



UNIVERSITY *of*
DENVER

COLORADO EVALUATION
AND ACTION LAB

Transforming Colorado's Child Support Services to a Two-Generation Approach

Lessons Learned and Impact Results
from Implementing an 11-County
Randomized Controlled Study

February 2020

*The Implementation findings, separated from the impact findings,
were released in an earlier version of this report dated May 1, 2019*

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Executive Summary

The Colorado Department of Human Services' Division of Child Support Services (CSS) embarked on an innovative partnership with counties to transform child support services in Colorado from a traditional enforcement approach to a family-centered multigenerational approach, commonly known as the "two-generation" or "2Gen" approach. For CSS, the primary goal of the 2Gen approach is to support family income growth by providing both parents with access to employment services and the tools needed to build social capital and improve the long-term outcomes of children. Because packaged, replicable 2Gen models for child support services did not exist when this transformative work began, the State of Colorado developed an **innovative model** and initiated an 11-county pilot known as the 2Gen Child Support Services Transformation Project (the 2Gen Project).

Tell us about your 2Gen caseworker...

"It felt like it was more personal, instead of just business matters. In the past, I would call child support and it'd just be business...With [my caseworker], it was more, 'What does your family need? I'll talk to the father.' It was more personal, and it was the family's needs and not just money. [My caseworker] took more time, she heard me out. She's asking, 'How do we help?' and 'How the family is doing?'"

-Noncustodial Parent

This report includes:

- **Part I:** Implementation findings and lessons learned during the first eight months of implementing the 2Gen Project in 11 Colorado counties.
- **Part II:** The results of the impact study, an 11-county randomized controlled trial.

The primary audiences for this report are state- and county-level child support services administrators and supervisors. Together, these studies may inform Colorado's long-term investment and approach to CSS reform.

The purpose of the first half of this report is to present implementation findings from the 11 participating counties and to elucidate lessons learned throughout the implementation process. The purpose of the second half of this report is to present findings from the impact study, which primarily focuses on measuring if there were changes in child support payment behaviors resulting from the implementation of the 2Gen model.

The counties participating in the 2Gen Project all demonstrated substantial progress in transforming CSS to the 2Gen model, and there is more work to be done to fully implement the model.

All 11 counties are meeting fidelity in the following indicators: leadership, commitment, culture; data sharing/use; program design; partnerships; and caseworker staffing. The foundation for delivering 2Gen services has been created in these counties.



To fully implement the 2Gen model, there needs to be more consistent engagement of custodial parents, use of advanced motivational interviewing techniques with all parents, and caseworker staffing that gives caseworkers enough time to focus on a 2Gen caseload.

The implementation level of the pilot, as a whole, is *transitioning to 2Gen services*, with two sites of the eleven sites *fully implementing* the 2Gen model. This is important context because the impact study findings are based on outcomes of *transitioning to 2Gen services*.

Supporting counties in fully implementing the 2Gen approach, then reassessing impacts, is necessary determine if the approach can drive increases in child support payment.

The impact study results show that *transitioning to 2Gen services* does not result in statistically significant differences in child support payment behavior between noncustodial parents (NCPs) that received 2Gen services and those that did not. Fully implementing the model with a small caseload may have promise for improving payment behavior.

Of the NCPs who received 2Gen services, 66% reported that they were able to pay child support sometimes or all of the time, as compared to 55% of NCPs who received regular services. This finding was based on a subset of the sample who participated in a follow-up survey six months after enrolling in the study. The observed difference was not statistically significant, but that may be due to the relatively small sample size that completed the follow-up survey (n = 165).

The results of the impact study must be considered within the context of the limitations of the study design, which included: the possibility of control group NCPs receiving some 2Gen services; the relatively short length of time between entering the study and measurement of outcomes; and the relatively high level of attrition for NCPs who participated in the follow-up assessment six months after being randomized into the study.

Most importantly, the results of the impact study can only be understood within the context of the challenges that counties across Colorado have faced in their early adoption of the 2Gen model. Many counties are still in the process of building staff capacity and partnerships to strengthen program design, which are key ingredients in developing an impactful 2Gen program. Conducting additional analyses in the future—once counties have had time to further develop their 2Gen programs and with a larger sample of parents—may result in more significant findings and yield deeper insight in the effects of comprehensive 2Gen services. Both the implementation study and the impact study highlight the importance of thinking actionably about the lessons learned from this pilot study in order to progress the 2Gen model along the [evidence continuum](#).



Part I: The Implementation Study

Key implementation findings by indicator below are based on information gathered during site visits, analysis of technical assistance calls, and interviews with parents.

The rubric developed to document counties' levels of implementation further classifies each of the 10 key indicators into three levels of service delivery:

- **Level 3 = 2Gen Services**
- **Level 2 = Transitioning to 2Gen Services**
- **Level 1 = Regular Child Support Services**

Fidelity to the 2Gen model for a given county is defined as demonstrating "Level 2 or higher" on the first seven environmental and program indicators and demonstrating "Level 3" on the last three parent interaction indicators (see Appendix A).

10 Key Indicators	Implementation Overarching Findings	Number of Counties Meeting Fidelity
1. Leadership, Commitment, Culture	<p>All counties demonstrate Level 3 leadership, commitment, and culture, because CSS leadership in participating Colorado counties is strongly committed to 2Gen principles and exemplifies commitment by actively creating a culture of 2Gen practice.</p> <p>This finding reflects both the strong supportive work of the State team in engendering excitement for the 2Gen Project and Colorado's historical position as a national leader in 2Gen approaches.</p>	11
2. Data Sharing/ Use	<p>All counties demonstrate Level 2 data sharing/use, meaning that relevant data is collected in individual county CSS offices and utilized on a limited basis, but there are no counties where data related to all three parties (noncustodial parents, custodial parents, and children) is collected, tracked, and utilized to improve the quality of 2Gen services on site.</p> <p>This finding reflects that county leadership could be better supported in thinking systemically about the benefits of data sharing or using data to improve 2Gen service delivery.</p>	11
3. Program Design	<p>Just under half of the participating counties exhibit Level 3 program design and just over half of the participating counties exhibit Level 2 program design.</p> <p>This finding reflects the trend towards interagency communication and increased opportunities for CSS leadership to coordinate 2Gen services with leadership in other programs and agencies beyond CSS.</p> <p>In rural counties, program design may allow for supportive services to be brought in-house within CSS.</p>	11

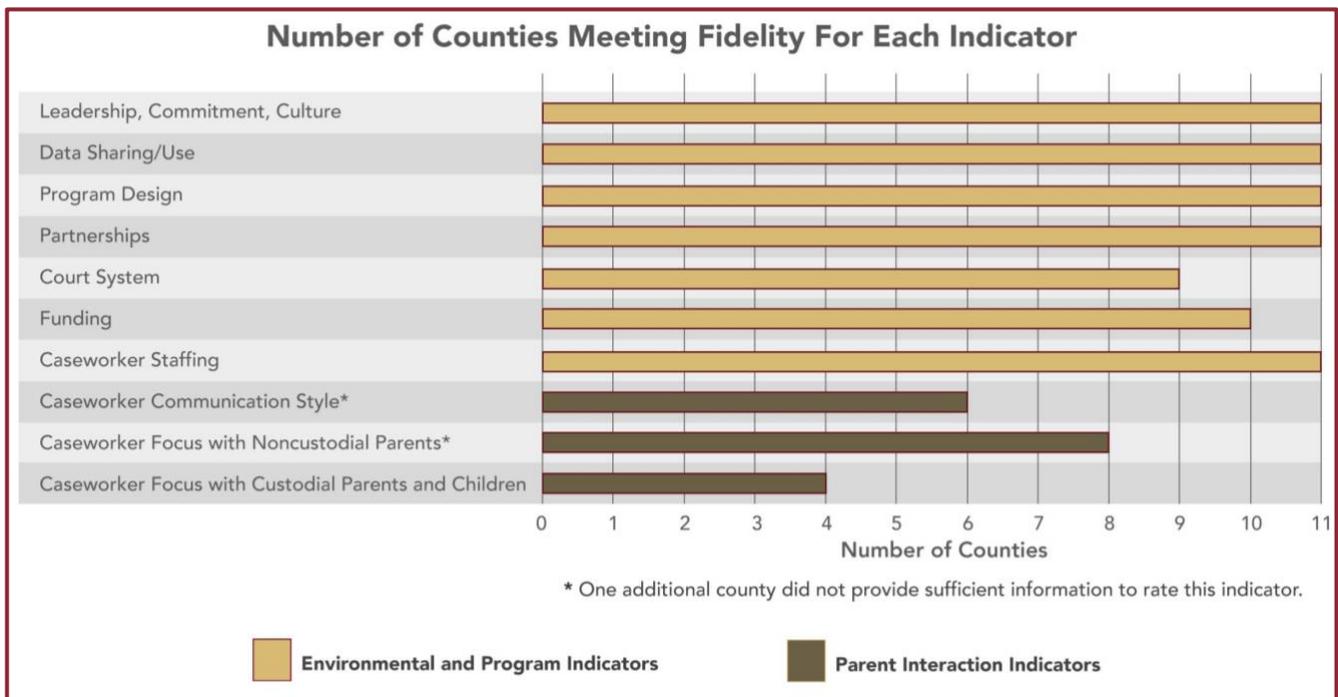


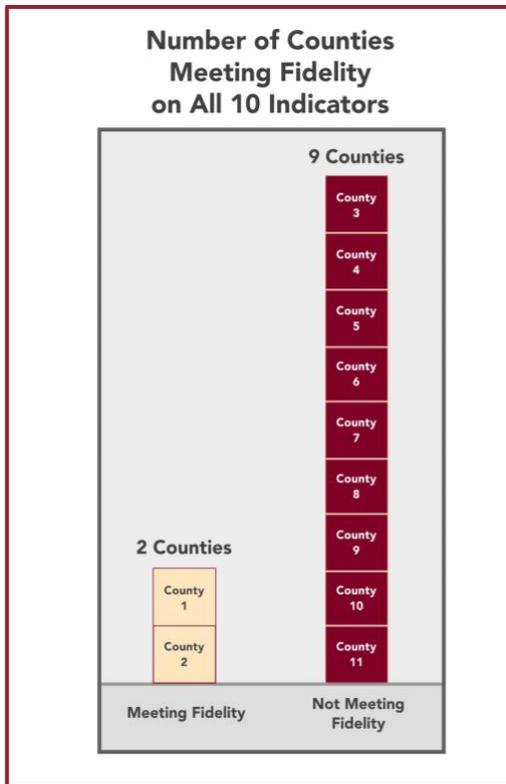
10 Key Indicators	Implementation Overarching Findings	Number of Counties Meeting Fidelity
4. Partnerships	<p>All CSS offices have made substantial progress in forming and strengthening partnerships that support 2Gen service delivery for parents.</p> <p>Most counties do not report the ability to track the outcomes of referrals and, as such, are not able to support the application of enforcement remedies based on information shared by partner agencies (i.e., following parents' use of these resources).</p> <p>Only a few counties have formalized these partnerships through Memorandums of Understanding, which sometimes allow for tracking of outcomes of referrals.</p> <p>Gaps in resources in some counties, especially in housing and substance abuse treatment services, limit the ability of counties to fully implement the 2Gen model.</p>	11
5. Court System	<p>Most counties demonstrate a Level 2 partnership with the court system. The court system is generally supportive of the 2Gen model, but it is not a consistent source of referrals; child support orders are not modified based on parent enrollment in educational programs; and formalized communication procedures are not in place.</p> <p>Leadership and caseworkers believe that court clerks are extremely helpful and serve as a resource and connector between the two systems.</p> <p>Magistrates in some counties express interest in incorporating changes that align with the 2Gen model.</p>	9
6. Funding	<p>A little under half of counties demonstrate Level 3 funding, meaning that there are concrete plans in place to continue funding 2Gen services beyond the pilot study through flexible or blended funding streams.</p> <p>Connecting parents to resources and interventions may require funding far beyond the flexible funding available through the pilot study.</p> <p>The supportive services funding is typically being utilized to pay court fees and driver's license reinstatement fees.</p>	10
7. Caseworker Staffing	<p>Most counties demonstrate Level 2 caseworker staffing because 2Gen caseworkers in most counties do not have a specialized caseload of 2Gen parents since they also need to maintain their regular services caseload.</p> <p>Across all counties, there is evidence of specialized staff trained in 2Gen case management techniques, including motivational interviewing.</p> <p>The realities of caseworker staffing on site result in many caseworkers feeling overburdened and unable to fully attend to their 2Gen parents.</p>	11
8. Caseworker Communication Style	<p>In most counties, caseworkers consistently demonstrate basic helping skills and more advanced motivational interviewing skills, which strengthens relationships with parents and facilitates conversations about barriers to payment of child support.</p> <p>In providing 2Gen services, caseworkers report feeling like they are stepping into the role of mental health provider frequently. Additional trainings could help caseworkers to respond more fully to parents and to prevent burnout.</p>	6*



10 Key Indicators	Implementation Overarching Findings	Number of Counties Meeting Fidelity
9. Caseworker Focus with Noncustodial Parent (NCP)	<p>In most counties, caseworkers consistently identify and follow-up on barriers to noncustodial parents' goals, especially once a strong relationship has been established.</p> <p>Across the state, caseworkers appear skilled at helping parents to focus on small, achievable tasks that are aligned with the larger goal of making child support payments.</p>	8*
10. Caseworker Focus with Custodial Parent and Children	<p>In most counties, caseworkers are not systematically connecting custodial parents and children to 2Gen services.</p> <p>Standardizing language as to how the 2Gen model is introduced to custodial parents may proactively orient them to how the 2Gen model can help all parties (i.e., noncustodial parents, custodial parents, and children).</p>	4

*One additional county did not provide sufficient information to rate this indicator.





Fidelity to the 2Gen model for a given county is defined as demonstrating “Level 2 or higher” on the first seven indicators, which comprise the environmental and program indicators, and demonstrating “Level 3” on the last three indicators, which comprise the parent interaction indicators (see [Appendix A](#)).

The parent interaction indicators are critical and require full implementation (Level 3) because one of the primary goals of the 2Gen model is for parents to personally experience a positive change in how child support services are delivered to them by caseworkers. Two counties demonstrated the required Level 3 for implementation fidelity in all three parent interaction indicators, primarily as a result of having sufficient resources devoted to caseworker staffing. These two counties were the only two counties who met full fidelity to the 2Gen model of the 11 participating counties.

