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Implementing Career Pathway Training with a Family Focus: The Two-
Generation Approach of the Community Action Project of Tulsa, Oklahoma in
Pathways to Careers in Health Care

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Implementing Career Pathway Training with a Family Focus

The Two-Generation Approach of the Community Action Project of Tulsa, Oklahoma

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Innovative workforce development strategies aimed at preparing low-income adults for career employment in the twenty-first century economy are expanding across the United States. Indeed, this volume focuses on sector-based career pathway training programs, one of the most promising new approaches. This chapter presents the implementation and evaluation of *CareerAdvance*[®], a career pathway training program with an explicit focus on low-income families with young children. *CareerAdvance*[®] combines high-quality early childhood services for children with career training and employment supports for their parents. Career pathway training programs targeted to families seek to increase parent education, employment, and earnings, and in turn to improve children's development.

The Community Action Project of Tulsa County, Oklahoma (CAP Tulsa), an antipoverty agency, is at the forefront of innovation in workforce development for low-income parents. CAP Tulsa's *CareerAdvance*[®] program takes a two-generation human capital approach, promoting the education and skills of parents and children together. The program recruits parents from CAP Tulsa's high-quality, no-cost early childhood education centers and prepares them for health care careers, a

growth sector of the local economy. *CareerAdvance*[®] also offers support services to parents, including career coaching, peer supports, employment services, and financial assistance.

The Health Profession Opportunity Grants 1.0 program provided CAP Tulsa with an unprecedented opportunity to bring *CareerAdvance*[®] to scale, expanding from 40 to over 300 families served.¹ CAP Tulsa is the only HPOG grantee with an intervention designed explicitly to serve parents, and *CareerAdvance*[®] is the only sectoral career pathway program under study that offers human capital services to parents *and* children simultaneously.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the *CareerAdvance*[®] program; offer preliminary findings, including program participants' experiences and reactions to the innovation; and discuss how CAP Tulsa has evolved in its two-generation approach. The chapter concludes with insights for program administrators and policy-makers interested in promoting sector-based career pathway programs for families.

BACKGROUND

Head Start is the largest federally funded early childhood education program targeted to low-income children and takes a whole-family approach, making it a promising platform for testing a two-generation human capital approach. Community colleges (and their nonprofit, technical school counterparts) are increasingly serving student parents with similar sociodemographic characteristics of Head Start parents. Many student parents in community colleges have young children, and 15 percent are single parents (Horn, Nevill, and Griffith 2006).

Community colleges often have had disappointing results in helping low-income student parents overcome barriers and reach their educational goals (Goldrick-Rab and Sorenson 2010; Miller, Gault, and Thorman 2011). For example, among unmarried parents who started postsecondary education in 1995–1996, fewer than 17 percent attained an associate's or bachelor's degree within six years (Goldrick-Rab and Sorenson 2010). Workforce programs also struggle to address common barriers faced by low-income parents, such as access to quality, reli-

able child care, social isolation, and few financial resources (Gardner, Brooks-Gunn, and Chase-Lansdale 2017).

Workforce training programs aimed specifically at young, low-income parents on public assistance were launched in the 1980s and 1990s. Yet these programs (e.g., Project Redirection; New Chance Demonstration; Teenage Parent Demonstration; and Learning, Earning, and Parenting Program) were largely ineffective in promoting GED attainment, employment, or exits from welfare (Granger and Cytron 1999; Heckman 2000). Similarly, workforce development programs for the broader population of economically disadvantaged adults that began in the same era (such as JTPA) also had lackluster effects on parent human capital (Bloom et al. 1993; Heckman, LaLonde, and Smith 1999).

Yet, an expanding innovation in the field of job training programs—sector-based career pathway training—has shown promise for low-income adults (King and Prince 2015). Sector-based career pathway training programs have produced positive impacts on educational persistence and certification, and they have improved earnings and income—especially when combined with financial incentives and wraparound support services (Esyster, Anderson, and Durham 2013; Holzer 2009). The effectiveness of career pathway training targeted specifically to parents with young children is unknown.

