equity. The [Race Matters Institute](#) — which provides resources and tool kits to help organizations, policymakers and advocates ensure equitable opportunities for all children, families and communities — offers several tools, including a [short survey](#) that can serve as a good starting point, as well as an [organizational self-assessment](#). Additional guides, tools and strategies are available through the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s [Racial Equity Resource Guide](#).

First, you must understand the diversity of the families your organization serves. An essential step to that end is ensuring you collect data by race and ethnicity and analyzing that data within programs and operations.

Next, organizations can signal their commitment to racial equity to staff and parents by having stated and visible policies about respecting the diverse backgrounds of staff and families. From employee manuals to parent handouts, a clear commitment to creating a culture of racial equity and inclusion should permeate your organization.

Research on why families get involved in programs indicates that “how welcoming the program is” greatly influences family engagement.<sup>2</sup> Developing a welcoming environment for all families is, therefore, another key step in showing your organization’s commitment to equity and sets the tone for parent engagement overall. By lifting up different customs, cultures, music, food and languages — and making all of these visible in the organization — you create an environment that builds on the strengths of families. Posters or artwork from various cultures helps families feel comfortable in your building, and signs in parents’ languages show respect for their particular culture or norms. Workshops and other training for parents in their native language show you are paying attention to the needs of the families in your community. Some organizations find parent

volunteers to help with translation and plan celebrations for holidays important to the families coming to the organization.

Additionally, providing verbal and nonverbal communication that acknowledges the language and culture of the families you serve helps demonstrate your respect for them. Asking for parents' preferred method of communication (e.g., in-person meetings, phone calls or emails) can begin to break down assumptions about how they wish to communicate with staff. At a minimum, translating materials into the languages of families helps them feel comfortable with the organization and staff. For many meetings, workshops or other events, interpreters can help with face-to-face interactions. However, for some interactions, hiring staff who are representative of the community is preferable.

For example, at Community Action Project of Tulsa in Oklahoma, staff working with Head Start parents on mental health issues found a dearth of Spanish-speaking clinical staff. They tried using interpreters, but meetings with clinically trained therapists or counselors cover sensitive material, and parents saw having an interpreter as a barrier. The organization and its partners worked hard to recruit bilingual staff to address the needs of parents more fully. Listening to parents' concerns and needs resulted in a different solution from the one the organization originally tried. But their feedback helped program directors to redouble their efforts to meet families' language needs while respecting their privacy.

To that end, making sure there are ways to hear from families about your organization's services and staff is critical to forge true, honest relationships with parents. Establishing a culture in which families feel comfortable providing feedback in various ways enables your organization to begin deeper engagement with families. Demonstrating a commitment to this feedback and responding in ways that show you listen to parents help begin building trust with families.

For example, the Federal Way School District outside Seattle has hired six full-time family liaisons. Based in six elementary schools, the liaisons work directly with those schools, early childhood programs and five middle schools to foster partnership among parents, teachers and staff so that they, in turn, can support student success. The liaisons, who speak Spanish and English, have helped facilitate conversations between staff and non-English-speaking parents about student strengths and needs. They also communicate that they are there for *all* families.<sup>3</sup>

All of these steps help build trust between organizational staff and parents — a key factor in parent engagement, as that trust is the basis for increasing families' commitment to collaborating

#### Additional Resources

- The National Association for the Education of Young Children's [comprehensive literature review](#) on a family engagement in early childhood education programs
- The Harvard Family Research Project's [family involvement and cultural diversity](#) resources
- The Build Initiative's resources on [diversity and equity](#) in early childhood programs

with your organization. Conversely, losing families' trust weakens relationships and, ultimately, engagement.<sup>4</sup>

## Level 2

If many of the items (i.e., all but two or three) in Level 1 are familiar to your organization and staff, then you are ready to address racial equity more deeply.

As mentioned in Level 1, having paid or volunteer staff who reflect the community culturally, racially and linguistically — and who are, ideally, part of the community — can help build trust and strengthen communication. As your organization moves further into racial equity work, the composition of your staff becomes more reflective of the community you serve. Another important step for your organization and staff involves conducting an inventory to ensure all of your programs and services validate families' cultural values, norms, language and context.