In the first half of this report, the implementation study findings reflect important lessons learned from the first eight months of the 2Gen Project and include:

1. **Caseworker Staffing.** Implementation of the 2Gen service delivery model greatly benefits from 2Gen caseworkers with specialized training and dedicated time for 2Gen caseloads. 2Gen caseworkers are more able to deliver the model when they possess the skills to motivate parents to voluntarily participate in 2Gen services while matching parents with needed resources. Caseworkers report that comprehensive 2Gen service delivery requires more time and energy than the enforcement model, but that the 2Gen work often feels more fulfilling because it provides opportunities for more meaningful positive connections with parents. Caseload size and composition need to be considered when transitioning to the 2Gen approach.
2. **Routine Leadership-Level Meetings with Partners.** Partnerships are essential to implementing the 2Gen service delivery model and to ultimately improving family economic stability, the parent-child relationship, and child well-being. Consider establishing a schedule of consistent, routine meetings with leadership in partner programs and agencies (e.g., Workforce, public benefits, etc.) so that case-level issues can inform systems-level changes in program design.
3. **Rural CSS Offices.** Following the first eight months of the pilot study, the [2Gen case management procedures guide](#) was expanded to further recognize the resources and needs of rural settings and efforts to meet the spirit of the intent of the 2Gen model.
4. **Gaps in Services Available.** Counties indicate that local gaps in services are a barrier to fully implementing the 2Gen model. Availability of housing, substance abuse/mental health treatment, transportation, and parenting programs varied within and across counties. Working across sectors to



address these local gaps is an essential step toward ensuring that comprehensive 2Gen services can be a reality for all parents, regardless of county of residence.

5. ***Incentives for Transformation.*** Transforming CSS to a 2Gen model is a heavy lift and needs to be incentivized if a statewide rollout of the 2Gen model is a goal of the current administration. The monthly accountability tracker, C-Stat, is not currently sufficient to gauge the success of the 2Gen model. The model is intended to address the root causes of non-payment and produce long-term sustainable benefits like improving overall child well-being and breaking the cycle of poverty. Addressing parents' abilities to pay child support requires identifying needs, building capacity, and reducing barriers before improvements can be expected. Thus, longer-term metrics for performance management may compliment the current C-Stat measures.
6. ***Role for Enforcement.*** The 2Gen model and the enforcement approach can continue to work hand in hand to advance child support service delivery throughout the state. The success of the 2Gen model relies on parents achieving the "action" stage of change, meaning that parents have made "specific overt modifications in their life styles" (i.e., behavioral changes related to gaining employment, paying child support, and strengthening relationships with their children; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). Participation must be at least partially self-motivated to be effective, and, in the absence of that motivation, enforcement retains an important role. Some noncustodial parents (NCPs) may not reach the level of change needed to participate in the 2Gen approach, even if their caseworker is highly skilled in motivational interviewing and services are tailored to identified needs.



7. ***Launching When Ready.*** It is important to support readiness to launch across all areas of implementation of the 2Gen model: state leadership, county leadership, partnerships, caseworker staffing, staff training, and data collection. It may be beneficial during future 2Gen model rollouts to set aside a planning grant period or a county-building period to help at the county level with technical assistance related to preparing fully for launch. The implementation findings from this study can be used to proactively identify areas where counties are likely to need targeted support.



Part II: The Impact Study

In the second half of this report, findings from the impact study are provided, which include:

- 1. The 2Gen Project had no statistically significant impact on child support payment among noncustodial parents (NCPs).** Analysis of administrative data shows that receiving in 2Gen supportive services did not have a statistically significant impact on NCP's child support payment behavior (measured as a percentage of payment and frequency of payment across the six-month period).
 - All NCPs paid the same amount of child support, 33% on average, whether they were in the 2Gen treatment group or the regular services control group.
 - Sixteen percent of NCPs who received 2Gen services paid and 14% of NCP's in the control group paid at or above 80% of the amount owed.
 - All NCPs, regardless of whether they received 2Gen or regular services, made child support payments for three months out of six, on average.
- 2. The 2Gen Project had no statistically significant impact on exploratory outcomes for NCPs** (e.g., employment status, number of hours worked, barriers to getting or keeping employment, and perception of relationship with children). This aspect of the study had a smaller sample size; therefore, detecting small or moderate improvements was not possible. **The descriptive data suggests that the 2Gen approach may hold promise for improving ability to pay child support.**

Looking at the data descriptively and comparing the baseline Family Resource Assessment¹ (FRA) results with six-month follow-up responses points to some promising trends and opportunities for growth, including:

- 3. At baseline, 98% of the sample of NCPs reported willingness to pay child support, while only 14% confirmed that they were able to pay child support. Of all NCPs in the study, 57% reported inability to pay child support at all, and 29% were only sometimes able to pay child support. This speaks to the critical need for transforming child support practice.**
- 4. More NCPs who received 2Gen services felt like they were able to pay child support at the end of the six-month study period. Almost 66% of parents who received 2Gen services reported that they were able to pay child support sometimes or all of the time as compared to 55% of parents who received regular services.**
- 5. Regardless of the type of service received, employment rates rose for NCPs across the six-month study period.**

While this study's findings show that 2Gen services did not statistically improve child support payment behavior after six months as compared to regular services, there was observable positive change among all NCPs (across the treatment and control groups).

¹ The Family Resource Assessment is a universal screener developed by the evaluation team intended to systematically identify NCPs likely to benefit from 2Gen services. It also assesses specific barriers to NCP's payment of child support and the quality of the parent-child relationship.



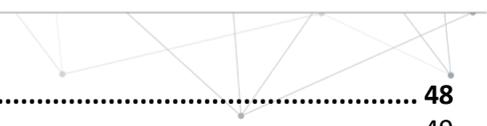
After six months, overall, NCPs reported: feeling like they were better able to pay their child support; facing fewer barriers to getting and keeping employment; and improving relationships with their children. However, future exploration is warranted because this conclusion is based on self-reported outcomes from parents who took the initiative to complete the follow-up FRA.

The 2Gen service delivery model is undeniably resource intensive, requires extensive collaboration and partnerships, and mandates dedicated, consistent leadership. This comprehensive report documents significant progress towards fidelity to the 2Gen model but also highlights opportunities for growth. These lessons learned can inform future rollouts of the 2Gen model in Colorado and the nation as the impetus to provide more comprehensive 2Gen child support services grows.



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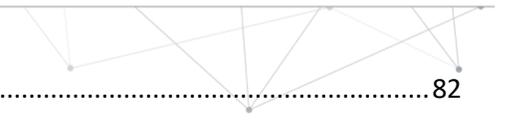
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In addition, a grateful acknowledgment is extended to the Colorado Department of Human Services team who led the implementation of the Two-Generation (2Gen) Child Support Services Transformation Project, including Sylvia Abdullah, Jeff Ball, Keri Batchelder, Janel Beidel, Larry Desbien, Wisler Jacquelin, Sabrina Montoya, Heather Rego, Tracy Rumans, Amanda Terkildsen, and Elise Topliss.

Data Sources

For the implementation study, the evaluation team used data collected from focus group interviews with staff and leadership during county site visits to the 11 participating Child Support Services offices, recordings and direct observations of caseworker interactions with parents, and program data to inform ratings. Interviews with noncustodial parents and custodial parents were conducted following site visits to provide case examples that highlight the value of the 2Gen approach for individual parents.

For the impact study, the evaluation team used data from the following sources: Child Support Services state administrative data and the Family Resource Assessment (developed by the evaluation team).

Suggested Citation

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Note

The term “caseworker” is used throughout this report and is meant to describe caseworkers, case managers, and technicians implementing the 2Gen model who are the focus of this implementation study. This term is intended to encompass the frontline staff who provide direct 2Gen services to parents. There are no educational requirements necessarily implied by this term (e.g., possessing a bachelor’s or master’s degree is not necessary), and all dedicated CSS staff members who are trained in specialized 2Gen skills can provide high quality 2Gen services.



Introduction

The Colorado Department of Human Services' (CDHS) Division of Child Support Services (CSS) embarked on an innovative partnership with counties to transform child support services in Colorado from a traditional enforcement approach to a family-centered multigenerational approach, commonly known as the “two-generation” or “2Gen” approach to child support services. “2Gen” is the catchall term used to describe those approaches that focus on both generations (the children and their parents or adult caregivers) to help families escape the cycle of poverty. For CSS, the primary goal of the 2Gen approach is to support family income growth by providing both parents with access to employment services and the tools needed to build social capital and improve children’s long-term outcomes. The secondary goal of the 2Gen approach focuses on strengthening the willingness of parents to pay child support by offering co-parenting and parenting programs aimed at improving relationships among parents and their children.

Because packaged, replicable 2Gen models for child support services did not exist when this transformative work began, the State of Colorado developed an **innovative model** and initiated an 11-county randomized controlled trial pilot study known as the 2Gen Child Support Services Transformation Project (the 2Gen Project). The long-term goal of the 2Gen Project examines the extent to which this cutting-edge model meets the goals of improving important outcomes associated with multi-generational poverty for children and the entire family.

The 2Gen Project is comprised of two foundational studies: (1) an implementation study (Part I of this report) and (2) an impact study (Part II of this report).

The implementation study documents the extent to which the 2Gen model is being followed in the 11 Colorado counties that are participating in the pilot study. It should also be noted that the implementation study is an essential component of the second study, the impact study, as it identifies threats to the internal validity of the impact study and documents the level² of 2Gen service delivery occurring within each participating county’s CSS office.

The impact study primarily documents changes in noncustodial parents’ child support payment behaviors resulting from the implementation of the 2Gen model.

This report includes:

- **Part I:** Implementation findings and lessons learned during the first eight months of implementing the 2Gen Project in 11 Colorado counties (also released in an earlier version dated May 1, 2019).
- **Part II:** The results of the impact study, the 11-site randomized controlled trial of the 2Gen Project intended to inform Colorado’s long-term investment in CSS reform.³

² A full description of the three levels of 2Gen service delivery (Level 1, Level 2, Level 3) is provided in the **document prepared by the Center for Policy Research** in January 2018 and revised in March 2019, “*2Gen Procedures: Integrating a Two-Generation Approach to Child Support Services – Colorado’s Service Level Approach.*”

³ A full description of the impact study methodology is provided in the document prepared by the evaluation team in March 2018 entitled, “*2Gen Child Support Services Evaluation Plan: A Randomized Control Trial and Process Evaluation Design.*”



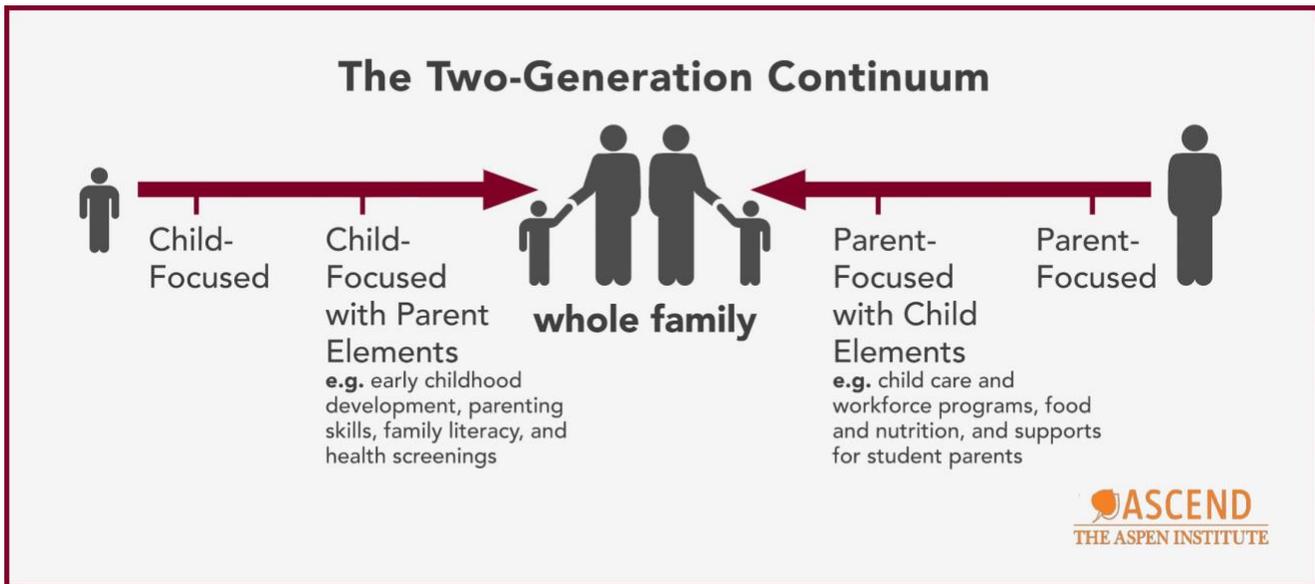
History of the 2Gen Child Support Services Transformation Project

The shift in child support practices towards a more family-centered, supportive model has been ongoing in the nation and in Colorado. The 2Gen Project is one element of this evolution in Colorado.

In the past several decades, changes in family structure have led to a significant increase in single-parent households in the United States. The child support system is designed to address the potential negative consequences of children living apart from one of their parents by guaranteeing that noncustodial parents (NCPs) contribute financially to their upbringing. Many NCPs, however, including a disproportionate share of those whose children are living in poverty, have limited earnings and ability to pay child support (Cancian & Meyer, 2004; Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2010). Moreover, child support orders often make up a high proportion of their limited income (Cancian & Meyer, 2004).

“Colorado is pulling off a culture shift in child-support collection, a new era far from the 1990s’ call to track down ‘deadbeat’ parents, freeze their accounts and suspend their driver’s licenses.”

-From a Denver Post article published January 8, 2018





“Colorado looked and listened and found a very different narrative in many of our child support cases. We saw parents who wanted to provide for their children but did not have the skills or the education to obtain employment that allowed them to meet the needs of their families. We heard from parents who said they could not afford to get themselves off the streets, much less pay for their children’s needs. We saw the heartache of parents being ordered to pay child support for a child whom they never saw or with whom they had no relationship. We found that most parents wanted to engage, provide resources, and be involved in caretaking for their families.”

-Reggie Bicha, Executive Director of Colorado Department of Human Services, and Roxane White, Morgridge Family Innovator in Residence, Ascend at the Aspen Institute

As plainly stated by the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), “Children in single-parent households could therefore benefit from a child support system that enables, as well as enforces, NCPs contributions to their support (Mincy & Sorensen, 1998)” (Meyer et al., 2015, p. ix).

To address these issues, a programmatic shift in Colorado began in 2008 with Arapahoe County’s Parents to Work Program, which focused on helping parents become employed, self-sufficient and meet their child support obligations (Prevost & McKean, 2011). In fall 2012, OCSE launched the Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration Project (CSPED) to identify effective policy alternatives to address these needs (Meyer et al., 2015). OCSE competitively awarded grants to child support agencies in eight states, including Colorado, to provide enhanced child support, employment, parenting, and case management services to NCPs who are having difficulty meeting their child support obligations. In Colorado, this project was called the Colorado Parent Employment Program or CO-PEP, and five counties chose to participate: Arapahoe, Boulder, El Paso, Jefferson, and Prowers (Bicha & White, 2018). The study involved 1,500 parents who were behind on their support payments. Half of this cohort were handled with traditional child support enforcement practices while the other half were assigned a caseworker whose mission was to determine why parents were

not making payments and to help them overcome those barriers (Meyer et al., 2015). The results of CSPED and CO-PEP are presented in more detail in the discussion of the impact study’s [implications](#).

Under the leadership of CDHS Executive Director Reggie Bicha, the State has clearly and repeatedly committed to this philosophical shift in CSS and throughout CDHS. In alignment with this movement, in 2013, the Division underwent a name change from Child Support Enforcement to Child Support Services (Colorado Office of Economic Security, Division of Child Support Services, 2013). CDHS also established a 2Gen manager dedicated to overseeing and supporting 2Gen work across the Department and providing in-house technical assistance and guidance to assist divisions in establishing a 2Gen vision, framework, and timelines.

