

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR TWO GENERATIONS



Creating opportunities for both children and parents through intentional, holistic approaches can lead to more effective programs and policies for Coloradans. Improving the outcomes for both families and children by strengthening the system of services that support them is at the core of two-generation approaches. When the needs of children are being addressed, parents are better able to explore their own hopes and opportunities; and when parents are more secure in their own opportunities, they will be better able to support the healthy development of their young children.

Building upon the lessons of programs supporting student parents and their children, Colorado can expand upon two-generation approaches to better address equity barriers and provide opportunities for all Coloradans to succeed.

WHY USE A TWO-GENERATION APPROACH FOR STUDENT PARENTS?

Families, especially those in marginalized communities and enduring poverty, encounter multiple social stressors that make it particularly difficult for parents to access what they need to build a strong foundation for themselves and their children.

Here are just a few **national trends**:

- **1 in 5 undergraduate college students are parents**, out of which the largest share (42%) is enrolled in community colleges ¹
- Over half (53%) of student parents have children under age 6 ²
- **52% of student parents drop out of college** without a degree or certificate, compared with a third (32%) of students without children ³

In Colorado:

- About half of people (51%) live in **childcare deserts** ⁴
- Less than a third (29%) of public community colleges in the state offer **on-campus childcare** ⁵
- In Denver, **nearly half (49%) of the median income** for single-mother families goes to childcare ⁶



COMPONENTS OF THE STRENGTHENING WORKING FAMILIES INITIATIVE (SWFI)

This initiative boosts the power of community college education, childcare and employment systems in Denver by working closely with students who are parents, whose access to these resources has become increasingly complex, by providing the following:

- **Tuition support:** to leverage financial aid scholarships and grants to cover costs of education, including transportation
- **College bridging:** to help nontraditional students prepare for college classes
- **Academic coaching:** to navigate higher education systems
- **Childcare navigation:** to identify and navigate childcare options and leverage available financial support
- **Career advising:** to help with job placement and retention through hard and soft skills, as well as employment training



Dollar flexibility. One of the most uncommon and beneficial aspects of the SWFI is the discretion on dollars that students are granted, allowing them to decide how they spend their allocations. Because of the many demands on them, student parents often face unexpected expenses that determine the extent of their engagement in school. Flexible funds are a way to keep parents engaged and retrained.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR FAMILIES AND THE LARGER COMMUNITY?

As families are supported through SWFI, parents get access to education and jobs at the same time children enter higher-quality childcare, which together create improved building blocks for a brighter future.

Of 176 students who got SWFI supports at Community College of Aurora and Community College of Denver in 2018–19:

One-third (33%) have completed courses and obtained a degree or credential, compared with about 10% of the general community college student population.

Nearly one-third (28%) have obtained employment.⁷

\$34,064 of the scholarship money provided to students has been allocated to childcare expenses.



For parents:

- More time spent combining work and education among parents is associated with several hundred dollars in higher earnings at age 30.⁸
- People with associate degrees earn, on average, 22% more than those with only high school degrees.⁹

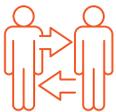


For children:

- \$3,000 more invested in early childhood education results in 17% higher incomes for those children later in life.¹⁰
- Parents' education level significantly predicts educational and occupational success for the child 40 years later.¹¹

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS¹²

Some key lessons from the SWFI program have yielded ideas for policy that may support the implementation and continuation of two-generation approaches in the community college setting and beyond:



Establish **proactive and standardized data collection and sharing** that allows for early identification of student parents as well as measurement of impact on parents and children



Provide **greater flexible scholarship funding** that goes beyond tuition to include supportive services (e.g., transportation) and emergencies



Include **flexible childcare funding support** in financial aid that may cover gaps for CCCAP enrollment and allows discretionary spending to best fit needs of families



Increase **investment in career counseling and coaching** to connect students to employers more effectively



Create **family-friendly spaces on campus** both to help student parents as well as to increase awareness of their importance within the community college setting

WHAT ROLE CAN FUNDERS PLAY?

Foundations often provide the first money to inject momentum into efforts like SWFI, which propels program impact and builds the argument for expanded funding. Because of this, foundations are critical sources of dollars to establish the baseline through which public-private partnership opportunities emerge to build the needed wraparound supports. Take a look at the strategies we're using to redesign structures so they work better for students and their families as a whole, read more in our white paper, and connect with SWFI efforts at the link below.

WWW.CO-SWFI.COM

SOURCES

¹ Institute for Women's Policy Research. (2018). *Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015–16 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study.*

² Ibid.

³ U.S. Government Accountability Office. (August 2019). *Higher education: More information could help student parents access additional federal student aid* (report to congressional requesters).

⁴ Augenblick, Palaich and Associates. (2019). *Investigating the need for shared services organization for child care providers in three communities.*

⁵ Institute for Women's Policy Research. (FY 2016–2018). *Analysis of approved CCDF plans.*

⁶ Colorado Children's Campaign, The Women's Foundation of Colorado and Qualistar Colorado. (2014). *Child care prices and affordability: A struggle for Colorado families & providers.*

⁷ The Civic Canopy. (2019). *Strengthening Working Families Initiative child care learning community, 2018–2019 chronicle.*

⁸ Spaulding, S., Sandstorm, H., & Sick, H. (2019). *Supporting young parents as they advance their education and careers.* Urban Institute.

⁹ Miller, K., & Gault, B. (2011). Institute for Women's Policy Research. *Improving child care access to promote postsecondary success among low-income parents.*

¹⁰ Duncan, G., & Magnuson, K. (Winter 2011). The long reach of early childhood poverty. *Pathways*, 23–27.

¹¹ Dubow, E. F., Boxer, P., & Huesmann, R. (Jul 2009). Long-term effects of parents' education on children's educational and occupational success: Mediation by family interactions, child aggression, and teenage aspirations. *Merrill Palmer Q (Wayne State Univ Press)*, 55(3): 224–249.

¹² Bell Policy Center. (2019). *SWFI: Moving lessons learned into policy proposals.*