To deepen your organization's commitment to racial equity, look at one of your new policies or practices through a racial equity lens. You can do this using a [racial equity impact analysis](#), a tool that provides five questions around policies and practices to ensure you continue to advance equity.

Staff who work directly with families should also do at least one home visit. This often shifts the power dynamic away from staff and office or school settings that can intimidate some families, in addition to allowing staff to better understand their home environments. For example, the Federal Way School District outside Seattle piloted a home-visiting program in which teachers build relationships with families. Unlike many other models seeking to address problems, develop specific skills or provide information, this program emphasizes teachers' listening and learning about their students and families.

In addition, your organization should offer staff training focused on cultural respect in the community you serve. The [Race Matters tool kit](#) provides equity training materials, and the [National Equity Project](#) offers training curricula for advancing racial equity within organizations and communities for leaders, staff and parents. Staff training should be frequent, identifying places where the organization successfully promotes equity and areas in need of improvement.

Finally, staff should dedicate time to discuss and address the diversity of families served and view their work through a racial equity lens. Making this part of regular staff communication at meetings helps ensure this stays front and center in working with families.

## Level 3

Training and conversations in staff meetings around the context and ecosystem of the community you serve — including any social and cultural isolation families experience — is an important means for continuing discussions on equity.

For example, do staff understand the challenges of living in the community, the income required to survive in that neighborhood and demographic trends for unemployment and poverty? Learning about the context in which families live and the biases they experience can foster further understanding. Additionally, do staff have time to reflect on the successes and strengths within the community, celebrating when families connect with one another on their own, when the community rallies together to achieve a goal or other accomplishments? And do you have regular conversations about promoting a culture of inclusion and equity so that it is a daily part of your organization's mission and way of interacting? By holding regular, ongoing check-ins and training with staff on racial equity, you can help build understanding and respect for others.

You can also incorporate an equity frame into how staff work with families by training staff on a coaching model, which views parents and caregivers as capable of identifying and developing solutions to their challenges — and as experts on their children. Again, part of understanding and celebrating all families is to approach each relationship with a family from a position of strengths and knowledge. Valuing families, and what they bring, helps change the dynamic between staff and parents and create a culture of equity and inclusion in which all families can find the tools and support they need.

For example, Educare Atlanta, a Head Start program in southwest Atlanta, has trained family support staff to use coaching techniques with families. “Coaching is a practice that develops over time as you work to continually improve your own interactions with parents,” one manager at the school noted. “It is very self-reflective, helping you to address your own assumptions and biases.” Indeed, coaching switches the relationship from “expert staff” and “needy parent” to one of mutual respect and involves working together to set goals for a family and allowing parents to find ways to accomplish those goals. As coaches, family support staff do not serve to fix families but to help them find tools and access resources, and to encourage them as they strive to accomplish their goals. For many staff members and families, this new approach was transformative.

You can take a number of other steps to fully integrate equity into all aspects of your organization's work. Incorporating racial equity principles (e.g., did staff attend training on racial equity? Did they work to meet parents where the latter are comfortable?) into your performance appraisal/review process can help ensure staff and supervisors address race and diversity. This sustained commitment better prepares organizations and staff to handle questions and conflict and to resolve issues together, in a respectful manner.

Finally, your organization should train staff to be aware of dominant cultural behaviors and privileges, languages, attitudes, values and how they present information — and to consciously work to mitigate the negative effects of cultural and racial bias or discrimination for families.

## DOMAIN 2: COACHING PARENTS ON COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE

### Strategies to Deepen Your Work

When done well, building parents' sense of competence and confidence can develop skills that families can apply in many areas of their lives and when facing future challenges. Having the knowledge and confidence to use information to create change is at the core of these organizational questions. At the most basic level, organizations should share research-based, actionable information with parents and caregivers on parenting and achieving financial stability, among other relevant topics. But in-person [coaching and adult learning](#) opportunities go a step further, helping to ensure parents and caregivers can access and internalize that information for the benefit of their families and communities. New digital resources also offer alternative ways to deliver information to families for anytime, anywhere learning.