To strengthen 2Gen training, Bicha invited key staff from each CDHS office to attend a learning opportunity with Ascend at the Aspen Institute, an organization that has created 2Gen guidance, key resources, and a 2Gen toolbox, including the report “The Colorado Guide to 2Gen” (Ascend at the Aspen Institute, 2017). At this event, Bicha tasked each office with taking on 2Gen initiatives. CSS committed to propelling the work of the Parents to Work Program and CO-PEP through an expanded pilot study, the 2Gen Child Support Services Transformation Project described in this report.

Colorado is undoubtedly an “emerging national leader in 2Gen approaches” (Ascend at the Aspen Institute, 2017, p. 5). Even before the development of this particular CSS 2Gen model, and the launch of the 2Gen Project discussed herein, many CSS offices in Colorado were incorporating 2Gen practices into their work with parents. It can be assumed that counties that were already making strides towards a 2Gen approach were more likely to



volunteer for this pilot study because it aligned with their strategic vision. Thus, in many Colorado counties, even so-called regular services are infused with aspects of the 2Gen model, which may explain, in part, the lack of a statistically significant difference in payment or other outcomes between the treatment and control groups.

Colorado's 2Gen Approach to Child Support Services

Within CSS, the 2Gen approach is described as a “program shift from strictly an enforcement and solely parent-focused system to one that connects whole families to resources and interventions that benefit the entire family” (Colorado Office of Economic Security, Division of Child Support Services, 2018). The resources and interventions are matched to the family’s needs and may include: job skills training, employment support, child development and education, parenting skills and visitation, health and well-being, financial literacy, transportation, and other community supports.

“Child support is for the child. To do right by the child, sometimes you have to make sure the parents are okay.”

-NCP, during parent interview conducted during implementation study

CDHS partnered with the evaluation team⁴ to develop a model for the 2Gen approach to child support services, focusing on 10 key indicators below. This framework for the key indicators is based on successful strategies for implementing 2Gen approaches in program settings (King et al., 2013) and from lessons learned during the Parents to Work and CO-PEP programs. The evaluation team then designed a screening tool to identify cases that are likely to benefit from 2Gen services, the [2Gen case management procedures guide](#), and a case management checklist to guide child support caseworkers during the pilot study.

⁴ The Colorado Department of Human Services contracted with the University of Northern Colorado, the Center for Policy Research, and the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab at the University of Denver to support the development of the 2Gen model.



10 Key Indicators of 2Gen Child Support Services

- 1. Leadership, Commitment, Culture** – Evidence of a site’s leadership-driven culture of commitment to 2Gen principles
- 2. Data Sharing/Use** – Evidence of commitment to utilizing data to implement 2Gen services and engage in quality improvement
- 3. Program Design** – Evidence of effective program design that supports communication across agencies and coordination at the administrative level in order to provide enhanced 2Gen services
- 4. Partnerships** – Evidence of cross-system and sector partnerships to meet 2Gen goals
- 5. Court System** – Evidence of navigating and partnering with the court system with the goal of increasing decisions that are in alignment with 2Gen philosophy
- 6. Funding** – Evidence of funding diversity that supports 2Gen service delivery
- 7. Caseworker Staffing** – Evidence of hiring, training, and staffing practices that are necessary to support 2Gen service delivery
- 8. Caseworker Communication Style** – Evidence that caseworkers utilize motivational interviewing skills learned in training, consistent with 2Gen philosophy and service delivery
- 9. Caseworker Focus with NCP** – Evidence of identifying NCP barriers to payment and taking a comprehensive, tailored approach to reducing these barriers
- 10. Caseworker Focus with CP and Children** – Evidence of identifying and addressing barriers to economic security, educational attainment, and child well-being

Part I: Description of the Implementation Study

Guiding Research Question of the Implementation Study: To what extent are the 11 participating CSS offices implementing the 10 key indicators of the 2Gen model?

The information gained from site visits, technical assistance, and interviews is synthesized into implementation findings and documented on a rubric (see [Appendix A](#)). The rubric documents point-in-time fidelity to the 10 key indicators for each CSS office. Specifically, the rubric ratings reflect counties’ level of fidelity approximately five months into the 2Gen Project.

These data collection strategies are also used to identify lessons learned from the implementation study, and separately, have been applied to revising the 2Gen case management practices.⁵

1) Site Visits

All 11 pilot study counties participated in a site visit, the purpose of which was to assess the level of implementation fidelity to the 2Gen model at each CSS office. Of the 10 key indicators of 2Gen CSS, indicators 1 through 7 (i.e., environmental and program indicators) were all assessed through focus group interviews with leadership and caseworkers. Indicators 8 through 10 (i.e., parent interaction indicators) required the evaluation team to observe parent interactions directly or through listening to recordings of caseworker and parent

⁵ These changes have been incorporated into a March 2019 revised version of the [document prepared by the Center for Policy Research](#) in January 2018, “*2Gen Procedures: Integrating a Two-Generation Approach to Child Support Services – Colorado’s Service Level Approach.*”



interactions. One county declined to allow direct observations or recordings due to parent privacy concerns. Two other counties were unable to obtain recordings due to lack of parent engagement with 2Gen Project caseworkers.

2) Technical Assistance

From April 2018 to December 2018, the evaluation team provided on-going technical assistance related to implementing the 2Gen Project throughout the implementation study period. During this time, the evaluation team led hour-long technical assistance calls every month. For the first five months of program enrollment, researchers held county-specific technical assistance calls with individual CSS offices. Participants on the technical assistance calls varied by site depending on the structure within each county, however, typically participants included site supervisors, 2Gen caseworkers, and regular child support technicians, along with the evaluation team and a representative from the State team. A template was developed to guide each call, and implementation challenges, issues, and best practices were discussed and documented. Action items were taken from each call and issues that surfaced were documented and addressed immediately, either by the evaluation team and/or the State team. Starting in October 2018, counties were grouped by cohort, which created a small learning community group where challenges and best practices could be shared peer-to-peer. The culmination of the technical assistance efforts was an all-sites learning community call in December 2018 which brought together all county-level leadership and 2Gen caseworkers, along with the evaluation team and the State team to share lessons learned during the implementation study and best practices to move the 2Gen model forward.

3) Interviews with Noncustodial Parents and Custodial Parents

The evaluation team also conducted open-ended qualitative interviews with NCPs and CPs who received 2Gen services. During October and November 2018, the evaluation team reached out to approximately 20 2Gen parent participants to gauge reactions to their experience with the 2Gen Project. Interviews were conducted over the telephone and lasted approximately 45 minutes. Parents received a \$45 gift card incentive for completing the interview. Parents were contacted from a list provided by each county and represented parents from nearly all sites. Ultimately, researchers conducted interviews with a total of 12 parents; four CPs and eight NCPs. The goal of the interviews was to hear from parents who participated in the 2Gen Project and to report on their reactions to receiving services, the impact of these services on their ability to provide economic stability for their family, perceptions of the child support system, and the new approach to 2Gen service delivery.

The lessons learned from the implementation study described in this report can inform the 2Gen work of CSS offices in other Colorado counties and throughout the U.S. as the impetus to transform child support services continues to expand.



Part II: Description of the Impact Study

Guiding Confirmatory Research Question of the Impact Study:
What is the impact of the 2Gen Project on the child support payment of noncustodial parents (NCPs)?

Four exploratory research questions, listed in the description section of Part II, are included in the final analysis.

The goal of the impact study is to explain and quantify the impact of participation in the 2Gen program on child support payment at six months after entry into the study. The impact study also aims to identify other differences that may exist between NCPs who receive 2Gen services versus NCPs who receive regular services, including differences in employment status, hours worked, barriers to employment, and child well-being. The impact study is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) in which child support cases were randomly assigned to the treatment (i.e., 2Gen) or control (i.e., regular services) group. RCTs produce the most rigorous method of determining the impact of an intervention compared to regular services. A combination of descriptive and statistical analyses was performed to explore the following research questions:

- **Confirmatory Research Question 1:** What is the impact of the 2Gen Project on the child support payment of NCPs?
- **Exploratory Research Question 2A:** What is the impact of the 2Gen Project on employment status?
- **Exploratory Research Question 2B:** What is the impact of the 2Gen Project on number of hours worked?
- **Exploratory Research Question 2C:** What is the impact of the 2Gen Project on barriers to getting or keeping employment?
- **Exploratory Research Question 3:** What is the impact of the 2Gen Project on NCP's perceptions of their relationships with their children and frequency of contact?

The impact study relies on two primary data sources: (1) **Child Support State Administrative Data**, which includes payment data on study participants for the six months following their entry into the study, and (2) **Family Resource Assessment (FRA) responses**,⁶ which includes responses from a baseline FRA administered from April-November 2018 during the study's enrollment period and responses from the same FRA administered again at six months after participants were randomized into the study.

The findings from the impact study described in this report can inform the continued development of 2Gen models in Colorado counties as well as future analyses of child support services.

⁶ The Family Resource Assessment is a universal screener developed by the evaluation team intended to systematically identify NCPs likely to benefit from 2Gen services. It also assesses specific barriers to NCP's payment of child support and the quality of the parent-child relationship.



PART I:

The Implementation Study Results



10 Key Indicators: Implementation Overarching Findings

Delivering 2Gen child support services (a holistic and integrated model) is a major systemic shift in practice. The 2Gen Project described in this report is intended to be a substantial step toward systems change, not a stopping point. With this goal in mind, the implementation study documents where participating counties are operating during the pilot program and highlights opportunities to elevate practice further.

The 2Gen Project team – state staff and evaluators – have set an implementation fidelity goal for this pilot study as follows:

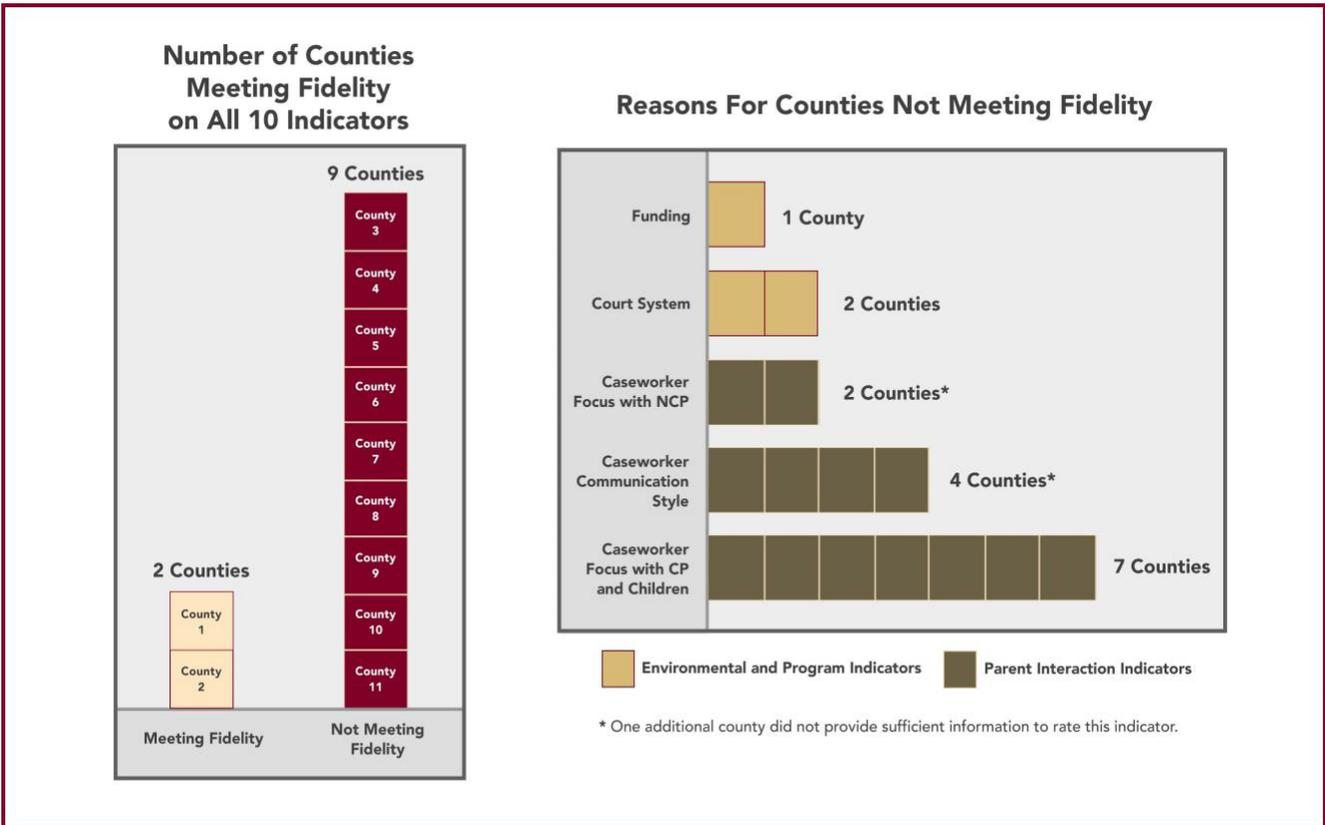
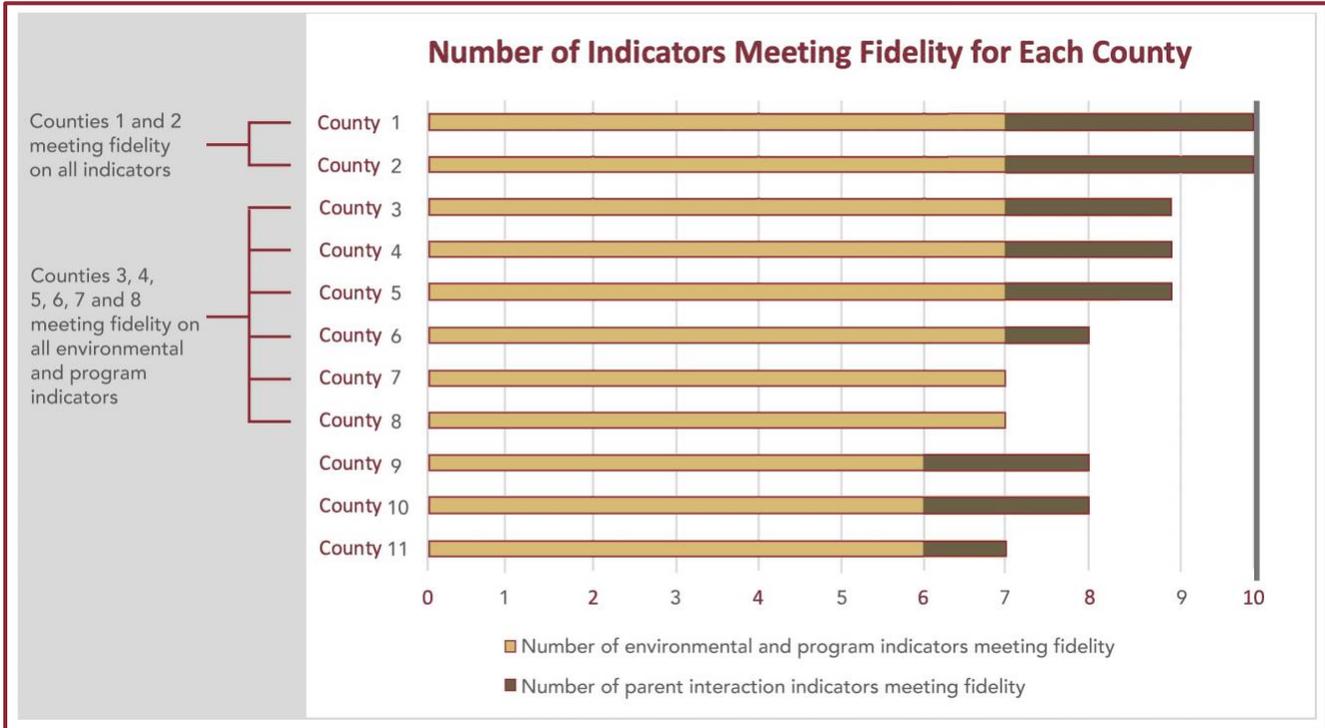
- Demonstrating Level 2 or Level 3 on environmental and program indicators 1 through 7 (see full rubric in [Appendix A](#))
- Demonstrating Level 3 on parent interaction indicators 8 through 10, as the threshold was higher for these parent-facing indicators (see full rubric in [Appendix A](#))

The key parent interaction indicators, indicators 8 and 9, require direct observation or recording of parent interactions with a 2Gen caseworker. One county declined to participate due to concerns over parent privacy. Two other counties were unable to obtain recordings due to lack of parent engagement with 2Gen Project caseworkers, which can be assumed to be due to lack of fidelity to the 2Gen model.