Why would such an approach be effective? First and foremost, parenthood is no longer viewed as a barrier but rather as an advantage to parent participation in workforce training. Parents who see their children thriving and learning in school may become inspired to pursue their own educational goals (Gelber and Isen 2013; Love et al. 2013; Sommer et al. 2012). Early childhood education programs have also been recognized as an ideal platform for serving parents and children together (Chase-Lansdale and Brooks-Gunn 2014).

Second, a two-generation approach addresses logistical challenges parents commonly face. Coordinated parent and child school schedules can help parents balance the competing demands of school, work, and the care of young children. Offering child care before and after school also ensures that children are fully cared for while parents attend classes and training.

Third, career pathway training programs with close ties to employers and employment can help reduce parental stress and financial worry and make finding career employment more likely (Chase-

Lansdale, Sommer, Sabol, Brooks-Gunn et al. 2019). Career employment increases attachment to work and likely leads to increasing wages over time, and which may in turn expand available resources at home that benefit children.

Fourth, early childhood education programs can help address social isolation by strengthening social capital (Small 2009; Sommer et al. 2016). Early childhood education centers can serve as safe, trusted communities that support the best interests of children and offer opportunities for social connection among parents, teachers, and staff (Chase-Lansdale and Brooks-Gunn 2014).

Finally, two-generation interventions may increase service efficiencies. Community-based partnerships that align programming and draw on the specialized expertise and organizational structures already in place are well positioned to target and streamline services. High-quality early childhood education centers, such as Head Start, with embedded family support services are likely to be well equipped to help parents set goals, access emergency assistance and other financial supports, and address a broad range of family needs (e.g., housing and mental health services). Likewise, innovative and well-funded community colleges are likely to have the expertise and resources to support occupational skills training, employment services, and academic issues (e.g., tutoring, academic and career coaching).

THE CAREERADVANCE[®] PROGRAM MODEL

CAP Tulsa became the Head Start and Early Head Start grantee for the majority of Tulsa County in 1998 (King et al. 2009). A decade later, through the visionary leadership of CAP Tulsa's Executive Director Steven Dow, the agency expanded its investments to include a more intensive focus on the education and employment of the parents of children participating in its early childhood education centers. CAP Tulsa began enrolling parents in CareerAdvance[®] in 2009 and dramatically expanded its reach in 2010 with HPOG 1.0 funds (CAP Tulsa also received HPOG 2.0 funds in 2015). Below we describe the CareerAdvance[®] program's key components during the HPOG 1.0 grant period.

Early childhood education. CAP Tulsa serves over 2,000 children each year through Head Start, Early Head Start, and Oklahoma's state-funded early education program, in addition to a smaller (250 children) home visiting program. The agency's early education centers are of unusually high quality. Teachers have bachelor's degrees and engage in high-quality teacher-child interactions as measured by the CLASS assessment system. CAP Tulsa's early childhood education services also have been shown to increase school readiness in the short term and reduce grade retention and chronic absenteeism in elementary and middle school (Gormley, Phillips, and Gayer 2008; Phillips, Gormley, and Anderson 2016).

Sector-based career training. CAP Tulsa's two-generation human capital approach uses a sector-based approach to improve parents' chances for securing stable employment and higher wages by identifying and targeting promising areas of the local economy. Market analyses of Tulsa identified health care as a growth sector (Glover, King, and Carter Smith 2012). Through cross-agency partnerships with Tulsa Community College and Tulsa Technology Center, CAP Tulsa purchased entry-level certification classes and paid full tuition, fees, and related school costs for parents accepted into the program.

Stackable credentials. CAP Tulsa offers credentialing at multiple levels in the nursing and health information technology fields in partnership with two local colleges. The goal is for parents to obtain career employment with family-supporting wages, job stability, and opportunities for career advancement and wage growth (King et al. 2009). For example, a parent might pursue short-term certification, such as a nursing assistant training earning only \$9–\$12 per hour, in order to minimize time demands on the family when a child is very young. The parent may then progress to a more challenging and time-intensive college-level training, such as a licensed nurse practitioner making \$16–\$20 per hour, when a child enters elementary school.