Recent research<sup>5</sup> has suggested coaching, rather than only taking a case-management approach, can better equip parents to persevere and achieve their goals. Consequently, organizations are moving away from being the owners of information and experts in navigating the complex system of public and nonprofit programs and services, instead using coaching techniques to enable parents to solve problems, set goals and develop peer networks.

#### Level 1

Your organization can provide information in a number of ways to help parents and caregivers build their skills in parenting and achieving personal goals, either directly through staff or through peers. Additionally, a number of innovative, virtual options have emerged, such as the Vroom app or Text4Baby (for more information, see “Engaging Parents Virtually” on p. 23). Finding creative ways to engage parents can help families easily access the information they need to foster their children's development and feel more connected to the work your organization does.

As part of thinking about what you offer parents and caregivers, programs can incorporate adult learning strategies to make them more engaging. For example, a new program focusing on at-home literacy went from talking with parents about reading to having parents and their children attend a class that modeled quality reading and having families practice. Programs can also adopt existing, proven models that effectively use adult learning principles to advance families, such as [Parents as Teachers](#), [Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters](#), [Nurse-Family Partnership](#), the [Parent Services Project's Stronger Together](#) curriculum or the [Positive Parenting Program](#).

If your organization struggles to get parents to take advantage of your services, a good place to start is collecting information from families on how they interact with the agency and other

services. Focus groups, surveys and looking for referral patterns and preferences are good strategies.

## Level 2

If your organization already provides many services to support parents and caregivers, disseminates information in engaging and digestible ways and offers opportunities tailored to adult learning styles, then you're ready to go deeper in helping to build families' competence and confidence. Organizations working at this level think more comprehensively about the stress and adversity facing the families with whom they work. Sometimes organizations seek to address stress and often related mental health issues directly, through assessments such as the Patient Health Questionnaire-2 or the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (see "Assessing for Stress and Adversity" on p. 24 for more on the PHQ-2 and PHQ-9). Other organizations have gone further, using or adapting the [Adverse Childhood Experiences Survey](#) to determine a parent's history of adversity. Still others focus on the stress that children experience, often informed by the latest research on [toxic stress](#).

All of these efforts call for more intensive work to coordinate care for families, either through new or deeper partnerships with other organizations or by working with families and children in a way that better meets them where they are and acknowledges their experiences, particularly traumatic ones.

In addition to providing more intentional connections for some families, organizations can help create a broader sense of community among families to foster their well-being. Research shows better outcomes for families who experience services or programs in coordinated groups with other families or with a support group that links caregivers with peers within the same organization so they can collaborate and support each other. These bonds with peers who share similar experiences and challenges often help parents overcome barriers to program participation. Such connections can also break the isolation that many families — especially those with young children — can feel.

For example, Community Action Project of Tulsa County (CAP Tulsa) in Oklahoma used funding from a federal [Health Profession Opportunity Grant](#) to train parents of children participating in Head Start programs for careers in health. They designed this effort to have small groups of families who would go through the intensive training program together. Classes of about 30 parents formed early bonds and worked together to ensure one another's success, including

Engaging Parents Virtually [Vroom](#) is a virtual toolbox with hundreds of short, carefully crafted lessons that encourage parents to play simple games and make use of everyday moments to foster their child's brain development. Available as an app and online, Vroom is designed for children from birth through age 5 and tailors lessons based on a child's birth date.

[Text4Baby](#) is a free mobile service that provides information to help pregnant women and new moms care for themselves and their babies. Women who sign up for the service, offered in English and Spanish, receive free text messages every week, timed to their due date or their baby's birth. The messages cover the 12 months before and after birth.

forming study groups and helping one another with transportation, child care and other issues as they arose.

Many child- and family-serving organizations often overlook such efforts to build social networks and connections among parents, but these are key to helping families feel empowered and make connections that last beyond a service or program. They also can enable organizational leaders to design programs that better meet the needs of families.

