



Community Renewal Team Testimony

Human Services Committee, February 10, 2015

S.B. 795 AN ACT CONCERNING A TWO-GENERATIONAL SCHOOL READINESS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Thank you Senator Bye, Senator Moore, Representative Walker, Representative Abercrombie, and other members of the Human Services Committee for reading and considering the following testimony in support of Senate Bill 795.

Community Renewal Team supports all aspects of this bill, and would very much like to be part of the work group that is assembled on this issue.

We have attached two documents:

- 1) Testimony presented today by Emilie Montgomery, Director of Early Care and Education for CRT. This highlights:
 - a. The two-generation approach of two CRT programs: Head Start and the Generations campus for grandparents raising their grandchildren.
 - b. CRT's holistic Steps to Success model of case management, which is used throughout CRT's programs.
 - c. A new initiative to train parents with children in CRT preschool programs to enter the early childhood career track.

- 2) Background testimony prepared by Krista Heybruck, Director of Research for CRT. This highlights:
 - a. All of CRT's programs work with the entire family, rather than just one person or generation in isolation.
 - b. The Head Start model provides a family advocate to each family, to conduct an assessment and help to set goals.
 - c. CRT's intensive Steps to Success model of case management provides measurable outcomes as families progress toward self-sufficiency.
 - d. A "next generation" workforce opportunity is being designed for parents of preschool children, so that they can enter the early childhood field.
 - e. CRT would like to share our knowledge of this approach, joining other organizations on the statewide work group.



**Testimony of Emilie Montgomery
Director of Early Care and Education, Community Renewal Team
Human Services Committee, February 10, 2015**

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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Thank you Senators Bye and Moore, Representatives Walker and Abercrombie, and other members of the Human Services Committee for hearing testimony in support of Senate Bill 795.

My name is Emilie Montgomery, and I am the Director of the Community Renewal Team's Early Care and Education program. I am here today to speak in favor of Senate Bill 795, and to provide our organization's input on the issues that are addressed in that bill. We fully support each of the five items raised in this bill, and we would like to be part of the inter-agency work group that will be formed.

CRT operates the largest community-based ECE program for low-income families in Connecticut, including Head Start and School Readiness. If you're at all familiar with the Head Start model, you probably know that it is an intentional and very successful two-generation approach that addresses the family's self-sufficiency while it educates the child. Staff assist the families to find stable housing, go back to school or get jobs – all to improve the lives of both the children and their parents.

In the past decade, CRT has also developed a wonderful and very different two-generation program which is – appropriately enough – called the Generations campus, for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. As they assume the custody of their grandchildren, these low-income grandparents need more than an affordable place to live. They also need help so that they and their grandchildren can reach important life goals.

What ties these two programs together – and what runs through all of CRT's programs – is that they employ our holistic Steps to Success approach to helping low-income families move out of poverty. The family is always treated as a "whole," whether the intake occurs at a preschool, a residence for grandparents, a Family Service Center or an outreach program for veterans.

The process starts with an in-depth assessment that is completed with the families. It examines a family's situation across 17 dimensions and assigns a score, from crisis to thriving. Fourteen of these domains refer to family issues, such as income, employment, housing, health insurance and so on; three relate specifically to the health and education of the children.



Staff helps families define and prioritize their goals. They work together to identify the strengths, relationships and resources that will help them take smaller steps to get to that goal.

A quarterly reassessment captures this progress in the Steps software, making it possible to quantify the progress that's made. Thousands of at-risk, low-income children and families have benefited from CRT's two-generation programming and are now better able to meet their needs. In Head Start, for example, parents have obtained or improved their employment; moved into permanent and affordable housing; improved budgeting skills; enrolled in vocational or educational classes; and attended our fatherhood program.

In the past year, we know that one-half of the families enrolled in CRT's Early Childhood programs progressed towards self-sufficiency.

The grandparents at our Generations campus have also moved forward toward their goals. Thanks to the campus visits we organize and a summer opportunity called Grandparents University, many of the grandchildren raised at that campus have gone on to attend four-year colleges. Youngsters prepare for their future in higher education through the after school tutoring and other programs offered right on campus. We see great opportunities for expanding this model in the future!

Now I would like to turn to the area of job development. CRT is working to make sure parents can turn their ECE experience into a job. CRT is building a training infrastructure to ensure a pathway for parents to become teachers and assistants by earning their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. This is a formal, competency-based credential that for many is the first step on the early childhood career pathway.

The Credentialing program will begin fall 2015 and include 120 hours of classes, 480 hours of practical experience in Head Start classrooms, the development of relationships with an advisor and a practicum mentor, and ultimately a formal credentialing test to earn national certification. Once they've completed the CDA, we will work with Capital Community College to facilitate the parents' education and enrollment in college coursework to further their studies. At the same time, they will take jobs at ECE programs, with the end goal being to become teacher assistants or teachers in the ECE program.