Employment services. Partnerships with local health care employers in search of job candidates are also a key component of the program. Under HPOG 1.0, CAP Tulsa began with a workforce intermediary or partner to match the needs of employers with the skills of workers, in

the form of the local workforce board (Chase-Lansdale and Brooks-Gunn 2014; Giloth 2004).

Training and certification geared toward the needs of the local employers may be more likely to lead to stable employment and higher earnings than just “getting any job” (Holzer and Martinson 2005; Jenkins 2006). Yet this strategy can be challenging for a special population, such as parents of young children, in which employer demands and family needs must be considered. CAP Tulsa has developed several key supportive program elements, such as coaching, peer supports, and financial incentives, to help parents manage competing demands.

Coaching and peer support. Early education programs such as Head Start are well designed to support parents. CAP Tulsa families were already receiving family support services, including referrals to community-based services (e.g., housing and mental health services) and emergency assistance and other financial supports. The *CareerAdvance*[®] program added academic coaches as a supplement to CAP Tulsa’s Family Support services. Career coaches hold individualized sessions with parents to address barriers, offer problem-solving strategies and social support, and develop a career advancement plan. The plan helps parents learn goal setting, planning, and accountability skills, which may promote self-efficacy and attachment to careers.

Meetings with small groups of Head Start parents (15 each) allow for frequent (weekly) exposure and interaction among parents. Led by career coaches employed by CAP Tulsa, these meetings help parents develop career-related skills, such as job interview skills and business etiquette, and provide advising on college readiness, course selection, and career counseling. Peer groups also discuss self-empowerment and self-advocacy, stress management, and nutrition. Central to both coaching and peer supports is the building of social capital among parents and staff, increasing social connection and support for addressing their near- and far-term needs (Small 2009; Sommer et al. 2016).

Incentives and other financial supports. *CareerAdvance*[®] is intentionally structured to reduce the financial burden of returning to school by offering tuition-free classes, free books and materials (such as stethoscopes and scrubs), and incentives for participation. These supports are meant to offset the costs of returning to school, including

the loss of income when parents either reduce work hours or exit the labor force to focus on their education. Moreover, many low-income students who enroll in postsecondary education incur significant debt, even with scholarships and grants (Goldrick-Rab and Sorenson 2010), and often leave before completing a degree, which likely would have led to higher earnings. To help offset the range of financial concerns, *CareerAdvance*[®] participants can earn up to \$3,000 annually for regular attendance in classes and peer group meetings, achieving certification or employment milestones, gaining at least six credit hours, and maintaining a 3.0 grade point average. Parents also receive vouchers to pay for after-hour child care for children enrolled in CAP Tulsa's early childhood education centers, children on CAP Tulsa's waiting list, or older siblings.

THE EFFECTS OF TWO-GENERATION HUMAN CAPITAL PROGRAMS ON PARENTS AND CHILDREN IN HEAD START

To date, there have been few studies of the effectiveness of two-generation human capital program models. One randomized control evaluation studied the Enhanced Early Head Start's influence on parents' human capital but did not involve intensive or on-site services for parents: parents were referred to existing community-based services and expected to access them on their own. The experiment showed no significant differences between treatment and control groups in parenting, employment, education, earnings, or child development three years after program start. Possible explanations for the lack of impacts include the low-intensity program model for parents, which typically involved simple referrals to other services without follow-up, combined with varying levels of expertise and comfort among the Early Head Start staff in supporting parent human capital services (Hsueh and Farrell 2012).

CAP Tulsa's *CareerAdvance*[®] program employs an alternative, more intensive model involving support services provided by staff with specialized expertise on-site at Head Start centers, the intentional alignment and coordination of services for parents and children, and mutually beneficial Head Start and community college partnerships. A descriptive analysis of persistence and completion among the first

CareerAdvance[®] program entrants (N = 92) showed promise for parents: 76 percent of program enrollees attained at least one health care certificate 16 months after enrollment (two consecutive semesters with or without a summer break), and 58 percent remained in the program 16 months after program start. Of those who left the program during the first 16 months, 68 percent attained a work-applicable certificate (Sabol et al. 2015).