Another innovative example is the New Haven Mental Health Outreach for MotherS (MOMS) Partnership in Connecticut. MOMS Partnership trains mothers within neighborhoods to be community ambassadors who do mental health outreach and provide information on child development in places where moms regularly go, such as grocery stores and nail salons. By creating a network of mothers who reach out to fellow mothers, help them identify stress in their lives and connect them with the emotional support and financial resources they need, MOMS hopes to improve the lives of mothers and their young children.

To prepare staff to more deeply engage with families, they must have a better understanding of the people they serve and the impact of the stress and adversity associated with living in poverty on parents and caregivers. While overcoming the immediate obstacles of poverty tends to take precedence over addressing long-term needs, research also indicates that poverty's effects on parents can make planning for the long term a challenge. Ways to train staff include tapping into new brain research and trauma-informed care, which can help your organization modify its systems, policies and practices to adapt to the challenges low-income families face.

Another proven strategy that your organization might consider taking on is more focused mentoring and coaching of parents and caregivers. Adults learn best when they are actively using skills, concepts and content directly relevant to their lives and needs.<sup>6</sup> An increasing number of programs, such as Boston's [Economic Mobility Pathways](#) (formerly Crittenton Women's Union) and Denver's [Warren Village](#) use mentoring to build on parents' strengths, actively engage them in learning and help keep families focused on long-term goals by managing or ignoring near-term challenges and distractions.

Finally, programs can help families achieve financial stability by assessing parent and caregiver skills and education levels; starting to collect data on family income, savings and work readiness; or developing partnerships with local workforce development, adult education or financial literacy

Assessing for Stress and Adversity  
A variety of tools can help organizations meet parents where they are. We include several leading assessment tools below.

- The [Adverse Childhood Experiences Survey](#) helps better serve families and children by determining whether individuals have a [history of adversity or trauma](#), linking those experiences with health outcomes.
- The [PHQ-2](#) and [PHQ-9](#) provide a validated assessment of a parent's level of mental well-being, consisting of two and nine questions, respectively.

Brain Development and Families  
[Building the Brain's "Air Traffic Control" System](#)

[Building Adult Capabilities to Improve Child Outcomes](#)

[Using Brain Science to Create New Pathways out of Poverty](#)



programs to help families access their services. For example, Connecticut's [All Our Kin](#) helps parents become licensed child care providers, thereby increasing their economic opportunities and knowledge of early childhood education, as well as the availability of high-quality early education in a community.

### Level 3

Once you are familiar with the concepts and practices around engaging families and finding ways to build on their strengths, your organization is ready to move more deeply into jointly creating programs and services, with families driving the change they want to see in their lives and communities. With this approach, parents build and act on their skills and competencies, raising their voices with confidence and helping to lead efforts within the organization, such as determining the content of training, making decisions on meeting times and locations and identifying other family and community needs that the organization could help address.

At this level, staff who work directly with parents and caregivers are proficient in the art of coaching and work with them to create goals and a road map for accomplishing those goals — with programs and services tailored to their family. Parents are often in the driver seat in coordinating peer learning opportunities, establishing networks and learning communities and maintaining support groups without the involvement of professional staff. Parents work with program staff to begin moving toward greater change within the community — on behalf of themselves and their children.

Staff also will be ready and able to step aside and let parents shape the organization's programs with an equal or leading voice in designing and selecting services and deciding how to conduct outreach and engagement overall. For example, Chicago's [Community Organizing and Family Issues](#) (COFI) has a parent leadership/community-organizing model in which parents first learn about leadership and team development. They then assess a community issue by going door-to-door to talk with other parents, refining the challenge they want to solve and building a coalition of parents, businesses and community organizations to address that issue. COFI provides structure and support for parents to lead but does not specifically set the agenda for what they are trying to change.

#### Helping Children and Families Address Trauma

Trauma-informed care recognizes the adverse effects and long-term implications of stress — resulting from poverty or violence — on children and their parents. Such care “emphasizes physical, psychological and emotional safety” for staff and families and enables the latter to “rebuild a sense of control and empowerment” ([The Trauma Informed Care Project](#)).