Based on the information provided, two Colorado counties are achieving the level of fidelity to the 2Gen model that is the goal for this pilot study.

These two counties demonstrate Level 3 on most indicators, exceeding the goal for implementation fidelity.

The purpose of the following chart is to illustrate, for each county, the number of indicators meeting fidelity. In order to achieve the goal of this 2Gen Project, counties need to meet fidelity for all 10 indicators, resulting in a score of 10. This chart shows that only two counties are achieving this goal.





10 Key Indicators: Detailed Findings and Lessons Learned

This section of the report documents the successes and challenges encountered by each county’s CSS office in delivering the 2Gen approach. Ratings on the implementation fidelity rubric (see full rubric in [Appendix A](#)) are presented, followed by:

- Lessons Learned and Opportunities to Further Develop the 2Gen Model** are outlined below each indicator, which can inform the expansion of the 2Gen model.
- Narrative** describing implementation findings in more detail.
- Parent Perspectives on 2Gen Services** gathered from interviews with NCPs and CPs.
- Strong Practice Examples** for many of the key indicators are also included as beacons for other counties striving for full fidelity to the 2Gen model.

Rubric Guide

-  The beige box lists the indicator and its definition
-  The grey box delineates Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3 for that indicator
-  The maroon box lists the number of counties scoring at Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3 for that indicator
-  The hunter green section calls out the mode, or most frequent rating, for counties in a given indicator

1. Leadership, Commitment, and Culture

Evidence of a site’s leadership-driven culture of commitment to 2Gen principles

2Gen Services Level 3	Transitioning to 2Gen Services Level 2	Regular Services Level 1
<u>11</u> Counties Scored at this Level	<u>0</u> Counties Scored at this Level	<u>0</u> Counties Scored at this Level
<p>Leadership articulates why and how the 2Gen approach is central to the role of CSS and supports the goal of increasing payments.</p> <p>Leadership describe concrete changes they have implemented (or maintained) at the site to support</p>	<p>Leadership reports supporting the 2Gen model and describes a plan to transition to 2Gen services.</p> <p>Some caseworkers <i>may</i> be aware of a plan to transition toward 2Gen service delivery in the future.</p>	<p>Leadership and caseworkers indicate that their focus is on NCPs and primarily use enforcement remedies to increase CSS payment.</p>



<p>2Gen service delivery for eligible cases.</p> <p>Supervisors use 2Gen language in meetings or talk about service delivery for custodial parents and children.</p> <p>Caseworkers indicate that 2Gen services are an expectation for their work.</p>		<p>Leadership <i>may</i> indicate interest in exploring 2Gen service delivery.</p> <p>Leadership and caseworkers <i>may</i> report that serving CPs and children directly is outside the scope of CSS.</p> <p>Some staff <i>may</i> not be aware of 2Gen CSS work in Colorado.</p>
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Implementation Findings: Leadership, Commitment, and Culture

Learn More Details in Discussion Section Following

All counties demonstrate Level 3 leadership, commitment, and culture, because CSS leadership in participating Colorado counties is strongly committed to 2Gen principles and exemplifies commitment by actively creating a culture of 2Gen practice.

This finding reflects both the strong supportive work of the State team in engendering excitement for the 2Gen Project and Colorado’s historical position as a national leader in 2Gen approaches.

This strong leadership could be further leveraged to implement services for CPs.

Lessons Learned and Opportunities to Further Develop 2Gen Leadership, Commitment, and Culture

- 1) Staff for 2Gen service delivery.

Both leadership and caseworkers agree that despite ongoing communication about the 2Gen approach and the overall culture shift towards integrated services in recent years, some caseworkers remain aligned with the enforcement model, especially, and understandably, those with a long history in CSS. The 2Gen caseworkers selected to deliver 2Gen services in this pilot study were typically selected by leadership for their openness to the culture shift and demonstrated willingness to move away from an enforcement model. More attention can be paid to trainings and other communications regarding the 2Gen model for all caseworkers, particularly those with a long history in CSS.



2) Emphasize the commitment to CPs and children.

Many CSS offices struggle to meet the target for implementation in this area (see [p. 62](#)). Focusing on the entire family unit (NCPs, CPs, and children), is foundational to the 2Gen model so that barriers to economic security, educational attainment, and child well-being can be addressed. To further develop fidelity to the 2Gen model, leadership can emphasize outreach and service delivery to CPs and children.

3) Use each county's fidelity rubric ratings to guide action.

In this report, rubric ratings are aggregated across counties. Each county received its specific ratings confidentially. Leadership can use county-specific information to guide next steps in transforming CSS in the county. For example, some counties may benefit from a more proactive focus on addressing 2Gen systems-level issues, such as in data sharing, program design, funding, or partnerships with magistrates.

4) Focus on systems-level issues that must be resolved in order to fully implement the 2Gen model.

In expanding the 2Gen program, more guidance would be helpful at the state level about possible solutions to systems-level issues. Systems-level issues refer to the alignment and coordination across systems that is necessary to deliver 2Gen services, including partnerships with workforce, the technology needed to track referrals and outcomes, and the prioritization of 2Gen work in staffing and funding allocations. In this pilot study, the technical assistance learning communities focused on information-sharing targeted at the direct-service level and caseworkers providing 2Gen services to parents, but future technical assistance could focus on systems-level issues.



Discussion: Leadership, Commitment, Culture

In all pilot counties, CSS leadership appears strongly committed to the ideals of 2Gen service delivery approach: connecting parents to comprehensive, integrated services. Leadership articulates clearly why and how the 2Gen approach is central to the role of CSS and supports the goal of increasing payments. County-level leadership describes wanting to participate in the pilot study because of their previous commitment to the 2Gen model. The pilot study appears to be viewed as an extension of many counties' previous work supporting 2Gen practices.

Leadership is able to provide concrete examples of changes implemented in the county to support 2Gen service delivery, whether during the course of the pilot study or before the pilot study began: weekly meetings with program managers across other agencies; integrating career counseling and job skills coaching on site; and forming and strengthening service partners in the region.

Leadership reports that the 2Gen approach is discussed regularly at staff meetings. This is evidenced in the fact that conversations with regular services caseworkers and 2Gen caseworkers revealed that, in many cases, the only difference in the service delivery approach was access to pilot study funding for services. Furthermore, conversations with regular services caseworkers not involved in the pilot study revealed that most were highly aware of the 2Gen service delivery approach.

“This is no longer us chasing people around with a baseball bat saying, ‘pay or else.’ It’s more us reaching out a helping hand saying, ‘This is hard. Nobody is saying this is easy. You and I have to work together for the next 19 years or longer. What can we do to make that relationship as positive as it can be? I don’t want you to be cringing every time my name pops up on the caller ID. How do we get you there? It’s not me calling to scold you. It’s me calling to ask, ‘How can I help?’”

-Child Support Leadership, during implementation site visit



EXAMPLE OF A STRONG PRACTICE IN COLORADO LEADERSHIP, COMMITMENT, AND CULTURE

Because all participating counties in Colorado demonstrated Level 3 leadership, commitment, and culture, the evaluation team would like to highlight the work of the 2Gen Project state team who has been working tirelessly to educate county leadership about the 2Gen model so that they are supportive of the transformation and making concrete changes to support 2Gen service delivery.

The state team oriented county leadership and enhanced buy-in prior to the start of the 2Gen Project by:

- Creating and delivering a consistent communication plan about the 2Gen Project.
- Holding an initial meeting where opinions were gathered from across the state regarding the 2Gen initiative.
- Conducting an informal environmental scan where most counties were represented to identify the current state of 2Gen service delivery.
- Providing webinars and presentations about the 2Gen model.
- Presenting at the annual Colorado Family Support Council Conference in 2016 before the launch of the 2Gen Project.
- Attending regional meetings to build support for the 2Gen Project.
- Working closely with CDHS' 2Gen manager, the position dedicated to overseeing and supporting 2Gen work across the Department.
- Presenting at various county human services conferences about the 2Gen model.
- Doing outreach to human services directors and county administrators about the 2Gen Project.
- Meeting regularly with an advisory group comprised of CSS leaders and staff throughout the state in order to hear a variety of perspectives about the 2Gen Project.

The 2Gen Project's rollout and implementation has been enhanced by buy-in from CSS leadership across the state due to the preliminary, foundational action steps of the 2Gen Project state team.



2. Data Sharing/Use

Evidence of commitment to utilizing data to implement 2Gen services and engage in quality improvement

2Gen Services Level 3	Transitioning to 2Gen Services Level 2	Regular Services Level 1
<u>0</u> Counties Scored at this Level	<u>11</u> Counties Scored at this Level	<u>0</u> Counties Scored at this Level
Evidence NCP, CP, and child data are collected, tracked, and utilized to improve the quality of 2Gen services provided at the site.	Evidence that data are collected, tracked, and utilized on a limited basis to inform 2Gen services (e.g., only for the NCP; data are collected for CP and children but not used to inform CSS or for improvement specific to 2Gen services). Agreements <i>may</i> be in place for CP and child data but have not been implemented.	Data and quality improvement work is not specific to 2Gen service delivery.

Implementation Findings: Data Sharing/Use

Learn More Details in Discussion Section Following

All counties demonstrate Level 2 data sharing/use, meaning that relevant data is collected in individual county CSS offices and utilized on a limited basis, but there are no counties where data related to all three parties (NCPs, CPs, and children) is collected, tracked, and utilized to improve the quality of 2Gen services on site.

This finding reflects that county leadership could be better supported in thinking systemically about the benefits of data sharing or using data to improve 2Gen service delivery.

A next step for some counties is to use the software they have adopted for case management purposes to aggregate data to inform program improvement.



Lessons Learned and Opportunities to Further Develop 2Gen Data Sharing/Use

- 1) Provide more training to county leadership about the benefits of data sharing and how data sharing can improve 2Gen service delivery.
- 2) Provide more guidance to county leadership about concerns over data privacy, especially surrounding asking other agencies for parent data and creating consent forms that clarify potential data privacy issues.
- 3) Use the enhancements in the Automated Child Support Enforcement System (ACSES) to consistently track referrals to supportive services and outcomes of referrals.

Counties can aggregate these data to understand strengths and gaps in partnerships and referral networks to improve the quality of 2Gen services.

- 4) Adopt local software solutions that can help with both case management and coordinated service delivery.
- 5) Promote county participation in larger data sharing conversations with the Governor's Office of Information Technology.

Discussion: Data Sharing/Use

All 11 counties are transitioning to more coordinated data sharing to improve 2Gen service delivery, and some counties have adopted case management software such as HSConnects (see Strong Practice Example in Eagle County below). For most counties, data is being collected and utilized to improve the reach of 2Gen services on an individual parent basis. For example, data collection is used to identify 2Gen -eligible NCPs (i.e., court records and employment records). Furthermore, caseworkers report that the 2Gen spreadsheet⁷ is being used to informally monitor NCP outcomes such as payment behavior; however, this information is not being used to systematically improve 2Gen service delivery.

Caseworkers typically keep detailed records on interactions with parents. Yet, such data is not commonly relied upon to systematically track referrals for NCPs. Typically, to track the outcomes of referrals, caseworkers rely upon relationships in place to be able to call a staff member at another agency providing services to the parent and inquire if the parent has been accessing the services.

An example of productive data sharing can be found in Mesa County (described below), and it provides an ideal example for future 2Gen data sharing work in the state.

⁷ Caseworkers used a spreadsheet to enter data related to the 2Gen Project until enhancements to the Automated Child Support Enforcement System could be completed.



Using data sharing to connect parents to resources, some caseworkers report having the ability to access eligibility records and the Colorado Benefits Management System (CBMS) to see if an individual is eligible for benefits. In one smaller county, caseworkers reported frequently walking down the hall and asking a knowledgeable staff member whether an individual is eligible for a specific public benefit program (e.g., Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF], etc.).

But in some counties, leadership expresses concerns over data privacy in asking other agencies for parent data and wanting guidance related to this potential issue, especially related to creating a consent form that clarifies potential data privacy issues.

“The state systems that we tie to don’t always talk well to each other. Even when they allow access to data systems, the data is still very siloed...2Gen is all about demolishing silos, yet our current data systems don’t allow for that.”

-Child Support Leadership, during implementation site visit

EXAMPLE OF A STRONG PRACTICE IN MESA COUNTY

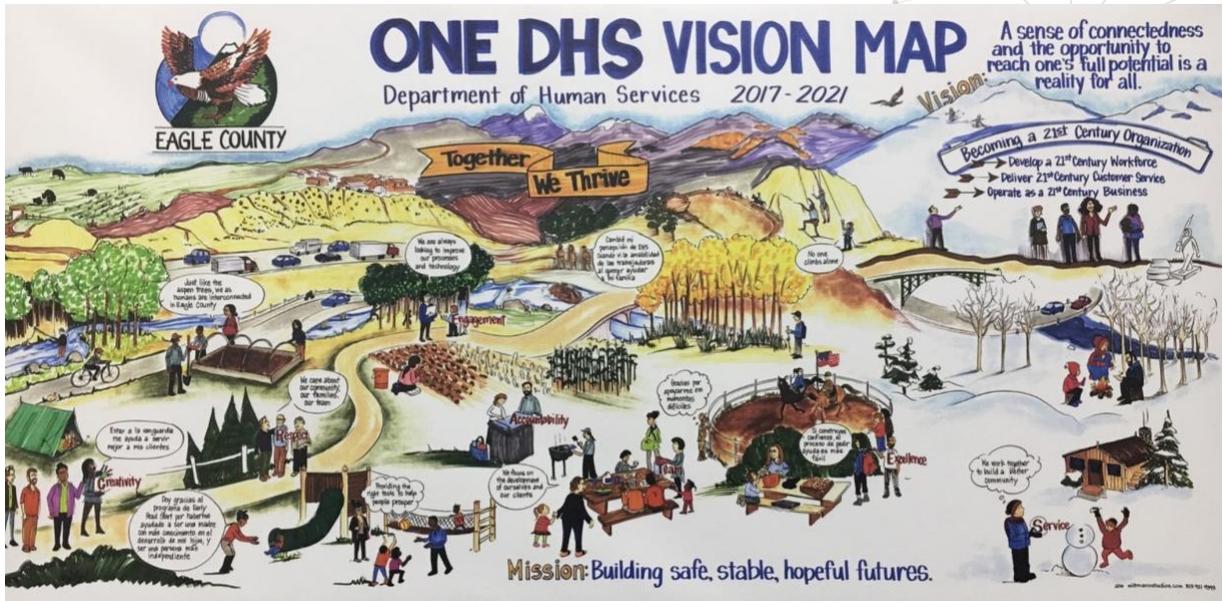
DATA SHARING/USE

The CSS office in Mesa County coordinated with the Workforce Center so that the 2Gen caseworker could be granted read-only access to the Connecting Colorado database. The supervisor of the Workforce Center suggested this as a solution to time-consuming emails between staff of the two agencies. The 2Gen caseworker is now able to access the database and determine which parents have followed up on her referrals to the Workforce Center. The 2Gen caseworker has used this information to improve the quality of 2Gen services by returning to parents who have not yet followed up and trying another approach to engage them in this resource.