Recent Evaluation of CareerAdvance[®]

The most recent evaluation of CareerAdvance[®] examined the one-year effects of program participation on parent human capital, parent psychological well-being, and children's Head Start attendance. The study used quasi-experimental methods to estimate the average treatment effect of CareerAdvance[®] combined with quality early childhood education (e.g., Head Start) among a total sample of almost 300 families, including program enrollees and a matched-comparison group who received early education services only (Chase-Lansdale, Sommer, Sabol, Chor et al. 2019; Sommer et al. 2019). The evaluation measured the added effect of parent career pathway training to high-quality early learning services, which included center-based care for children, emergency financial services for families, and goal setting for parents. The study found that one year of CareerAdvance[®] participation promoted parents' career certificate attainment and employment in the health care sector and boosted parent psychological well-being. CareerAdvance[®] also improved children's Head Start attendance and reduced chronic absenteeism. The findings, all of which are statistically significant, are described in more detail below.

Almost two-thirds (61 percent) of CareerAdvance[®] enrollees achieved at least one health care certification in one year compared to 4 percent of the matched-comparison group. These rates are high, even when compared to national rates over a much longer time frame among all community college students, of whom 53 percent achieved a certificate or degree within six years of community college enrollment (Nelson, Froehner, and Gault 2013). CareerAdvance[®] certification rates are also favorable when compared with similar career training programs (Card, Kluge, and Weber 2015). For example, experimental studies of WorkAdvance, a program with intensive support services that was largely serving student parents, found that the program increased

credential attainment by 25 percentage points compared to the control group (Hendra et al. 2016), a much smaller gain than experienced by CareerAdvance® enrollees.

CareerAdvance® also improved sector-based employment: 51 percent of parents in the program were employed in the health care sector compared to 27 percent in the matched-comparison group. Participation in CareerAdvance® did not have a significant effect on hourly earnings, yet the CareerAdvance® group also did not report higher levels of material hardship. This may have occurred because the program offered financial incentives of, on average, about \$1,800 per year that may have offset the income loss over the course of the year among this group (about \$1,300 per year).

CareerAdvance® parents also reported higher levels of commitment to work, greater levels of self-efficacy, and higher levels of optimism one year after program entry compared to the matched-comparison group (Chase-Lansdale et al. 2019). Parents also did not report higher levels of perceived stress or psychological stress after one year of CareerAdvance® participation combined with Head Start services.

Average rates of children's Head Start attendance were 5.13 percent higher in the CareerAdvance® group than the matched comparison group after one semester (Sommer et al., forthcoming). This translates into CareerAdvance® children attending Head Start about five more days than matched comparison children over one semester. CareerAdvance® participation was also associated with significant reductions in children's chronic absence. The proportion of children who were chronically absent among the CareerAdvance® group was 37 percent compared to 59 percent among the matched comparison group, a 22 percentage point difference.

EXPLORING POSSIBLE MECHANISMS FOR EFFECTS OF CAREERADVANCE®

Unpacking Effects on Parents

Descriptive data from annual focus groups with parents who both continued in and exited the CareerAdvance® program during HPOG

I-funded years suggest ways in which program services may have worked together to support the success of enrollees. The positive effects of CareerAdvance® on parent human capital and psychological well-being may be the result of the program's intensive financial and support services. Participants can comment on the utility of program elements, which can give program designers and organizations insights, even when they do not have a formal evaluation of the effectiveness of individual elements.