#### [Perspectives and Resources on Trauma-Informed Care](#)

[The Trauma Informed Care Project](#) (comprehensive list of resources)

#### [National Center for Trauma-Informed Care and Alternatives to Seclusion and Restraint](#)

#### [Helping Traumatized Children Learn](#)

## DOMAIN 3: LISTENING TO AND FORMING PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS

### Strategies to Deepen Your Work

Making progress in this area can take time, but doing so can make a significant difference for families and organizations. Remember that it is best to pick one or two of the items in the assessment to address and move ahead slowly. As you assess your progress, check in with parents and staff on how they perceive changes. Progress requires great empathy for parents and caregivers that respects the barriers they face (such as racism) and appreciates and elevates their inherent strengths. It also means a commitment to changing the fundamental relationship of professional provider as expert and parent as student to one in which both are equals. Eventually, organizations are comfortable allowing families to lead significantly in terms of helping to guide their direction and services within the community.

#### Level 1

To begin, organizations can provide simple, accessible, multilingual communications at various literacy levels to parents and caregivers. Materials are generally considered most accessible to families when they are at no higher than an eighth-grade reading level. Additionally, staff composition should reflect the people your organization serves, including race and languages spoken.

To help staff understand the families they serve, leaders can begin by ensuring their employees comprehend the realities of living with financial insecurity and working in low-wage jobs. Poverty simulations (see “Learn More: Poverty Simulations”) are a good way to orient staff and remind them of the structural challenges low-income families face, highlighting the difficulty of residing in communities that lack the resources they need to thrive.

Another simple step is providing programs and services at times when parents and caregivers can actually attend — taking the time to understand their schedules and comfort levels with meeting at your organization. For example, you may want to offer services in the evening or on weekends or provide assistance with transportation, child care or meals — if families need that kind of support — to allow them to participate.

Organizations can also strive to accommodate different needs by learning how their families differ. Do they live in rural or urban areas? Are they mostly single- or two-parent families? Knowing more about a family’s circumstances can enable staff to better meet needs.

Learn More: Poverty Simulations  
[Missouri Community Action Network's Poverty Simulation](#) promotes greater understanding of poverty by having participants role-play a month in the lives of low-income families trying to meet basic needs.

[Access of West Michigan](#) does a poverty simulation workshop that allows participants to experience the daily struggle of low-income families and motivate them to become involved in activities that help reduce poverty in our communities.

[Playspent.org](#) is an online tool by Urban Ministries of Durham that simulates the struggles of living on a limited income. Users must make decisions, such as where to work and live, trying to make ends meet for 30 days.

In addition, organizations can give parents and caregivers opportunities to develop their leadership skills. Do you have a parent volunteer who would like to organize a workshop or lead an exercise class? Developing programming driven by and for parents and caregivers is a good way to signal to families that they are valued and an asset to the work in the community. Policy councils within Head Start organizations are a good model for structuring time and space for parents and caregivers to weigh in on program decisions and reflect on what is and isn't working within the organization. Frequent focus groups or surveys can be invaluable vehicles for engaging parents, especially those who may not have time for regular participation through meetings or committees. For example, the Children's Museum of Atlanta uses its text-messaging system to not only notify parents and caregivers of upcoming events and activities but also to ask simple questions about the types of programs and scheduling they most want.

## Level 2

After strengthening organizational and staff methods of listening to parents and caregivers, many nonprofits and schools have gone on to create additional leadership opportunities for them. Organizations can form parent advisory councils or ask parents to serve on their board of directors. Ideally, a critical mass of parents and caregivers, instead of just one, would serve on the board to bring a range of voices and perspectives and help create an environment in which their opinion matters. For example, Boston's [Thrive in 5](#) initiative, which aimed to ensure all city children had what they needed to succeed in school and beyond, required all subgrantees to have parents represent one-third of their board members. This helped ensure biases and assumptions about parents and their lives did not shape or drive organizational priorities. With parents and caregivers in the room helping to lead the work, you can embed the authentic voice, needs and strengths of families throughout your organization.