As we establish this career pathway, we would like to call upon the legislators to extend Care 4 Kids to parents who are pursuing both certifications and degrees, as this is also supports the two-generation approach.



CRT is very excited about the work that lies ahead in creating two-generation strategies to reduce child poverty in our state. Please do not hesitate contact us if you have any additional questions, or if the CRT staff can be of assistance in advancing the two-generation approach throughout Connecticut.

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**Testimony of Krista L. Heybruck
Director of Early Care and Education, Community Renewal Team
Human Services Committee, February 10, 2015**

**S.B. 795 AN ACT CONCERNING A TWO-GENERATIONAL SCHOOL READINESS AND
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Thank you Senator Bye, Senator Moore, Representative Walker, Representative Abercrombie, and other members of the Human Services Committee for reading and considering the following testimony in support of Senate Bill 795.

CRT Background on Two-Generational Approaches

CRT fully supports each of the five items raised in Senate Bill 795: strategies to increase service access, colocation of services, coordinating a comprehensive inventory of resources, engaging the philanthropic community to support two-generation replication, and establishing an advisory body to guide and oversee implementation. The agency and dedicated staff deeply understand and advocate for a state-wide plan to facilitate the educational and economic success among low-income households in Connecticut. Given CRT's long history implementing two-generational strategies to fight poverty, we would very much like to be a part of the interagency work group that will be formed.

Since the agency's inception in 1963, CRT has designed and implemented quality programming using two-generation strategies to move low-income families out of poverty. Over time, the popularity of a two-generation approach has ebbed and flowed among the law makers and program funders. CRT, however, has stood soundly on the principles of the two-generational approach and continues to refine and utilize strategies that transform the whole family. According to ASCEND, an Aspen Institute initiative, "social capital, economic well-being, postsecondary and employment pathways, early childhood education, health and well-being, and economic assets are the core components that create an intergenerational cycle of opportunities" (October, 2014).¹

Two programs which are intentionally designed to use a two-generation strategy are CRT's Early Care and Education program (i.e. Head Start, School Readiness, etc.) and Generations, a community of 24 townhouses specifically designed for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. When a family comes to CRT through an early childhood program or through Generations, they are able to access housing support, behavioral health, financial literacy,

¹ ASCEND, <http://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/pages/the-two-generation-approach>



nutrition assistance and many other services offered by CRT through a single intake with a lead Case Manager or Family Service Worker. If CRT cannot meet the needs of the family, then the lead Case Manager makes an immediate referral to other services. Currently, the agency has a database of over 430 external providers for making referrals.

What ties these two programs together, and what runs through all of CRT's programs, is that the agency employs a holistic Steps to Success (STS) approach to helping low-income families move out of poverty. The family is always treated as a "whole," whether the assessment occurs at preschool, a residence for grandparents, a CRT Family Service Center, or an outreach program for veterans. This approach is described in detail below.

The Head Start Model – CRT's Earliest Two-Generational Program

When Head Start was launched nationally in 1965, at its core was the idea that families and communities were integral to any effort to support children's successful learning and development. Fifty years after that first summer of parents, churches, and community organizations opening classrooms for poor children and providing them with learning experiences, medical and dental care, and nutritious meals, Head Start now serves more than one million children annually nationwide. The philosophy, always believing in parents as their children's first teachers and a program's most important partners, has not wavered. That sense of partnership is inherent in every interaction between programs and families and represents a true two-generation mindset of advancing outcomes for children and parents together.

Head Start is a two-generation model that has brought thousands of CRT families many great successes. CRT was one of the first agencies to pilot Head Start. One of the strategies that Head Start uses to support families is to assign a family advocate to work with parents, conduct a family needs assessment, and create a family partnership agreement that lays out goals for both children and parents.

Goals can range from the health and educational outcomes for the child, to immediate family needs like safe housing and food security, to future parent aspirations of obtaining a living-wage job, buying a car, earning a college degrees and/or establishing careers. Developing and implementing a comprehensive, holistic plan such as this cannot be done without active and continued parent participation. CRT's Family Service Workers work diligently to ensure participation, and visit ECE families at least twice during the school year. To ensure the robustness of this model, CRT re-designed its case management database to better track and measure the impact of services on the entire family.

In addition to the educational domains typically served through a Head Start program, adult family members receive assistance through other internal CRT programs or wrap-around services. Examples of parents' or guardians' success include: obtaining employment; obtaining permanent housing; improving budgeting skills; enrolling in vocational or educational classes; and attending



fatherhood programs (for noncustodial fathers). According to the family assessment scoring rubric, this translates, into one-half of families enrolled in CRT's Early Childhood programs (most of whom were Head Start families) progressed towards self-sufficiency.