The CareerAdvance® program's coordinated parent-child schedules may have helped parents solve some of the logistical challenges parents commonly face, including the coordination of schedules:

I like how they've made the program fit around the youngest child's schedule . . . how they've tailored it to fit around those hours, which really would tailor around all school-age children's hours. So only during clinical times do you have to really worry about before and after care. But for the most part, all of us can still take the kids, kiss them goodbye, do our thing, and then be there to pick them up.²

Likewise, as intended, the small groups of parents who enrolled together in community college classes seemed to build social connection and support for balancing school, work, and the care of young children with limited financial resources. Parents discussed ways in which they helped each other with homework, transportation, child care, and daily encouragement. The support of their peers may have played an important role in program persistence (and ultimately program completion):

I know if I tried to leave this program, I would have some people on my phone. And that's the good thing about us being, that's the one good thing about us being a small group of people. If one of us tried to leave it, oh, we gonna be on that phone quick, "Wait a minute what are you doing?"

One-on-one and group coaching also offered concrete solutions and motivation when parents faced educational barriers:

I took [the GED test] like twice and I could never pass it. And I just felt so dumb that I was like, there is no need for me to take the GED test. How hard is it to take the GED test and I keep failing it so I must be dumb. And I just kept feeling that way. I will give up. But my Career Coach and GED instructor, "Don't give up, never give up." And I'm not a give-upper. I like to challenge myself. And you know they talked and talked to me and "just take your time."

Because I like to rush also. And that was my problem. I want to get it, get it done. So, I stayed there for a while and took it the third time and there I went. I passed it. I just had to do it, just take my time.

Coaches and peers together seemed to offer a breadth and depth of support not experienced by many CareerAdvance® participants in previous college experiences or by comparison group members:

My favorite part is so much support we're getting. We can pretty much call [the coach] anytime. . . . We constantly have the support not only from our classmates but also from our teachers and our coach. . . . When I was in community college before, it was just me against the world basically, you know. So, if I dropped out, nobody cared. It was just, I was only disappointing myself. Now if anybody is missing too much class, we'd call them and are like, you know, "Where are you at? Come to class."

Free tuition and financial incentives importantly seemed to counter the many financial burdens faced by parents, including past student loan debt and reduced earnings when returning to school. Numerous parents reported that without free tuition, they would not have been able to enroll in CareerAdvance®. Financial supports were often the most highly rated:

Tuition was number one because of school getting paid for, and the second thing would be the child care so I can go to school.

The tuition finding is supported by information gleaned from site visits indicating that a significant number of CareerAdvance® participants entered the program with student debt incurred from their previous attempts to obtain postsecondary credentials that may have made them ineligible for federal educational loan assistance (Glover, King, and Carter Smith 2012).³

Effects on Children

We hypothesize that improvements in parents' human capital and psychological well-being are also likely to lead to improvements in children's development in the short and long term, including academic success and social competence (Duncan, Ziol-Guest, and Kalil 2010; Yoshikawa, Weisner, and Lowe 2006). Parents with more education and skills may provide more cognitively stimulating home environ-

ments, which may boost children's literacy, numeracy, and other cognitive domains (Crosnoe and Kalil 2010). They also may serve as better academic role models, have higher expectations for their children, and become better advocates for their children's schooling, which may in turn promote children's motivation and cognitive and social skills (Davis-Kean 2005; Kalil and Crosnoe 2009; Klebanov and Brooks-Gunn 2006).

Analysis of the impacts of CareerAdvance® on children's outcomes is forthcoming. Preliminary results from focus groups with participants in the program suggest possible associations between improved parent human capital and children's development. For example, the skills parents developed in training may have increased parents' engagement with their children's schooling and confidence in supporting their learning.

I have found, on a positive note, what school has done in our house is . . . like, my nine-year-old has always struggled in math. And I have always struggled in math. It's never been a strong suit. I've always told her that, you know, sorry I can't really help you. And she's relied on that, "Well mommy can't help me. She doesn't get numbers . . ." Well, when I got put in this math tutoring class, I felt like I could then relate to her more, and I felt like it was empowering me because it was giving me those skills that I left behind somewhere in high school and junior high. And so when I would get home, for the first couple of weeks, I'd be like, "I can help you." She's like, "No you can't, you don't know how to do this", and I was like, "No, really, I know how to do it now." So, I feel like, I wasn't getting so upset with her because now I know the material and understand it and I'm getting it. So, it's helping her to feel better about herself, and I feel better about myself because for all those years, it was embarrassing to tell your nine-year-old, "Sorry I can't help you with this because I don't know it myself." So, I feel like that's been a positive—that I can guide them better now, that I have the information, I can help them better.