Organizations can also arrange to have meetings in places convenient to families. For example, parents frequently prefer to meet in their own homes or neighborhoods. In addition to balancing the power dynamics as mentioned previously, meeting where parents feel comfortable helps reduce the burdens of traveling to an office and having to find care for their children. Your organization could adopt one of many research-based or promising home-visitation models, such as [Parents as Teachers](#), [Nurse-Family Partnership](#) and [others](#), so that you can connect with families where they are most comfortable. Even without a home-visiting program, staff willingness to meet in neighborhoods close to families makes it easier for them to get the support they need.

Additionally, organizations can enhance family engagement through programs that enable parents and caregivers to hone their leadership skills (such as how to organize their peers for a common cause) and apply them in a project that strengthens their community. The [Parent Leadership Training Institute](#) is one key resource for developing parent leaders, helping to build their skills as change agents for their children by engaging in self-reflection; practicing democratic skills such as voting and policy advocacy; and leading a project to improve some aspect of their

community. Another is I am a Leader, a program of [CDF](#), which includes two components: (1) a training program for parents to develop their leadership skills and, once completed, (2) a team project to improve early childhood education in Clarkston, Georgia. Such leadership programs can advance community change efforts and lay the groundwork for launching new ones to address a variety of neighborhood issues. In the case of I am a Leader, participants have focused on helping the early childhood education system serve the large multicultural community of refugees in Clarkston. One project led to a bigger effort to train more early educators who come from the communities served.

Organizations can focus on making a long-term commitment to an issue, place or both, spanning multiple years to build trust and effect multistage change.

### Level 3

Organizations that have done many of the things described in the first and second levels are well on their way to fostering more authentic parent engagement. Leaders can further do so by establishing and promoting a family-centered agenda, in which parents and caregivers determine the family goals and activities they and the organization will focus on and pursue.

Parent ambassadors, for example, not only provide important feedback to organizations but also can help strengthen parents' confidence and skills as they work alongside program staff. Though many of these positions are voluntary, some provide a stipend or salary that helps support families, build self-confidence and show value for parents and caregivers on par with professionals in an organization. Other organizations find ways to allow families to take ownership of programs and services. [CASA de Maryland](#), which serves low-income immigrant communities, describes its 60,000 participants as members rather than clients. Participants pay a \$25 membership fee that covers a vast number of classes and services, as well as a vibrant social network, among other benefits. Parents and caregivers represent one-third of the organization's board, enhancing their skills in managing programs, budgets and being part of a board structure — which, in turn, enhances their ability and confidence to speak up and on behalf of their community.

Another important strategy involves using learning communities to foster collaboration and share wisdom on multiple levels. Organizations develop such communities for parents and professional staff to discuss families' needs and how to design and deliver services. They are a vehicle for organizations and parents to exchange information, share lessons and jointly develop solutions beyond the boundaries of one organization.

Some organizations have created ambassador roles, in which parents and caregivers recruit and serve their peers. These ambassadors can be highly effective in building trust and community within your programs. Initially, they might simply provide organizational information to parents and caregivers and encourage them to follow up if they are interested and want to learn more. Peer

networking could be episodic (such as a community movie night) or ongoing (such as parent meet-ups, which Boston's Thrive in 5 regularly hosted).

Other programs have also found ways for parents to work alongside staff to recruit other families to participate in particular services or events. [Raising A Reader Massachusetts](#) uses volunteer parent ambassadors to coach other parents on how to read to their kids and foster early literacy, and early data show this approach has led more parents to participate. The [New Haven MOMS Partnership](#) goes a step further, hiring local mothers as staff in their Community Ambassadors program. These ambassadors receive training in promoting health, child development and mental wellness and are trusted referral sources for fellow mothers in their community. Finally, the [Magnolia Place Community Initiative](#) in Los Angeles and [AVANCE](#), a parent skill- and confidence-building training program, have developed ways to identify and hire parents (or have them volunteer) to lead a specific group of new parents through programs.

## DOMAIN 4: PARTNERING WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TO BENEFIT FAMILIES

### Strategies to Deepen Your Work

You can quickly find and put in place ways to build a seamless system of services across various organizations for parents and caregivers. Rewiring existing programs for ease of use makes it much more likely that families and communities will actually take advantage of them. Even just providing information on available services that families can access at any time or place can make a difference.