Intensive, Wrap-around Case Management – Steps to Success

Case management is the backbone of CRT's many programs, and provides an excellent framework in which our two-generation program models are successful. Over the past four years, CRT has developed and implemented a new case management service model: Steps to Success (STS). STS is an intensive, holistic and strength-based case management model for families and individuals. It identifies family strengths and builds on community-based relationships to reinforce and support positive changes that will have a long-term impact on these families' lives. Results Based Accountability is a core component of CRT's programs. RBA is a disciplined way of thinking and taking action that communities can use to improve the lives of children, families and the community as a whole.²

Through STS, CRT has strengthened its "any door" to all services philosophy so that at every entry point into a CRT program, case management is available and standardized. The Family Service Worker or Case Manager completes an all-encompassing intake form that facilitates collaboration with the program participant and his/her family to determine additional services that would be useful for developing self-reliance. During a participant's initial visit, s/he will have an interview with a case manager using the Self-Sufficiency Outcome Scale Matrix (OSM).

This tool uses simple questions to identify existing customer assets and possible barriers to self-reliance in 17 dimensions – 14 family ones (income, employment, job retention, training, education, housing, health insurance, transportation, child care, household budgeting, subsistence, behavioral health, and community involvement) and three child/youth dimensions (school, child behavior and juvenile justice). The OSM establishes a baseline for each family in each of these areas and is re-administered quarterly. Scoring is based on a continuum from in-crisis to thriving.

After all information is entered, this powerful system tabulates the results and creates a very readable "score sheet" that is shared with the family. The simple summation is very useful for helping family members and CRT staff to develop short and long-term goals and strategies to realize them. These goals become part of each family's Individual Service Plan. This plan is a road map of sequential services, timelines and benchmarks that may be used to progress toward independence.

² Results Leadership Group, <http://raguide.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/RBA-Brochure-2.0.pdf>



All CRT Case Managers and ECE Family Service Workers learn that the assessments are completed *with* the families not for them. The family's voice is essential in establishing and taking the steps that will allow them to progress in their goals. The questions are straightforward and nonjudgmental, culturally and religiously sensitive, and focus on present needs, rather than dwelling on any past failures. The work done through this process gives families the tools to advocate for themselves during and after the period with which they work at CRT.

To date CRT's STS model been very successful. Thousands of at-risk, low-income children and families have tremendously benefited from CRT's two-generation programming and are now better able to meet their needs. Through STS, we can show that from June 3, 2013 through May 31, 2014, over 12,500 new interventions occurred, 2,308 new referrals were made, and 1,953 referrals were completed. In addition to the educational domains typically served through a Head Start program, adult families also received assistance through other internal CRT programs or via external referrals. Examples include parents or guardians: obtaining employment; obtaining permanent housing; improving budgeting skills; enrolling in vocational or educational classes; and attending fatherhood programs (for noncustodial fathers).

A Workforce Opportunity

CRT is once again working to make sure parents can turn their experience with its Early Care and Education program into a job. After Congress raised the education requirements for the Head Start teaching staff in 2007, CRT ECE decided to re-build a training infrastructure from years past and ensure a career pathway for parents. The goal is for parents to become teachers and assistants by earning their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, a formal, competency-based credential that for many is the first step on the early childhood career pathway. This represents a renewed partnership opportunity with parents, affected by poverty to help them education and vocational opportunities that make a difference.

The ECE CDA Credentialing program will begin fall 2015 and include 120 hours of classes, 480 hours of practical experience in Head Start or Early Head Start classrooms, the development of relationships with an advisor and a practicum mentor, and ultimately a formal credentialing test to earn national certification. This project addresses the readiness needs of parents through precursor skills to prepare them for the workplace, focusing on professional behavior and practical skills. We are also proposing an introductory computer course that could earn these parents three college credits. As participants move forward in the training process, they have the opportunity to choose which CDA they will pursue - among the options are a preschool or infant and toddler focus - and their practicum is designed to meet their interests. Once they've completed the CDA, we will work with Capital Community College to facilitate the parents' education and enrollment in college coursework to further their studies as they take jobs within the CRT ECE program as substitutes with the end goal being to become teacher assistants or teachers in the ECE program.



As CRT establishes this career pathway, we would like to call upon the legislators to extend Care 4 Kids to parents who are pursuing both certifications and degrees, as this also supports the two-generation approach.

Working Together on Two-Generation Solutions

I urge you to take CRT's over 50 years of experience along with its documented success implementing two-generational models into consideration as you move Senate Bill 795 forward. The transformation from poverty to prosperous is a slow, arduous task for a low-income family, and creating a thriving, stable lifestyle often takes years to achieve. During this metamorphosis, there are setbacks, obstacles, and conditions that interfere with the steady progression toward reaching one's goals, but with sound, evidence-based practices and strong, sturdy supports it is possible. Please work to pass this bill, and again, CRT is willing to be part of the interagency workgroup that will be formed.

Please do not hesitate contact us if you have any additional questions, or if the CRT staff can be of assistance in advancing the two-generation approach throughout Connecticut.

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