Parents also identified ways that they served as academic role models for their children.

I'm the first person to even go to school. So, it feels good to me to just know that I'm gonna make a better, like pave a better path for my son. The chances of him going to school if I complete school are so much higher. And that's, you know, not only will I create a better life for him as a child, but it'll give him some encourage-

ment and motivation, and I can be a better role model for him to go to school when he's older. So it makes me feel a lot better, I think.

Role modeling by parents may shape children's expectations for themselves, which in turn could motivate parents to pursue more education and further advance their careers. These bidirectional benefits to parents and children could lead to greater collective benefits for parents and children than those accrued by separate, uncoordinated human capital services to parents and children, although further study is needed.

Other Evidence

Other early evidence on the effectiveness of two-generation human capital models for families with children enrolled in early education services like Head Start is also emerging. A recent article in the *Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* by coauthors of this chapter (Sommer et al. 2018) advocates for federal investment in two-generation human capital approaches as a way to reduce poverty among children in the near and long term. An analysis of a program model that recruits parents of children enrolled in Head Start services for career pathway training across a range of promising career fields (such as health care, information technology, and manufacturing) estimates average benefit-cost ratios of 1.3 within 5 years and 7.9 within 10 years (assuming 10 percent of parents of children enrolled in Head Start services participated in career training [Sommer et al. 2018]). These estimates are based only on increased earnings and thus underestimate other societal benefits, such as reduced use of public benefit programs and increased tax revenue.

THE IMPLEMENTATION AND EVOLUTION OF CAREERADVANCE®

The Ray Marshall Center at the University of Texas at Austin and Northwestern University's Institute for Policy Research partnered to study the implementation of CareerAdvance® under an HPOG University Partnership research grant. The evaluation involved monthly calls between researchers and program staff and quarterly meetings among

all community partners led by CAP Tulsa. It also included semiannual focus groups and interviews with service delivery staff and program leaders at both CAP Tulsa and partner agencies (such as Tulsa Community College and Union Public Schools Adult Education program) and parents (enrolled, exited, and matched-comparison parents).

Studying the implementation of Career*Advance*[®] provides insights into the complexities of serving parents and children at the same time, and reveals benefits and challenges at the agency, participant, and partner levels. Several themes emerged across these levels, including the importance of a well-defined and operational two-generation organizational mission; the value to participants of key supportive elements; the necessity of close ties with employers; and the importance of sustained, mutually beneficial partnerships. For each theme, we explore lessons for the field.

Operationalizing a Two-Generation Mission

Early in its tenure as the Head Start and Early Head Start delegate of Tulsa County, CAP Tulsa began considering organizational strategies that reflected the critical role parents' education and family income play in promoting children's well-being. The agency, with the support of local philanthropy, responded by developing a two-generation strategy that took shape through Career*Advance*[®]. Over the years, CAP Tulsa has continued to adjust its services and partnerships to maximize its ability to operationalize a two-generation mission. Ongoing programmatic questions include whom best to serve and for how long.

Whom to serve

Initially, CAP Tulsa focused on services for parents who were prepared for college-level coursework. Yet, this group turned out to include no more than 10 percent of parents with children enrolled in CAP Tulsa's early childhood education services. The agency later added pre-college programming, including English as a Second Language (ESL), GED, and developmental education services as part of a pipeline of preparation for Career*Advance*[®] (Sommer et al. 2016).

ESL services have become especially important, given the growing number of immigrant families in Tulsa, Oklahoma. CAP Tulsa's two-generation ESL program recruits parents of children enrolled in

Head Start and delivers an ESL curriculum that is contextualized to child development and children's early school experiences. A recent descriptive study of the program (Sommer et al. 2018) finds that parents advanced their English language skills at higher rates than parents in traditional community-based ESL programs. Parents in the program moved on average from beginning to high intermediate levels based on National Reporting System benchmarks. The program also supported parents' focus on their children, including an improved sense of parents' agency in their children's school and other child-related domains. It is too early to tell whether parents in the ESL program will later enter *CareerAdvance*[®], as the impacts of CAP Tulsa's two-generation ESL program on parent and child outcomes are under study.