As organizations develop better relationships with others serving families in their community, they can begin to create more formal, stronger partnerships and alliances. For example, having memoranda of understanding between organizations can improve families' access to services, as well as the level of services they receive. Finally, organizations can pursue one of the increasingly prominent models of community alignment to establish shared goals, strategies and practices for the benefit of families.

### Level 1

Taking a more comprehensive approach to working with families is a critical step in achieving whatever outcomes your organization hopes to realize. You don't have to do it all, but you do need to connect the dots for families to provide programs and services as seamlessly as possible. To improve referral services, organizations can collect data on how families interact with the agency and other services (through surveys or examining referral patterns and preferences). Staff who work directly with families should have time to develop their familiarity and relationships with other key organizations so that families experience a warm handoff (e.g., a phone call or email introduction) instead of a cold referral (e.g., the phone number to the Medicaid office). Ideally, all the organizations with whom you work also respect families and share a similar spirit of inclusion and equity.

Leadership can set up roundtables or luncheons so staff can meet others within the community, helping to form these relationships and a deeper understanding of available resources. You could set aside slots for professional development sessions at your organization for staff from partner organizations to provide an opportunity to learn together, build relationships and increase your collective capacity to serve the community.

You and your partners also can streamline or replace similar administrative processes with universal ones that all of you share. For example, a comprehensive needs assessment is a critical part of understanding where families are starting from in terms of their strengths, needs and goals for themselves and their children. The [Garrett County Community Action Committee](#) in Maryland recently revamped its needs assessment to focus on a "Crisis to Thriving" scale that asks families to identify where they are in a range of areas including employment, housing, child

care and self-esteem/motivation. The nonprofit uses this form with other partners across the county and is helping a neighboring county's community action agency adopt a similar intake form. Moreover, in Florida, the [Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County](#) has worked across multiple organizations and county agencies to develop a streamlined assessment tool to help identify and connect services around a family's needs.

## Level 2

If your organization has accomplished most of the items in Level 1, then you are ready to deepen partnerships with others in your community to better serve families. Your organization can consider using learning communities to foster collaboration among agencies, and with parents, and share wisdom on multiple levels. Organizations can develop such communities for parents and professional staff to discuss families' needs and how to design and deliver services. Learning communities can also add value across organizations within a given neighborhood or across neighborhoods. They are a vehicle for exchanging information, sharing lessons and jointly developing solutions beyond the boundaries of one organization.

To improve coordination and meet parent and caregiver needs across programs, organizations can enter into deep programmatic partnerships. Often defined through memoranda of understanding, such partnerships seek to align services to make programs fit together more smoothly and facilitate families' access to them. A critically important part of this work involves aligning data systems across organizations. Creating true two-generation approaches across programs or in a community requires being able to understand the services and outcomes for all family members. Indeed, many two-generation programs have worked tirelessly to align data systems and develop common data elements and outcome goals. In Atlanta, for example, partners [Educare Atlanta](#) and [the Center for Working Families Inc.](#) not only share their data with each other but also with families so that parents can provide input on what program changes are needed and engage in their own progress.

The goals around this work are typically twofold. First, organizations aim to provide seamless services that meet a range of family needs for shared goals, rather than inadvertently working at cross-purposes. Second, organizations undertake this work to consciously maximize resources

## Learn More: Two-Generation Approaches

Two-generation approaches connect low-income families with early childhood education, job training and other tools to achieve financial stability and break the cycle of poverty. The following provide more information on these approaches:

- [Creating Opportunity for Families](#), a KIDS COUNT policy report, describes two-generation approaches to reducing poverty and recommends ways to equip parents and kids with what they need to thrive.
- [Ascend at the Aspen Institute](#), a national hub of two-generation programs, policy ideas and research, hosts a network of leaders from various sectors who are working to bridge child and adult services, systems and policies.
- National Human Services Assembly produced two reports on two-generation strategies [for young parents who are not in school or working](#) and on [addressing the needs of young families](#).
- [The Future of Children's Helping Parents, Helping Children](#) provides a strong research base for what we know and have yet to learn about these strategies.

across pools of funding. One of the greatest challenges family-serving organizations face is meeting various parent needs with limited and sometimes inflexible funding. Accordingly, they seek partnerships to leverage or complement their funding. Memoranda of understanding often help articulate roles and responsibilities, allow for shared data and ensure caseworkers across organizations work in tandem to help families achieve their goals.