EXAMPLE OF A STRONG PRACTICE IN EAGLE COUNTY

DATA SHARING/USE

The CSS office in Eagle County is working with HSConnects to pilot a model that overlays with the current child support data system. They are hoping to use the tool to understand who are the common clients between agencies, which will help CSS staff to make sure that parents receive efficient and coordinated person-centered services. Arapahoe County’s IT Department created this workflow overlay tool for CBMS; it is slated to sit over ACSES and then, ultimately, to coordinate with TRAILS. Essentially, this system could potentially act as a common client database in the future.



Artwork in the Eagle County CSS office highlights 2Gen values.

3. Program Design

Evidence of effective program design that supports communication across agencies and coordination at the administrative level in order to provide enhanced 2Gen services

2Gen Services Level 3	Transitioning to 2Gen Services Level 2	Regular Services Level 1
5 Counties Scored at this Level	6 Counties Scored at this Level	0 Counties Scored at this Level
<p>Systematic opportunities for leadership to coordinate with workforce or public benefit agencies (e.g., regular meetings, leadership names point person or counter-part at and how they communicate).</p> <p>Evidence of program design that <i>may</i> include procedures to ensure court has actionable information if the caseworker is unable to attend.</p>	<p>Evidence of documented 2Gen program design such as the use of the procedures manual and case management checklist.</p>	<p>Evidence that program design is aligned to an enforcement model.</p> <p>Communication across agencies is typically for purposes of tracking payment or implementing remedies.</p>



Implementation Findings: Program Design

Learn More Details in Discussion Section Following

Just under half of the participating counties exhibit Level 3 program design and just over half of the participating counties exhibit Level 2 program design.

This finding reflects the trend towards interagency communication and increased opportunities for CSS leadership to coordinate 2Gen services with leadership in other programs and agencies beyond CSS.

In rural counties, program design may allow for supportive services to be brought in-house within CSS.

Lessons Learned and Opportunities to Further Develop 2Gen Program Design

- 1) Continue to identify and pursue systematic opportunities to collaborate at the county leadership level with other agencies who can provide 2Gen supportive services to parents.
- 2) Facilitate greater cross-county collaboration to serve parents who move away from the county where the case originated.

One barrier to strong program design in serving parents occurs when parents move outside of the county where the case originated. In Colorado, because the cost of housing is so expensive in many areas, both NCPs and CPs will often move to more rural locations or outside of the state. This relocation makes it difficult to connect NCPs and CPs to comprehensive resources because caseworkers do not have the partnerships in place. If a parent moves to another pilot study county, caseworkers are able to connect them to services through their relationships with each other.

- 3) Provide support to rural counties to bring 2Gen supportive services in-house within CSS.

See Strong Practice Example in Prowers County ([p. 36](#)).

- 4) Consider supporting program design that permits parents who complete fatherhood/motherhood/parenting programs to receive varying-levels of arrears forgiveness upon completion.
- 5) Ensure that counties have adequate time to plan implementation of the 2Gen model so that strong program design can be put into place.

Transforming to the 2Gen model requires a significant change in practice, and as such, counties need adequate time to develop the partnerships and staffing plans that support strong program design. This may include inventorying strengths and resources relative to the [2Gen case management procedures guide](#) prior to beginning the transformation.



Discussion: Program Design

Prior to the launch of this pilot project, counties were provided with training on **2Gen procedures**⁸ and a case management checklist. All counties demonstrate adoption and implementation of these 2Gen program design tools. What differentiates the five counties that demonstrate Level 3 program design is the development of established interagency communication processes on a regular basis.

In most counties, the 2Gen approach, including program design, is regularly discussed with leadership within CSS and the local Department of Human Services. Updates about the 2Gen Project are provided to leadership in CDHS regularly as well. Yet, at many CSS offices, interagency communication often tends to be motivated by the needs of a specific parent on a case-by-case basis. For example, if the parent needs employment assistance, the caseworker will connect the parent to a contact at the local workforce center. Efforts to coordinate with other agency heads at the level of program design and establish regular communication processes, however, are becoming more common.

Across counties, it is clear that the caseworkers generally follow the guidance in the **2Gen procedures guide** and the case management checklist in providing services (e.g., Goal Setting Plan meetings, following up with parents, etc.), with the exception of systematically reaching out to CPs (see [p. 62](#)).

“It feels like somebody who had dealt with the system worked their way up and then became in charge. Someone who knew the struggles working on the obstacles. Child support was a very negative experience and then this program is not a negative experience. I feel like you want to work with me and help me out.”

-NCP, during parent interview conducted during implementation study

⁸ See revised March 2019 [document prepared by the Center for Policy Research](#), “2Gen Procedures: Integrating a Two-Generation Approach to Child Support Services – Colorado’s Service Level Approach.”



EXAMPLE OF A STRONG PRACTICE IN EAGLE COUNTY

PROGRAM DESIGN

In Eagle County, for the past two years, a cross-divisional team known as the “Integrated Customer Service Team” has convened regularly to discuss families who need comprehensive assistance. The meetings include representatives from the Child, Family & Adult Services; Economic Services (i.e., public benefits); Public Health, and Child Support Services. While the emphasis is on a single case, conversations about improving integrated service delivery systemically at the program design level inevitably occur.

EXAMPLE OF A STRONG PRACTICE IN PROWERS COUNTY

PROGRAM DESIGN

Because of its rural location, the Department of Human Services in Prowers County often takes on programming that is not available in the community and that may not be a part of traditional core services typically provided by Human Services. For example, a program called *Crossroads and Journeys*, which is a growth group supporting participants in finding their life purpose, is provided on site through CSS. Parenting classes and adult education/GED classes are also provided on site. Referral to these programs do not require a formalized process (i.e., MOU) because they are provided in-house and often by CSS staff directly. In addition, because of the county’s recent focus on collaboration among agencies to serve the entire family and CSS’s participation in the Childhood Maltreatment Framework and the Collaborative Management Project, there is evidence of systematic opportunities for leadership to coordinate with other agencies.

Given the rural location of this site, the evaluation team feels that this meets the spirit of Level 3 program design and is a model for 2Gen service implementation in other rural counties.



4. Partnerships

Evidence of cross-system and sector partnerships to meet 2Gen goals

2Gen Services Level 3	Transitioning to 2Gen Services Level 2	Regular Services Level 1
<u>2</u> Counties Scored at this Level	<u>9</u> Counties Scored at this Level	<u>0</u> Counties Scored at this Level
<p>Evidence of formalized referral partnerships (including MOUs) with at partners in the community in various sectors of 2Gen services (e.g., at the employment office, etc.).</p> <p>Systematic referrals to public and community agencies for NCP and CP.</p> <p>The MOUs <i>may</i> allow for tracking of the outcomes of referrals, and, possibly, the application of enforcement remedies based on information shared by partner agencies (following parents’ use of these resources).</p> <p>Leadership communicates with partners to improve relationships and understand issues as evidenced by concrete examples or regularly scheduled meetings.</p> <p>Caseworkers demonstrate knowledge of partnerships, how to follow up on referrals, and strengths and limitations of available resources.</p>	<p>Informal referral partnerships across various sectors of 2Gen services.</p> <p>Caseworkers report that they have a “contact” at a partner agency across various sectors of 2Gen services.</p> <p>-----OR-----</p> <p>Formalized referral partnerships that are limited to one sector (e.g., employment, adult education, early childhood education, health care).</p> <p>Caseworkers may report gaps in partnerships that are a barrier to 2Gen service delivery.</p> <p>Systematic referrals for NCP; <i>may</i> refer CP as well.</p>	<p>Partnerships may be in place; however, they are not specific to 2Gen goals or service delivery.</p> <p>Individual caseworkers may have informal partnerships developed and refer NCP on a case-by-case basis (i.e., non-systematic referrals).</p>



Implementation Findings: Partnerships

Learn More Details in Discussion Section Following

All CSS offices have made substantial progress in forming and strengthening partnerships that support 2Gen service delivery for NCPs.

Most counties do not report the ability to track the outcomes of referrals and, as such, are not able to support the application of enforcement remedies based on information shared by partner agencies (i.e., following parents' use of these resources).

Only a few counties have formalized these partnerships through Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), which sometimes allow for tracking of outcomes of referrals.

Gaps in resources in some counties, especially in housing and substance abuse treatment services, limit the ability of counties to fully implement the 2Gen model.

Lessons Learned and Opportunities to Further Develop 2Gen Partnerships

- 1) Support counties in developing formal partnerships through MOUs.

Developing MOUs is a heavy lift for counties. Some counties may benefit from technical assistance in the preparation of these legal documents.

- 2) Support counties in establishing partners and beginning the conversations with other agencies about the goals of 2Gen work.

Some counties may first need more support in establishing partners before considering establishing MOUs. The State team may consider a partnership-building grant or increased emphasis on technical assistance and information regarding establishing partnerships that can better support 2Gen service delivery at the systems level.

- 3) Consider supporting counties in developing and implementing a multi-year plan to assemble all partners necessary to successfully implement the 2Gen model.

Within the model, there are five types of service providers that are necessary to achieve 2Gen outcomes: (1) employment services, (2) education services, (3) court and legal services, (4) parenting services, and (5) access and visitation services. Allowing counties the time and resources needed to incrementally build these partnerships could potentially generate more robust outcomes for families.



The two quotes included in this section highlight the wide variation in perceptions of the role of partnerships among caseworkers.

This quote shows a perspective more in line with the 2Gen approach:

“We have so many partners in the same building, in our building. If I were to refer someone to [Tom with Workforce] then I would walk there with the parent, and then naturally follow-up with Tom and ask if the parent really did get those services. Tom would tell me if the parent didn’t for whatever reason. Then I would get in touch with the parent and see what happened and how I can encourage them.”

-Child Support Caseworker, during implementation site visit

4) Advocate for hard-to-access resources at the state level to fill gaps in 2Gen service delivery, especially in rural counties.

Some counties note significant gaps in partner resources, especially in housing, child care, and mental health/substance abuse services. Where advocacy can occur at the state-level to increase availability and access to needed resources, especially in housing and mental health/substance abuse services, this will allow 2Gen services to be provided comprehensively throughout the state.

5) Invest in software and other capacity-building that is needed to help counties track the outcomes of referrals.

See Data Sharing/Use section for more details ([p. 30](#)).

6) Support counties in establishing fatherhood/motherhood/parenting programming, either through a local partnership or in-house at CSS.

Caseworkers and CSS leadership frequently report that they needed and wanted the ability to refer NCPs and CPs to parenting programs. Counties who used to have access to parenting programs and then lost the funding for these services report that the loss is noticeable, and that parenting programs are effective. In addition, attention to motherhood programs across the state could be beneficial. The number of NCP mothers is considerable in some counties, estimated at up to 25%. Some counties have advocated for the funding to provide parenting programs within the CSS office. Other counties have partnered with local mental health clinics and have a strong referral network in place for NCPs. The State team can assist counties in identifying strategies to bring parenting programs to the region.

Discussion: Partnerships

Leadership and caseworkers report connecting parents to services through a wide variety of informal and formal partnerships. Caseworkers demonstrate knowledge of partnerships, how to follow up on parent referrals, and the strengths and limitations of available resources. Specific strong partnerships frequently referenced include the local Workforce Center, public benefits, self-represented litigant coordinator, and the court system. This varies by county, however. Regularly scheduled meetings among leadership are sometimes incorporated into strong program design helped to solidify and improve partnership relationships.

Across CSS offices, depending on the resources available in the county and the demand for these resources, there is a wide range in partnership strength, even within the bounds of implementing 2Gen services with fidelity. If the partners are located in the same building, caseworkers report feeling more comfortable making contact with staff members to build relationships and assisting parents with accessing these services (i.e., “warm hand-off”).



This quote shows a perspective more in line with regular, traditional services (i.e., a 1Gen approach):

“I can give you the information. What you choose to do with it is your choice. So, if you want food stamps, I’m not going to go over to the food stamps office with you. I am going to give you the information that I have about food stamps, which is more than I had in the past, with information on the requirements, here is how you apply, and you choose what you want to do with it. And then next time, if there is a next time, depending on what they want to do, then I follow up and ask them, ‘How did that go for you?’...”

-Child Support Caseworker, during implementation site visit

administrative difficulties involved in creating MOUs. However, the benefit of an MOU is that it reduces the workload for individual caseworkers who are otherwise primarily responsible for reaching out and developing those external relationships. Caseworkers typically report that it is difficult to form partnerships with agencies they are not familiar with.

Gaps in resources available through partnerships that are frequently discussed by leadership and caseworkers include:

- Housing
- Mental health/substance abuse treatment services
- Public transportation, especially in rural areas
- Parenting/fatherhood/motherhood programming

These resources are simply not accessible or available in many counties, especially in rural areas. In some cases, faith communities were able to fill these gaps, and CSS offices reached out to local religious leadership to solidify these partnerships. CPs are rarely included in systematic referrals, which is an area of growth across the state. This is discussed further in the section on CPs and children ([p. 59](#)).

If partners are located outside of the building, some caseworkers report providing information about external supportive services directly to the parent and encouraging the parent to utilize these services. Caseworkers report frequently following up with the parent or a partnering staff member (on a case-by-case basis) to make sure that the parent utilized the referral services. However, there is not a systematic way to track the outcomes of referrals, except in Mesa County (see example in Data Sharing/Use section on [p. 32](#)).

Most counties do not report the ability to track the outcomes of referrals and, as such, are not able to support the application of enforcement remedies based on information shared by partner agencies (i.e., following parents’ use of these resources).

MOUs are considered a hallmark of the 2Gen approach because they formalize the service delivery expectations between CSS and local partners. The MOU creates accountability between CSS and partner agencies and creates a seamless system for parents to receive services, as opposed to a simple “warm hand-off” or a referral to “go see the Workforce Center.”