How long to serve

Under HPOG 1.0, CAP Tulsa supported parents' desired highest level of certification within the health care career field, such as licensed registered nurse, yet found this approach too expensive and time consuming, given the four to five years it often took parents to achieve their goal. CAP Tulsa, under HPOG 2.0, now offers one year of career training and an additional year of support services after parents are employed. Whether to target parent-centered services beyond children's participation in each childhood education programming, and whether to focus on short-term certification or to support high levels of career advancement are both ongoing questions. Further program innovation and evaluation is warranted.

Under HPOG 1.0 and ongoing, CAP Tulsa's two-generation approach has expanded beyond its model two-generation program *CareerAdvance*[®] to the agency as a whole. CAP Tulsa continually seeks new ways to promote children's development across all types of programming, especially through coordinated, aligned, and mutually reinforcing services for parents and children. For example, Family Support services focus not just on goal setting but also on building parents' executive functioning as a means to improving skills across domains, including work, parenting, and family functioning. Likewise, home visiting incorporates simultaneous and connected parent and child skill building. CAP Tulsa continually seeks innovative ways to advance parent and child well-being at the same time.

Supportive Services for Parents

Descriptions from program participants over many years suggest that the *CareerAdvance*[®] program's combination of coaching, peer services, and financial supports (including incentives and wraparound child care) are critically important to parents' ability to persist in the program. Other programmatic elements may also prove valuable. For example, CAP Tulsa is implementing new strategies to further align parent and child curricular elements. The agency is testing an increased focus on parenting topics (including child discipline and strategies for balancing work, family, and school) as part of the program's training services. It has also developed new peer partner meeting curriculum that gives parents the opportunity to use meeting time while children are in care (up to two hours per week) to address self-defined needs (e.g., household errands or doctor's appointment). Additional research on the implementation of these approaches will suggest whether they should be continued.

Employers and the Sequencing of Work and School

The original *CareerAdvance*[®] program was designed with career employment in mind. The agency chose to support parents' education and employment in the viable and growing health care career field in Tulsa, and one that could afford parents the opportunity to earn stackable credentials. The option to build career skills over time is especially attractive to parents of young children, who may need to move in and out of work and school in accordance with the shifting financial and care needs of their family.

Over time, the program has deepened its relationship with employers in a number of ways. A workforce intermediary (Giloth 2004) was part of the original HPOG 1.0 design. Under HPOG 2.0, Tulsa County WorkAdvance (TCW), a leading-edge, sector-based workforce development organization, serves this function while also taking the lead role in screening, training, and supporting *CareerAdvance*[®] participants in their first year of employment. While academic and career coaching were originally provided in-house by CAP Tulsa's academic coaches who were based in the agency's early childhood education center, employment and career coaching is now offered at TCW by workforce

training and employment experts who help enrollees gain and retain career jobs during their first year after certification. Academic coaching remains within CAP Tulsa's early childhood education centers and serves as a key bridge between early childhood education services and workforce training and employment supports.

Sustained, Mutually Beneficial Partnerships

Community-based partnerships are central to most two-generation human capital programs. The number and intensity of CAP Tulsa's partnerships and CAP Tulsa's role in leading them have evolved over time. Tulsa Community College was the *CareerAdvance*[®] program's initial education partner for parents ready for college-level training. However, when Tulsa Community College dropped its certified nursing assistant program and CAP Tulsa increased its focus on shorter-term certification programs, Tulsa Technology Center became the primary education partner for the agency. This partnership provided benefits for both organizations. Guaranteed classes, regardless of enrollment levels, provided a secure funding source for Tulsa Technology Center. College classes in which CAP Tulsa could participate in teacher selection and enroll only CAP Tulsa parents allowed for better matching of instructor skills and parents served and afforded parents sustained opportunities for social connection among parents of children enrolled in CAP Tulsa's early childhood education programs. The agency's current partnership with TCW offers additional cross-agency benefits, including new cross-organizational knowledge and strategies. For example, TCW has learned to be more family friendly in the way it operates and has expanded its knowledge of quality, affordable, and local child care options for parents. TCW staff have also developed a better understanding of the ways in which parents may pursue education and employment discontinuously, balancing income, education, and family care needs. Likewise, CAP Tulsa has learned from its partnership with TCW how to successfully engage employers and support parents' sustained career employment.