### Level 3

Organizations strive to align their work with other providers in their community around common family-engagement approaches. Accordingly, they develop shared goals that help create interlocking services (eliminating gaps) and maximize resources across funding pools. A number of the [Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#) communities have coordinated the development of community-wide goals, as well as the activities necessary to realize them.

One exemplary community alignment effort is [READ! Reading Success by 4th Grade](#), a Springfield, Massachusetts, initiative to improve reading proficiency for third-graders. Community leaders have developed a blueprint with annual reading goals and strategies executed by multiple community organizations.

Part of this work will include partnering with organizations that can help parents and caregivers who are interested in finding pathways to better-paying jobs. Organizations serving children can form partnerships with adult literacy, higher education or other training programs to co-locate programs and help parents pursue in-demand degrees and credentials. For example, the Nurse-Family Partnership in Indianapolis has worked with Goodwill Industries to help parents gain access to job training and other employment services to help stabilize their families' finances.

Finally, Garrett County's health department runs the area's home-visiting program, but Garrett County Community Action Committee's leadership encouraged the county to layer in an online GED program that would allow participating parents and caregivers to work toward earning their GED. This, in turn, would enable them to move forward on a path to increase their education or qualify for higher-skilled jobs in the community.



## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, we use the term “parent,” but we define the term as anyone who is a child’s primary caregiver, including adoptive parents, grandparents, other family members and nonrelatives.

<sup>2</sup> Hoover-Dempsey, K. V. & Sandler, H. M. (1997). Why do parents become involved in their children’s education? *Review of Educational Research*, 67(1), 3–42. Retrieved from <http://rer.sagepub.com/content/67/1/3.abstract>

<sup>3</sup> Ishimaru, A. M., & Lott, J. (2014). *Charting a course to equitable collaboration: Learning from parent engagement initiatives in the Road Map Project*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington. Retrieved from [http://education.uw.edu/sites/default/files/research/projects/epsc/EquitableCollaborationReport\\_0.pdf](http://education.uw.edu/sites/default/files/research/projects/epsc/EquitableCollaborationReport_0.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Halgunseth, L., Peterson, A., Stark, D. R., & Moodie, S. (2009). *Family engagement, diverse families, and early childhood education programs: An integrated review of the literature*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children and Pre-K Now. Retrieved from [www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/research/FamEngage.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/research/FamEngage.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2007). *Financial coaching: A new approach for asset building?* Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved from [www.aecf.org/resources/financial-coaching](http://www.aecf.org/resources/financial-coaching). And, Center on the Developing Child. (2016). *Building adult capabilities to improve child outcomes: A theory of change*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University. Retrieved from <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/building-adult-capabilities-to-improve-child-outcomes-a-theory-of-change>  
For research on coaching parents about early learning, see Kemp, P. & Turnbull, A. P. (2014). Coaching with parents in early intervention: An interdisciplinary research synthesis. *Infants and Young Children*, 27(4), 305–324. Retrieved from [http://journals.lww.com/iyjournal/Fulltext/2014/10000/Coaching\\_With\\_Parents\\_in\\_Early\\_Intervention\\_\\_An.4.aspx](http://journals.lww.com/iyjournal/Fulltext/2014/10000/Coaching_With_Parents_in_Early_Intervention__An.4.aspx)

Economic Mobility Pathways’ Mobility Mentoring is one example of a strong coaching model. For more information, visit [www.empathways.org/our-work/mobility-mentoring](http://www.empathways.org/our-work/mobility-mentoring).

<sup>6</sup> For more information on adult learning, see [https://teal.ed.gov/sites/default/files/Fact-Sheets/11\\_%20TEAL\\_Adult\\_Learning\\_Theory.pdf](https://teal.ed.gov/sites/default/files/Fact-Sheets/11_%20TEAL_Adult_Learning_Theory.pdf).