There is wide variety in terms of use of MOUs. Larger counties such as Denver County, detailed in the example below, have a number of MOUs in place, which is necessary to serve a larger number of parents. Some smaller CSS offices express that MOUs are not necessary at this stage in the 2Gen Project because there are not that many parents needing services and due to the



EXAMPLE OF A STRONG PRACTICE IN DELTA COUNTY

PARTNERSHIPS

In Delta County, there is a formalized contract (i.e., MOU) in place with a career counselor to assist NCPs with career services such as developing resumes and filling out job applications. The career counselor is required to provide updates back to the site related to outcomes of referrals, so she provides a monthly report to CSS which includes copies of cover letters/resumes she has assisted parents in writing. This provides an excellent example of 2Gen coordination of services with a strong formalized partnership.

PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF 2GEN SERVICES

PARTNERSHIPS

Both NCPs and CPs report that the 2Gen approach is particularly helpful towards providing resources and information on available supportive services. Many parents report that, prior to talking to their caseworkers, they were unaware of the myriad of supportive services available to them, including receiving help with visitation or parenting plans and educational goals.

The most common type of assistance that parents reported receiving from caseworkers related to employment and transportation. Parents report that the assistance being offered by caseworkers is personalized and tailored to their individual barriers to payment of child support.

Examples of the referral resources parents frequently note as being helpful include:

- Court resources – paperwork and classes for their visitation cases
- Employment – direct job openings, employment agencies, classes, and organizations focused on workforce development
- Food assistance
- Transportation

Several of the parents interviewed describe a physical or mental disability that makes it difficult for them to work or take public transportation. In these cases, caseworker knowledge of partnerships or agencies that work with individuals with disabilities is critical.



EXAMPLE OF A STRONG PRACTICE IN DENVER COUNTY *PARTNERSHIPS*

Denver County's vision for CSS is based in Denver Human Services' *value sphere*, a model for service delivery that emphasizes essential services, a network of opportunity, and a healthy and connected community. The value sphere aligns with the 2Gen model because both focus on building and sustaining partnerships that create a referral network of services for individuals and families.

A testament to the value sphere, Denver Human Services has established the GIVE Center in the first floor of its building. The GIVE Center is a free resource center operated by Denver Human Services staff, volunteers, and interns. GIVE Center resource navigators work with community partners to connect individuals and families to essential hygiene items like diapers, wipes, shampoo, soap, and other hygiene products, as well children's pajamas. Along with full-time staff, volunteer resource navigators serve as liaisons between Denver Human Services clients and community partners and refer clients to community-based service providers, including food pantries, clothing banks, utility assistance, rental assistance, and other lifeline resources.

Because the GIVE Center is located in the same building as CSS, it provides an excellent example of the level of partnerships that are possible in an urban area with strong leadership dedicated to comprehensive support for individuals and families.

CSS also participates in a quarterly community network event hosted by the GIVE Center, which provides an opportunity to understand, coordinate, and improve resources and services to parents.

In Denver County, caseworkers can also refer parents experiencing mental health issues to navigators with the Office of Behavioral Health Strategies co-located in the building. Caseworkers have also worked to develop the version of the Goal Setting Plan found in [Appendix C](#).



5. Court System		
Evidence of navigating and partnering with the court system with the goal of increasing decisions that are in alignment with 2Gen philosophy		
2Gen Services Level 3	Transitioning to 2Gen Services Level 2	Regular Services Level 1
0 Counties Scored at this Level	9 Counties Scored at this Level	2 Counties Scored at this Level
<p>Court system is a consistent source of referrals for 2Gen service delivery.</p> <p>Court at least intermittently assists with review and expedited adjustment or modifications to child support orders when either NCP or CP is enrolled in an educational program.</p> <p>Documented plan or formalized procedures for how the 2Gen program staff communicates with the court, especially if the court conducts review hearings and applies appropriate incentives and sanctions.</p>	<p>Evidence that the court system is aware of existing or planned 2Gen service delivery.</p> <p>-----OR-----</p> <p>Evidence of a plan to engage the court in the transition to 2Gen service delivery (e.g., program design, initial conversations with state or local court liaisons, task group agendas).</p> <p>-----OR-----</p> <p>Court system is an intermittent or sporadic source of referrals for 2Gen service delivery (e.g., a couple of magistrates in a large county; evidence of occasional referrals).</p>	<p>Leadership and/or caseworkers consistently report that court appears unsupportive of change from enforcement model to 2Gen approach.</p> <p>-----OR-----</p> <p>There is no evidence of CSS attempting to engage the court in 2Gen service delivery.</p>

Implementation Findings: Court System

Learn More Details in Discussion Section Following

Most counties demonstrate a Level 2 partnership with the court system. The court system is generally supportive of the 2Gen model, but it is not a consistent source of referrals; child support orders are not modified based on parent enrollment in educational programs; and, formalized communication procedures are not in place.

Leadership and caseworkers believe that court clerks are extremely helpful and serve as a resource and connector between the two systems.



Magistrates in some counties express interest in incorporating changes that align with the 2Gen model.

Lessons Learned and Opportunities to Further Develop 2Gen Partnerships with the Court System

- 1) Support counties in educating magistrates/judges about the 2Gen model and encouraging participation, especially where caseloads are high and court system leadership and staff have limited time.
- 2) Advocate for taking the next steps in strengthening partnerships with the court system so that the court can assist with expedited review and adjustment to child support orders when parents are enrolled in 2Gen programs when requested by a parent.
- 3) Work to formalize procedures for how 2Gen program staff communicate with the court so that data sharing related to a parent's involvement in 2Gen supportive services, such as parenting programs, can occur.
- 4) Promote continued participation in statewide partnerships with the judicial system that serve families.

Discussion: Court System

Overall, leadership and caseworkers report that magistrates/judges in most pilot study counties appear supportive of the 2Gen approach and are working to integrate 2Gen practices into the court system. One example is that a magistrate in one county has instituted an “Amnesty Day” for the past three years wherein NCPs are able to attend court and the magistrate will expunge their bench warrants.

However, at this point in the 2Gen Project, 2Gen procedures and processes are not formalized. Magistrates in the participating pilot counties are not currently assisting with review and expedited adjustment or modifications to child support orders depending on NCP's and CP's participation in 2Gen supportive services or programs. Conversations are occurring about how to better coordinate systems in order to facilitate this process.

It is important to consider that magistrates rotate every two to three years, so outreach about the 2Gen model should also include district court administration staff.

Some counties employ a court navigator on staff who assists with navigating the court system and serves as a connector between CSS and magistrates. Overall, leadership and caseworkers believe that court clerks are extremely helpful in connecting the two systems – the court and CSS. In some counties, leadership also reports meeting regularly with the individuals working within the court system to identify issues and barriers.

“We have a very open line of communication with the court system.”

-Child Support Leadership, during implementation site visit

In some counties, magistrates express interest in transitioning towards a problem-solving court approach to child support. The idea behind problem-solving courts is philosophically similar to the 2Gen model: “Based in existing court buildings, problem-solving courts yoke together the authority of the court and the services necessary to reduce re-offending and address the issues which drive crime.” (Centre for Justice Innovation, 2018, para. 1). There are now more than 1,200 non-drug-court problem-solving courts operating in the U.S., focusing on issues such as mental health, domestic violence, and veterans (Driscoll, 2018). Prior research about effective problem-solving courts may provide guidance on this transition in the context of CSS (Bowen & Whitehead, 2015).



In two counties, leadership reports that magistrates are resistant to changes to the existing enforcement model. In some areas, the magistrates' caseloads are very high and there are many competing demands for time, so change cannot be prioritized.

PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF 2GEN SERVICES

COURT SYSTEM

The experiences of NCPs within the court system appear almost entirely dependent on the specific magistrates and judges they have encountered, speaking to the power of these leadership positions. One father describes that, in the early days of his child support case, he felt as though he was the "bad guy." His mindset towards CSS in general was radically changed when a judge empathized with his feelings, and then explained to the father that the child support system is not meant to punish or harm him; it exists to make sure that his son has the money he needed for necessities. This humanizing moment radically changed how the father experienced the child support system.

NCPs in particular report that the purpose of the court system and its relationship to CSS is confusing, and caseworkers need to thoroughly explain the role of the court system in determining issues of custody, visitation, and payments:

"I don't understand why his dad spends more time with him and makes twice as much as me, and I have to pay him. I don't understand child support honestly. I have two jobs, day and night, and no transportation. Dad and his wife both work. I make partial payments whenever I can."

When caseworkers are able to communicate the role of the court system, both NCPs and CPs feel less afraid, confused, and combative towards judges and magistrates, court system staff, and CSS in general.



6. Funding		
Evidence of funding diversity that supports 2Gen service delivery		
2Gen Services Level 3	Transitioning to 2Gen Services Level 2	Regular Services Level 1
4 Counties Scored at this Level	6 Counties Scored at this Level	1 Counties Scored at this Level
<p>Concrete examples of integrated and flexible funding streams within the human services agency to support 2Gen service delivery.</p> <p>-----OR-----</p> <p>Concrete examples of blending funding or engaging in cost-sharing across multiple agencies.</p>	<p>Leadership reports being willing to explore more flexible funding approaches or blending funds between agencies, but the primary source of funds is from CSS.</p> <p>-----OR-----</p> <p>Evidence of actively pursuing county-appropriate opportunities for grant and local funding to support 2Gen services.</p>	<p>Leadership reports that the primary source of funds is from CSS, and there are no current plans to make changes.</p>

Implementation Findings: Funding

Learn More Details in Discussion Section Following

A little under half of counties demonstrate Level 3 funding, meaning that there are concrete plans in place to continue funding 2Gen services beyond the pilot study through flexible or blended funding streams.

Plans for future funding of 2Gen services vary greatly depending on the financial resources available in the county.

Connecting parents to resources and interventions may require funding far beyond the flexible funding available through the pilot study.

The supportive services funding is typically being utilized to pay court fees and driver’s license reinstatement fees.



Lessons Learned and Opportunities to Further Develop 2Gen Funding

- 1) Advocate for funding opportunities that can sustain the 2Gen transformation statewide.
- 2) Advocate for sustainable funding within each county and explore more blended or braided funding options.
- 3) Provide counties with guidance on best practices in making 2Gen funding requests to county commissioners or other leaders.

Several counties express that they would like to first see data resulting from the impact study before advocating for additional funding to county commissioners. The results of the impact study can be used by counties to tailor funding requests.

- 4) Provide guidance to county leadership and caseworkers about the most impactful distribution of the flexible funding.

Related to the supportive services funding, caseworkers in many counties report that the flexible funding dollars need to be spent equally on parents at the rate of \$200 per case (for a total of \$200 among all three parties—NCPs, CPs, and children). Some caseworkers remain unclear as to whether the funding can be used to directly support CPs and children. The original intent of the model involves taking an equity-based approach and distributing funding on a case-by-case basis depending on need and impact. Caseworkers report struggling to decide which funding requests will have the most impact. More communication and guidance may be helpful towards achieving the original goal of the 2Gen model's flexible funds.

Discussion: Funding

Plans for future funding strategies following the end of the pilot study vary significantly depending on the resources available in each county.

Most counties are currently depending on the pilot study's funding for supportive services. Many leaders and caseworkers express that the additional funding has been less important than they thought it would be. Connecting parents to resources typically does not require funding, or, it requires substantially more funding than available through the pilot study. For example, paying for housing, child care, and college courses directly is not possible in this pilot study. The funding is typically being utilized to pay court fees and driver's license reinstatement fees.

At the case level, caseworkers express that it is sometimes difficult to know how to best distribute the flexible funding. The purpose of the flexible funding is to allow for supportive services for parents who may need it, primarily for transportation issues, bus passes and/or work clothes. Because caseworkers have not previously been responsible for these kinds of decisions, they sometimes struggle to determine when to distribute the funds and how to document the distribution of these funds.

Future plans sometimes involve requesting \$1,000 to \$5,000 in the county budget, a less complicated, non-blended approach. Denver County demonstrates an example of blended funding with its GIVE Center, which is funded by CORE Services (see Strong Practice Example in Denver County, above in the section on Partnerships).



Several counties are utilizing blended TANF funds to support 2Gen work on site; for example, dedicating these funds to license reinstatement and bus passes in the future. Applying for state-level grant/demonstration-funded opportunities is also an option for funding 2Gen work when available.

Some counties face insurmountable financial barriers to continuing to fund 2Gen supportive services. In some counties, leadership report that there are no plans in place to pursue further funding because the county is not financially able to grant requests at this time. Some counties' tax bases and revenue streams have been significantly affected by diminished oil and gas work in the area.

In two counties, leadership expresses that, as of now, there has not yet been enough evidence that the 2Gen model will result in increased child support payments. Thus, requesting additional funding for the 2Gen Project is not justified and would not be approved by the county commissioner.

"I've got a small pot of money that I proposed in the budget...and our commissioners have been very supportive of those kinds of expenditures. Again, it's not going to buy somebody a car or a house, but to have some money so that if we find some things that are working beyond this pilot, then we can keep those things going."

-Child Support Leadership, during implementation site visit

7. Caseworker Staffing

Evidence of hiring, training, and staffing practices that are necessary to support 2Gen service delivery

2Gen Services Level 3	Transitioning to 2Gen Services Level 2	Regular Services Level 1
<u>2</u> Counties Scored at this Level	<u>9</u> Counties Scored at this Level	<u>0</u> Counties Scored at this Level
Evidence of specialized caseload staff trained in 2Gen case management techniques (e.g., job descriptions, staffing plans, caseworker reports).	Evidence of utilizing a case management model with specialized caseloads (Note: only applies to sites with multiple staff). -----OR----- Caseworkers have specialized training in 2Gen case management techniques, but caseloads are not specialized.	Leadership reports that (if county has multiple staff) specialized caseloads (such as DOC, Cat 3) are utilized. Single staff counties have a trained staffer.



Implementation Findings: Caseworker Staffing

Learn More Details in Discussion Section Following

Most counties demonstrate Level 2 caseworker staffing because 2Gen caseworkers in most counties do not have a specialized caseload of 2Gen parents since they also need to maintain their regular services caseload.

Across all counties, there is evidence of specialized staff trained in 2Gen case management techniques, including motivational interviewing.

The realities of caseworker staffing on site result in many caseworkers feeling overburdened and unable to fully attend to their 2Gen parents.

In expanding 2Gen services after the pilot study, caseworkers should have some flexibility beyond the Family Resource Assessment⁹ in selecting which parents should receive these services.

Lessons Learned and Opportunities to Further Develop 2Gen Caseworker Staffing

- 1) Advocate for the funding of specialized 2Gen caseworkers who utilize specialized skill sets to serve a smaller caseload of parents.

See suggestions for advocating for 2Gen funding above. Overseeing a 2Gen caseload requires a more specialized set of skills than does overseeing a regular services child support caseload. These specialized skills include advanced motivational interviewing skills and strong relational and communication skills.

- 2) Allow some flexibility to caseworkers beyond the Family Resource Assessment to identify NCPs likely to benefit from 2Gen services.