It is challenging to know whether offering the same combination of services at another community-based organization, and in close partnership with early childhood education services, would produce effects similar to those seen in the first year of program participation.

The choice of a two-generation lead agency is likely to depend on the service delivery capacity and leadership in a given community. For example, at the time of the inception of *CareerAdvance*[®], no publicly funded organization (such as the local workforce board, Tulsa Community College, or Tulsa Technology Center) or nonprofit (such as the local Goodwill agency) appeared sufficiently well positioned to lead a two-generation strategy. Yet community circumstances may change, and new leaders may present themselves.

An understanding of the time and intensity needed to support the cross-community goal of investing in the human capital of parents and children is also still emerging. Initial insights from CAP Tulsa's experiences suggest that a lead agency with the experience and the motivation to invest in services that support both generations is a necessary starting point. Yet, whether the primary agency can change over time, and whether an early childhood education provider should take a lead role, is an open question. As federal funding under HPOG 2.0 wraps up (in September 2020), CAP Tulsa is considering whether a different or broader constellation of partnerships, perhaps with a new lead agency, could sustain a two-generation intervention.

CONCLUSION

Aligning Head Start services for children with sectoral career pathway training programs for their parents addresses two of the most significant barriers student parents face (Adams, Spaulding, and Heller 2015): achieving educational credentials in a timely manner that produce earnings benefits in the near term and long term, and cost-effectively caring for their children with quality educational services while parents are enrolled in school and working (Attewell, Savill-Smith, and Douch 2009). Historically, workforce development strategies in the United States have not systematically addressed these concerns, nor have most early education programs typically addressed parents' education and workforce needs, tending to focus much more on parenting and basic literacy. In fact, most colleges and traditional workforce programs are largely unaware of the parental status and related needs of their students (King et al. 2009; Miller, Gault, and Thorman

2011), suggesting the potential benefits to community colleges and technical centers of learning how to better serve the growing population of student parents.

The two-generation field is still in its early stages, and more model testing is needed. Yet, career pathway training programs with a family-centered approach hold promise for supporting the human capital outcomes of parents and children. HPOG University Partnership funding provided an exceptional opportunity for CAP Tulsa, its partners, and *CareerAdvance*[®] participants to take risks and try a new approach to career pathway training designed specifically for families with young children. This chapter illustrates the innovative thinking that went into the design, implementation, and evaluation of the *CareerAdvance*[®] program. It represents a first step in, hopefully, a much longer trajectory of workforce training and employment strategies that improve outcomes for low-income families with young children.

Notes

1. In 2010, ACF awarded the first round of five-year HPOG grants (HPOG 1.0) to 32 organizations in 23 states, including five tribal organizations, with approximately \$67 million disbursed each year through fiscal year 2015. It awarded a second round of five-year grants in 2015 to 32 organizations across 21 states (HPOG 2.0).
2. The quotes in this chapter are all from focus groups conducted by research team members with program participants.
3. Unfortunately, we cannot accurately estimate the number of participants with outstanding unpaid student debt from our data. The share of participants with at least some college education at enrollment has ranged from as low as 20 percent to as high as 60 percent under HPOG 1.0 (Christensen, Juniper, and King 2015). Analysis of national U.S. Department of Education data by Miller (2012) for the Student Parent Success Initiative indicates that student parents are more likely than others to drop out and to have unpaid college debt without obtaining postsecondary degrees and that the problems are even more severe for single student parents.

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