



Connecticut Two-Generational (2Gen) Initiative

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 unique challenges presented by the pandemic, the 2Gen Initiative advanced work in key areas. Below are the pertinent updates from 2021.

Parent Engagement

As required by C.G.S. [Sec. 17b-112I](#), 25% of the members of the 2Gen Advisory Board are parent leaders with lived experience of poverty. These parents received training on the 2Gen Initiative, state government, and legislative process, and now participate as equal members in high-level policy discussions. All parents are compensated for their engagement.

In summer 2021, parents received additional training through a three-day 2Gen Parent Academy, co-designed and developed with 2Gen parent leaders. Parents were involved in all aspects of the 2Gen benefits cliffs [CT CLIFF](#) study and policy analysis with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta (Atlanta Fed). In July 2021, parents received training in research methods and assisted in the University of Connecticut (UConn) evaluation of the CT CLIFF study by conducting key informant interviews.

Two of the parents were elevated in leadership, now serving as co-chairs of two of the work groups. Through a partnership with the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS), parent leaders now serve on 8 of the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC) subcommittees, including on the committee that will advise on the \$10 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for workforce.

Over the past 7 years, the Connecticut 2Gen Initiative has established a respected framework and infrastructure for parent engagement in state government. 2Gen parents were involved in the design and development of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) Parent Cabinet. The 2Gen model informed the development of a Resident Advisory Board for the [Preschool through 20 Workforce Information Network \(P2OWIN\)](#). 2Gen also provided parent voice in the development of MyCT.

Benefits Cliffs

The 2Gen Benefits Cliffs Work Group, formed in June 2019, has led statewide efforts to address [benefits cliffs](#) through data collection and analysis and development of policy solutions. These efforts have made Connecticut a national leader in this work. The 2Gen work group is providing support and guidance to Maine, Kentucky, Alabama, and other states as they pursue similar direction. Below are the major milestones from these efforts.

In summer 2020, the 2Gen work group in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta (Atlanta Fed) created – 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.

From April to July 2021, the 2Gen work group beta-tested use of the CT CLIFF tool at four sites in Connecticut, including an early childhood education center, high school, and two job centers. UConn conducted the evaluation, showing promising results, and informing a broader adoption of the tool statewide.

The Atlanta Fed, in partnership with the 2Gen work group and GWC, simulated state policy options to the cliff effect. By using the CT CLIFF tool and the [Policy Rules Database](#), the Atlanta Fed was able to simulate state policy proposals along family type, public benefits package, career pathway, and region.

These simulations represent a culmination of several years of research and collaborative decision-making by the 2Gen work group and their many partners. Program experts were consulted at length to provide insight on what would be viable and effective in each program. Policies simulated include changes to cash assistance, housing, child care, and tax credits.

Workforce

In summer 2021, the Governor signed into law changes to the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program that include elimination of the "family cap" and, beginning in Fiscal Year 2024, requiring benefit increases to be provided in years when the program lapses funds, if certain conditions are met. The 2Gen Workforce Work Group played a role in recommending these changes. The work group also worked with state agency partners to implement administrative changes to the jobs element of the program, including but not limited to private vehicle transportation for those in training and employment.

The Fiscal Year 2022 budget implementer legislation mandates that by January 1, 2022, the Chief Workforce Officer must submit state workforce strategy recommendations to the Governor that include those advised by the 2Gen Advisory Board. The 2Gen Workforce Work Group supported this recommendation process to inform a statewide workforce plan that supports families.

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. Connecticut participated in biweekly calls Whole Family Approach to Jobs calls through the duration of the pandemic and sent delegates to the annual virtual conferences in spring and summer 2021. Connecticut contributed to the ACF publication, [COVID-19 the Family, State and Federal Policy: Lessons Learned in New England](#) that was used nationally and informed the new staff of the Biden Administration.

Connecticut participated in the regional work groups on racial equity, parent engagement, and ARPA, formed in fall 2021. These regional work groups enabled Connecticut to bring a 2Gen lens to ARPA proposals, plans, and eventual implementation.