The Family Resource Assessment is a universal screener intended to systematically identify NCPs likely to benefit from 2Gen services. No screening instrument is perfect, and caseworkers should be encouraged to consult with their supervisors if there is specific NCP who they believe is likely to benefit from 2Gen Services but was screened out by the Family Resource Assessment. It is strongly recommended that the Family Resource Assessment continue to be used as an initial screener, because its use reduces influence of caseworker bias in selecting which parents should receive 2Gen supportive services.

⁹ The Family Resource Assessment is a universal screener developed by the evaluation team intended to systematically identify NCPs likely to benefit from 2Gen services. It also assesses specific barriers to NCP's payment of child support and the quality of the parent-child relationship.



“2Gen is not my full-time job...we have a lot of people that we deal with every day. We’ve got email, we’ve got regular mail, we’ve got phone calls, we’ve got walk-ins. If I could only do 2Gen, that would be a whole other ballgame.”

-Child Support Caseworker, during implementation site visit

Discussion: Caseworker Staffing

Across all counties, there is evidence of specialized staff trained in 2Gen case management techniques, including motivational interviewing. At most CSS offices, the primary 2Gen caseworkers handles both regular services and 2Gen cases, which results in a rating of Level 2 caseworker staffing because the caseloads are not considered to be specialized.

Only two counties have the resources and strong program design in place to support 2Gen caseworkers who only maintain a caseload of 2Gen parents. Specialized caseworker staffing appears to make a significant difference in terms of reducing caseworkers’ feelings of overwork and work stress. Caseworkers who do not also have to maintain a regular

services caseload report feeling more effective in their 2Gen work with parents. They report having enough time to fully attend to parents’ needs and to build strong relationships with parents. They appear to follow-up with parents more frequently. Stress levels appear to rise depending on how many regular services cases the 2Gen caseworker also needs to monitor.

Even caseworkers who had many responsibilities as a result of juggling 2Gen and regular services responsibilities noted that participating in the 2Gen Project led to a deeper sense of purpose and fulfillment in their jobs. Participating in the 2Gen Project created opportunities for deeper connections with parents and feeling more helpful overall in their roles.

As a model of even more specialized caseworker staffing, at one CSS office, CPs are serviced by specialized 2Gen caseworkers who only work with CPs. This county is among the few that systematically engages CPs with 2Gen services.

In general, 2Gen caseworkers report strong opinions about staffing moving forward. One caseworker believes that the ideal 2Gen caseload would be 50 2Gen parents (and no regular services cases). This reduced caseload would provide enough time to monitor each 2Gen parent with full fidelity to the model without feeling overly burdened with responsibilities and commitments on time.

It may not be possible in some counties, especially smaller counties, to establish the funding for a specialized 2Gen caseworker. Should this be the reality, cases could still be potentially shifted to other regular services caseworkers to help make the workload more manageable for the caseworker providing 2Gen services.

“My only concern on the supervisory side is the amount of time that it’s taken to work 2Gen cases versus the number of cases that my caseworkers have. There is no way that they can work all of their cases like 2Gen cases.”

-Child Support Leadership, during implementation site visit

Another aspect of 2Gen service delivery affecting caseworker staffing involves the Family Resource Assessment, a universal screener intended to systematically identify NCPs likely to benefit from 2Gen services. No screening



instrument is perfect, and caseworkers should be encouraged to consult with their supervisors if there is specific NCP who they believe is likely to benefit from 2Gen Services but was screened out by the Family Resource Assessment. It is strongly recommended that the Family Resource Assessment continue to be used as an initial screener, because its use reduces influence of caseworker bias in selecting which parents should receive 2Gen supportive services.

Caseworkers report that the Family Resource Assessment is very useful at the entry level to screen out parents who may be unwilling to pay child support, but ultimately, the results of the assessment depend on self-reporting by parents, which may or may not be fully accurate. Caseworkers have the benefit of understanding the history of a parent's behaviors and knowing whether he/she is in the right stage of change to participate in 2Gen services. For this reason, it seems important in expanding 2Gen services throughout the state that caseworkers should have some flexibility in selecting which parents should be screened in to receive these services. Once parents are enrolled in 2Gen services, supervisors could also have the discretion to rescind services should a parent's behaviors repeatedly demonstrate that they are unwilling but able to pay child support (e.g., getting driver's license reinstated, getting a job, but then refusing to pay child support).

Leadership and caseworkers also report feeling pressure from upper management about not meeting collections targets. They report sometimes receiving conflicting messages about 2Gen work taking time away from enforcement casework and affecting collections goals. Addressing NCP's barriers to making child support payments and supporting them in developing the habit of making regular payment is beneficial in and of itself and, in theory, will lead to improved long-term outcomes.

Many caseworkers express that the "cradle to grave" case management model is more in line with a 2Gen philosophy because they are able to develop deeper relationships with parents using this case management approach. However, "cradle to grave" case management for the entire CSS office is not necessary. There are many options for incorporating a 2Gen approach, including establishing a 2Gen caseworker or caseworkers who see a smaller number of 2Gen parents with a "cradle to grave" approach or a hybrid approach that allows the 2Gen worker to develop the relationship with the NCP and get him/her "on the right track" before transitioning the case to a traditional caseload.

Lastly, related to the increased workload stemming from the transition to the 2Gen model, caseworkers believe that as 2Gen services become more a part of regular practices, job responsibilities are increasing. Overseeing a 2Gen caseload requires a more specialized set of skills than does overseeing a regular services child support caseload. These specialized skills include advanced motivational interviewing skills and strong relational and communication skills. As a result, compensation may need to be reevaluated.

CSS Caseworker Job Satisfaction as a Result of the 2Gen Project

Even caseworkers who had many responsibilities as a result of juggling 2Gen and regular services responsibilities noted that participating in the 2Gen Project led to a deeper sense of purpose and fulfillment in their jobs. Participating in the 2Gen Project created opportunities for deeper connections with parents and feeling more helpful overall in their roles.



EXAMPLE OF A STRONG PRACTICE IN MONTROSE COUNTY

CASEWORKER STAFFING

Long before the launch of the 2Gen Project, leadership in Montrose County advocated for the funding of a 2Gen-specific caseworker who could focus on 2Gen service delivery instead of 1Gen/regular services cases on site. This provides one of the few examples of specialized 2Gen caseloads in the state.

Leadership attributes the successful funding request to the site's previous participation in a fatherhood program that showed preliminary efficacy in improving outcomes. The 2Gen caseworker is also on the Workforce Board, which provides systemic opportunities to coordinate supportive employment services. Because the 2Gen caseworker delivers fatherhood/ motherhood/parenting coaching and employment coaching, a small portion of his salary is supplemented with braided TANF funding.

The 2Gen caseworker is able to engage with parents comprehensively and holistically, and he reports greater satisfaction with this workload and job responsibilities. He is able to take the time to fully implement motivational interviewing skills towards building strong and effective relationships with parents. He has worked to create the Goal Setting Plan in [Appendix D](#). As of right now, his caseload remains relatively small, which may not be feasible for other counties due to financial constraints and staffing pressures.



8. Caseworker Communication Style*

Evidence that caseworkers utilize motivational interviewing skills learned in training, consistent with 2Gen philosophy and service delivery

2Gen Services Level 3	Transitioning to 2Gen Services Level 2	Regular Services Level 1
<u>6</u> Counties Scored at this Level	<u>4</u> Counties Scored at this Level	<u>0</u> Counties Scored at this Level
<p>Caseworkers consistently use basic helping skills, such as open-ended questions, affirmations, and reflection of feeling to build rapport with parents and understand barriers to payment.</p> <p>Caseworkers consistently demonstrate more advanced motivational interviewing techniques, such as developing discrepancies, expressing empathy, amplifying ambivalence, rolling with resistance, and supporting self-efficacy.</p> <p>Evidence of consistently developing Goal Setting Plan including signatures by NCP.</p> <p>Evidence of caseworkers referring to Goal Setting Plan to gauge progress.</p>	<p>Caseworkers consistently use basic helping skills, such as open-ended questions, affirmations, and reflection of feeling to build rapport with parents and understand barriers to payment.</p> <p>Some caseworkers <i>may</i> intermittently demonstrate motivational interviewing techniques, but the practice is not consistent within or across caseworkers.</p> <p>Caseworkers <i>may</i> report having received motivational interviewing training but needing more support to implement the skills.</p>	<p>Caseworkers primarily ask closed questions during each parent interaction (e.g., a question that elicits simply a “yes” or “no” response).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-----OR-----</p> <p>Caseworkers are inconsistent in their use of basic helping skills.</p>

****One county did not provide sufficient information in the form of recordings to rate this indicator due to concerns about parent privacy. Two counties were not able to obtain recordings due to lack of parent engagement with the 2Gen caseworker, which can be assumed to be due to not meeting fidelity to the 2Gen model.***



Implementation Findings: Caseworker Communication Style

Learn More Details in Discussion Section Following

In most counties, caseworkers consistently demonstrate basic helping skills and more advanced motivational interviewing skills, which strengthens relationships with parents and facilitates conversations about barriers to payment of child support.

In providing 2Gen services, caseworkers report feeling like they are stepping into the role of mental health provider frequently. Additional trainings could help caseworkers to respond more fully to parents and to prevent burnout.

Lessons Learned and Opportunities to Further Develop the 2Gen Caseworker Communication Style

- 1) Provide caseworkers with motivational interviewing trainings facilitated by a clinician who has experience in human services and include a direct supervision component.

Direct supervision will allow the trainer to observe the caseworker's motivational interviewing skills and provide invaluable feedback towards improving parent-facing 2Gen services.

- 2) Provide caseworkers with trainings related to vicarious trauma to help to prevent burnout.

Discussion: Caseworker Communication Style

Recordings or direct observations of caseworker interactions with parents were necessary to complete this section of the rubric.

Across all counties, caseworkers consistently demonstrate basic helping skills such as asking open-ended questions, affirmations, and more specifically, affirming parents' behavioral changes towards making consistent payments (at any level of payment).

Caseworkers typically exhibit very nonjudgmental tones of voice to build rapport and strengthen relationships with parents.

At many CSS offices, caseworkers also demonstrate consistent use of more advanced motivational interviewing techniques, such as rolling with resistance and supporting self-efficacy. Across all counties, caseworkers who provided recordings of parent interactions could express more reflections of feelings in order to further demonstrate empathy.

"We build a relationship with our clients because that is the key to making sure that they know that we are on their side and that we are here to help them."

-Child Support Caseworker, during implementation site visit



Caseworkers are not typically trained mental health clinicians. Although some caseworkers providing 2Gen services may have received their master's in social work, some have not. Regardless, in providing 2Gen supportive services, caseworkers report feeling like they are stepping into the role of mental health provider frequently. For example, in many of the recordings provided to the evaluation team, caseworkers assisted parents dealing with significant mental health concerns, including substance abuse and suicidality. This issue most likely occurs across CDHS, for any employee who is client-facing, so this concern is not unique to the 2Gen program. Making sure that caseworkers feel supported and are trained in how to manage hearing parents' challenging stories, emotions, and distress (i.e., vicarious trauma) could help to prevent burnout in the future (Kanno & Giddings, 2017). Providing a Mental Health First Aid training may be a first step in this process.

"We hear all of our clients' stories and you kind of feel like you are traumatized by some of that, if they hate each other and they cry, and it's just so sad."

-Child Support Caseworker, during implementation site visit

It is also important to consider that the 2Gen caseworkers participating in this pilot study have been selected by leadership primarily due to their genuinely empathic natures and desire to help parents beyond what is typically possible within regular services. This may explain higher scores in this category. Expanding 2Gen services throughout the state might not result in such strongly delivered "Caseworker Communication Styles" in line with the 2Gen model. Essentially, caseworkers outside of the pilot study may not be as naturally inclined towards providing 2Gen supportive services. Caseworkers across CSS outside of the pilot study may require more training and skill development in order to master the specialized skill set that 2Gen service delivery requires, especially the motivational interviewing skills.

Motivational interviewing training will be even more critical in the future as 2Gen services are expanded. Caseworkers generally report that the motivational interviewing training has been helpful, especially if this is their first experience with the training. Other caseworkers report that the motivational interviewing trainer should have more direct experience working in human services so that the provided case examples are more relevant to 2Gen work. Caseworkers also report feeling like they need more practice of the advanced motivational interviewing skills. Future trainings should incorporate a direct observation component so that caseworkers can receive more supervision and feedback, especially related to the advanced motivational interviewing skills.

Spillover Effects

This exploration of caseworker communication style crystallizes an important issue that may have affected the results of the impact study in the form of spillover effects. The caseworkers selected for this pilot study appear to have been notably empathic individuals, who were then trained in motivational interviewing. Due to the 2Gen Project's constraints on caseworker staffing, most of these caseworkers also had to maintain a regular services caseload. This created a situation, which was acknowledged by caseworkers in interviews, wherein caseworkers frequently used motivational interviewing skills with control group/regular services parents and also referred control group/regular services parents to 2Gen supportive services (but without any financial support). In research, this is also known as spillover effects (i.e., when a treatment affects those in the control group or individuals who are not in the study sample). This concept will be further explored in the description of the results of the impact study.



PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF 2GEN SERVICES

CASEWORKER COMMUNICATION STYLE

Overall, NCPs and CPs have noticed a stark contrast between regular services and those being provided by their caseworkers in the 2Gen Project:

“It felt like it was more personal, instead of just business matters. I would call [child support] and it’d just be business...With [my caseworker], it was more, ‘What does your family need? I’ll talk to the father.’ It was more personal, and it was the family’s needs and not just money. [My caseworker] took more time, she heard me out. She’s asking, ‘How do we help?’ and ‘How the family is doing?’”

However, as a result of the significant change, one NCP articulated that it is difficult to trust the 2Gen Project and his caseworker due to negative interactions with CSS in the past:

“It’s like having a girl be really mean to you the whole time and then you meet the sister and she’s really nice. It’s hard to trust, because they’re related...I really like the concept of my caseworker working for me, but how long is it going to last?”

Other language used to describe caseworkers in the 2Gen Project includes:

- “He’s like a life manager.”
- “A once-in-a-lifetime person you meet.”
- “Very supportive.”
- “Helped me be hopeful.”
- “Like a light in my life.”
- “We built a really strong relationship – that’s something I really enjoy.”
- “Welcoming.”
- “Straightforward.”
- “Understanding, very understanding.”

The perceived impact of having a more personal connection with a nonjudgmental caseworker trained in motivational interviewing is that parents are more likely to engage in supportive services.



9. Caseworker Focus with NCP*

Evidence of identifying NCP barriers to payment and taking a comprehensive, tailored approach to reducing these barriers

2Gen Services Level 3	Transitioning to 2Gen Services Level 2	Regular Services Level 1
8 Counties Scored at this Level	2 Counties Scored at this Level	0 Counties Scored at this Level
<p>Caseworkers consistently use the Family Resource Assessment to identify barriers to payment consistently for new cases and at least intermittently for modifications.</p> <p>In conversations with non-compliant NCPs, caseworkers consistently ask follow-up questions related to at least 1 barrier to payment previously identified and, when appropriate, discuss at least 1 supportive strategy for overcoming each identified barrier (e.g., if transportation to work is identified as a problem, the caseworker discusses how parent can obtain bus passes).</p> <p>Evidence of caseworkers following up on progress in overcoming barriers.</p>	<p>Caseworkers <i>may</i> use the Family Resource Assessment or another assessment tool on an inconsistent basis.</p> <p>Caseworkers intermittently ask follow-up questions related to identified barriers and discuss strategies for overcoming barriers.</p> <p>Caseworkers <i>may</i> refer to partnership agencies but the approach, hand off, and explanations are not tailored to the parent (e.g., standard list provided to all parents).</p>	<p>In conversations with non-compliant NCPs, caseworkers do not (or only sporadically) ask follow-up questions related to barriers to payment.</p> <p>In conversations with non-compliant NCPs, caseworkers appear to focus on conveying information about non-compliance rather than offering support for solutions to barriers.</p>

****One county did not provide sufficient information in the form of recordings to rate this indicator due to concerns about parent privacy. Two counties were not able to obtain recordings due to lack of parent engagement with the 2Gen caseworker, which can be assumed to be due to not meeting fidelity to the 2Gen model.***



Implementation Findings: Caseworker Focus with NCP

Learn More Details in Discussion Section Following

In most counties, caseworkers consistently identify and follow-up on barriers to NCP's goals, especially once a strong relationship has been established.

Many caseworkers report that the Goal Setting Plan is not useful in its current form.

Across the state, caseworkers appear skilled at helping parents to focus on small, achievable tasks that are aligned with the larger goal of making child support payments.

Lessons Learned and Opportunities to Further Develop Caseworkers' 2Gen Focus with NCP

- 1) Provide flexibility to caseworkers related to completing the Goal Setting Plan.

While caseworkers need to follow-up with parents to emphasize accountability for goals, the caseworker-parent relationship may benefit from more flexibility in how (i.e., on paper or verbally) and when (i.e., at the start of the relationship or after the relationship is more established) they complete the Goal Setting Plan.

- 2) Emphasize that counties can modify the Goal Setting Plan form to meet the needs of parents in that county (see [Appendices C and D](#) for examples from Denver and Montrose).
- 3) Provide more trainings to caseworkers on the effective use of the Goal Setting Plan to increase their comfort levels in engaging parents in the goal setting process.

Discussion: Caseworker Focus with NCP

Recordings or direct observations of caseworker interactions with parents were also necessary to complete this section of the rubric. Related to the development of the Goal Setting Plan, while it is clear that caseworkers are consistently following up on barriers to payment, many caseworkers report that the current version of the Goal Setting Plan form is not as useful as it could be. Because caseworkers typically do not have such a personal relationship with parents, parents may feel shame or embarrassment in filling out the Goal Setting Plan due to the private nature of the information disclosed.

In some instances, caseworkers describe the parent not wanting to engage with the caseworker again due to these feelings of embarrassment. It is also possible that caseworkers' own lack of comfort is contributing to the reported discomfort of this process. It may be beneficial to provide more trainings to caseworkers on the effective use of the Goal Setting Plan to increase their comfort levels in engaging parents in the goal setting process.



In an effort to make this experience better for parents, caseworkers in some counties have created their own version of the form (see [Appendices C and D](#) for examples from Denver and Montrose).

“2Gen is about getting behind the reason or reasons why the payment is not coming in and being able to make time to get into that with someone – really engaging people in what’s going on. It can’t just be, ‘Let’s talk about how you’re going to make your next payment?’ It has to be, ‘How are you doing? Are you well? How is your family? What’s going on for you?’ Really engaging with them.”

-Child Support Caseworker, during implementation site visit

Some caseworkers are choosing to not complete the Goal Setting Plan meeting until after the parent relationship is more established in an effort to prevent this from occurring. This may also be ameliorated by caseworkers instructing parents at the end of the Goal Setting Plan meeting, “You may feel some embarrassment or feel ashamed after you leave today because of the things that you told me, but that is normal. I respect you and the challenges you have already overcome and really want to keep working with you and supporting you” (or similar language).

Caseworkers report that some parents have never thought about life goals at all, and they are not capable of doing so during the limited time period of the Goal Setting Plan meeting with the caseworker.

Whether or not the physical Goal Setting Plan form is completed, across the state, caseworkers appear skilled at helping parents to focus on small, achievable tasks that are aligned with the larger goal of making child support payments.



PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF 2GEN SERVICES

CASEWORKER FOCUS WITH NCP

NCPs report that their experiences in the 2Gen Project and the supportive services they are receiving are driven by their stated goals, needs, and barriers to payment.

Transportation is a frequently-cited barrier, and parents report that caseworkers demonstrate exceptional creativity and problem-solving in addressing this issue. Caseworkers regularly facilitate driver's license reinstatements and also assist with fuel costs, bus passes, or finding alternate modes of transportation. As one NCP emphasized:

"If you don't have transportation, you can't work, and you especially can't work in jobs that pay any real money."

NCPs also note that caseworkers are helping to address much smaller tasks leading to larger goals. For example, one NCP shared that his caseworker helped him to understand the forms and fees required to sign up for classes that would get him closer to his goal of having more visitation rights.

NCPs furthermore report that their living situations are precarious and an unfortunate event like the unexpected loss of a job or housing can dramatically upset their ability to pay child support for an extended period of time or even to work on goals like parenting or visitation plans. They believe that caseworkers need to be adaptable to set more immediate goals or to change approaches.

One example from an NCP highlights the level of assistance provided by his caseworker: The NCP was referred to a job opportunity at Amazon by his caseworker and secured this job. However, the job began to interfere significantly with his sleep schedule and his needs around sober living, so he returned to his caseworker to brainstorm solutions. With the support of his caseworker, he has taken classes on financial literacy and math, parenting, and career prep and is currently pursuing trade school.



10. Caseworker Focus with CP and Children

Evidence of identifying and addressing barriers to economic security, educational attainment, and child well-being

2Gen Services Level 3	Transitioning to 2Gen Services Level 2	Regular Services Level 1
<u>4</u> Counties Scored at this Level	<u>7</u> Counties Scored at this Level	<u>0</u> Counties Scored at this Level
<p>Evidence of caseworkers consistently attempting to engage CPs.</p> <p>When contact is made with CP, caseworkers engage in conversations about any possible needs of children (e.g., possible needs include: medical, food, housing, educational, child care, etc.).</p> <p>When contact is made with CP, caseworkers engage in conversations about CP employment, parenting, or other needs and how CSS <i>may</i> be able to help or connect the CP to partner agencies.</p> <p>-----May Include-----</p> <p>Evidence of providing specialized services (e.g., such as parenthood classes) to both CP and NCP.</p> <p>Evidence of consistently addressing access to children and visitation as appropriate for each case (e.g., parenting time, DV screening, mediation, parenting plan).</p>	<p>Caseworkers demonstrate an understanding of possible needs of involved children and discuss isolated examples of how they have previously attempted to meet those needs.</p> <p>Evidence that services are available to both CP and NCP, but that engaging CP is not systematic.</p> <p><i>May</i> be evidence of addressing access to children and visitation as appropriate for each case (e.g., parenting time, DV screening, mediation, parenting plan).</p>	<p>Caseworkers report that only NCP is offered additional services (e.g., employment, education, etc.).</p> <p>Caseworkers cannot provide examples of ways they have previously attempted to meet needs of involved children beyond facilitating payment.</p>



Implementation Findings: Caseworker Focus with CP and Children

Learn More Details in Discussion Section Following

In most counties, caseworkers are not systematically connecting CPs and children to 2Gen services.

Standardizing language as to how the 2Gen model is introduced to CPs may proactively orient them to how the 2Gen model can help all parties (i.e., NCPs, CPs, and children).

Lessons Learned and Opportunities to Further Develop Caseworkers' 2Gen Focus with CP and Children

- 1) Consider implementing the 2Gen model in stages, with Stage I focusing on NCPs and Stage II focusing on CPs and children.

It appears that caseworkers simply did not have the bandwidth to target all involved parties during the first months of the pilot study.

- 2) Provide guidance to county leadership and caseworkers about the most effective way to engage CPs in 2Gen services.
- 3) Encourage counties to target CPs at the point of intake by discussing resources or adding information to the application packet.

Discussion: Caseworker Focus with CP and Children

Connecting CPs and children to 2Gen services is the least consistent aspect of implementation of the 2Gen approach across the state. Most counties are not linking CPs and children to 2Gen resources systematically.

Caseworkers demonstrate an understanding of possible needs of involved children and discuss isolated examples of how they have previously attempted to meet those needs.

Most caseworkers express that resources and connections are provided to CPs on a case-by-case basis if the CP raises the need.

As a model of specialized caseworker staffing, at one CSS office, CPs are serviced by specialized 2Gen caseworkers who work only with CPs and not NCPs in the 2Gen Project (while also maintaining a regular

“Some CPs were actually pretty mad about 2Gen at first. They felt like the NCP was getting special treatment and asked why we were helping them when they’re not paying and they haven’t been paying. Or, they didn’t want to be part of a program or project that linked them together.”

-Child Support Caseworker, during implementation site visit



services caseload). This county is among the few that systematically engages CPs with 2Gen services. Moving forward to expand 2Gen services throughout the state, this might be a best practice for several reasons. Caseworkers report that CPs are often unwilling to engage with 2Gen services because they associate caseworkers with previous negative interactions with CSS. In addition, CPs frequently believe that caseworkers are only trying to assist NCPs, especially if the child support order has been reduced as a result of the NCP's participation in the 2Gen Project. It may be more effective for CPs to learn about the 2Gen supportive services available to them from a new caseworker not associated with this stressful history.

It is clear that communication to CPs about 2Gen services needs to be very intentional otherwise the services could be perceived as undermining the overarching goal of meeting the needs of children.

PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF 2GEN SERVICES *CASEWORKER FOCUS WITH CP AND CHILDREN*

CPs express a variety of reactions to the 2Gen Project. In interviews, some CPs seem enthusiastic:

"The idea of somebody trying anything to figure out something that will work better than just threatening...It shouldn't be about punishment, it should be about doing the right thing...I'm 100% for any method that's going to encourage [the NCP] to live up to his obligations. Sometimes talking to people may motivate them instead of taking something away."

However, other CPs feel angry that the 2Gen Project appears to be rewarding NCPs for not paying child support obligations:

"If he [the NCP] was helping in the beginning, we wouldn't have to get outside help...Even though it's helping me out, it's like he's getting rewarded for not even wanting to pay."

Although many CPs report that they have not yet received any additional supports or services, the CPs who have been connected to 2Gen supportive services express gratitude:

"It takes stress off of me. It feels good to know there is a support system in place because it's just been me and him [my son] for so long. I didn't think I'd get help. It makes me feel good to know I have a support system to figure out barriers."

"My caseworker and others came up with rent or I would've been homeless without a doubt. [My caseworker] has been very understanding. She's been like a light in my life because I've had some very dark moments...Just knowing I had somebody there that could help me keep track of all this information."

Lastly, a number of CPs describe their relationships with NCPs as non-communicative, hostile, or having a traumatic history of domestic violence. Parents feel that their caseworkers are playing an important role in helping them to navigate their relationships.



Lessons Learned in the Pilot Study's Implementation

Lessons learned in the pilot study's implementation have highlighted complex issues: 1) the pilot study funding received by CSS offices may be insufficient to implement 2Gen service delivery; and 2) launching the pilot study without adequate readiness has created challenges.

Implementation Funding

There are multiple lenses for conceptualizing implementation funding. A wide-angle lens suggests the need to consider the transformation to 2Gen approaches beyond CSS. The root causes of inability to pay child support are issues that span systems and geographical regions (e.g., housing instability, substance abuse, and a lack of transportation). These persistent social problems require resources far beyond the scope of CSS.

A narrower lens that zooms in on CSS highlights the need for increased funding to support the complete transformation to the 2Gen model. Increased funding can enhance not only the supportive services provided to parents, but also staffing within CSS to meet the spirit of the 2Gen model.

Specialized caseworker staffing for the 2Gen Project is not currently sustainable based on the limited funding available in many counties at this time. Only two counties participating in the pilot study have been able to set aside the funding to maintain dedicated 2Gen caseworkers with specialized caseloads. The caseworkers with specialized 2Gen caseloads have expressed less stress and frustration with the pilot study process and the provision of 2Gen services to parents. These caseworkers describe feeling more competent and confident in their work. In terms of program design, CSS leadership who reported having more time, energy, and resources to invest in the 2Gen Project facilitated more extensive and comprehensive partnerships. They reported being better able to find creative solutions to systems-level problems.

Caseworkers report struggling to onboard cases and, simultaneously, to serve cases continuously. The time and energy required to onboard parents to the 2Gen Project is substantial because it is often necessary to change their hearts and minds and persuade them that CSS will be interacting with them in a new way — a more supportive way. This begins with being able to have conversations with parents. Some counties suggest that funding a cell phone without a CSS number attached might facilitate this initial outreach to parents, but ultimately, supportive relationships with caseworkers change the hearts and minds of parents.

To serve cases continuously within the 2Gen model, which includes following up systematically and routinely with parents on progress towards overcoming barriers, counties must fund an adequate number of staff and allocate the resources necessary to develop their specialized 2Gen skill sets, including motivational interviewing skills. Specific to the pilot study, caseworkers report feeling burdened with follow-up data collection for the pilot study because the funding was not available for independent evaluators to do this work.

Increased funding devoted to implementation could support fidelity to the 2Gen model.



Launching When Ready

The pilot study's launch timeline has been driven, in part, by the goal of completing the pilot study before a change in political administration, not by readiness. While the evaluation team recognizes the political pressures inherent in launching an innovative social policy initiative, the timeline has challenged the team's ability to run the level of rigorous randomized controlled trial that was the hope of the 2Gen Project. It is critical to make sure that there is readiness to launch across all areas of implementation of the 2Gen model: state leadership, county leadership, partnerships, caseworker staffing, staff training, and data collection.

The time pressure during the pilot study, for example, resulted in the motivational interviewing training occurring concurrently with the implementation. Caseworkers were still working on developing motivational interviewing skills as the initial parents were enrolled into the pilot study, and this lack of caseworker training may have impacted their ability to connect with parents and garner parent support for the 2Gen Project. It is unclear whether there is any long-term impact on enrollment and engagement for parents in the 2Gen Project.

“Yeah, I reeled them into the study, but then they just disappeared.”

-Child Support Caseworker, during implementation site visit

It did take longer than anticipated to hit enrollment goals, and this delay has ultimately pushed back the timeline of data collection and analysis for the impact study.

In addition, the enhancements to the ACSES database being used to track key parent outcomes for the impact study took much longer to develop than anticipated. This delay resulted in caseworkers needing to use an Excel spreadsheet and then later transferring the data into the database. This two-step process was time consuming for caseworkers and has produced negative feedback.

Another aspect of *launching when ready* relates to program design. It may be beneficial during future 2Gen model rollouts to set aside a planning grant period or a county-building period to help at the county level with technical assistance related to partner buy-in within the counties. There are many action steps that need to occur to solidify partner relationships and the referral process at a higher level. The pilot study reveals that when there has been insufficient time and energy for this work to occur at the leadership level, caseworkers are simply providing parents with resource referral lists that ultimately may not produce the change hoped for.

Although it is understandable that top-down, real-world timelines may not align with research study timelines, nevertheless, future rollouts of the 2Gen model could benefit from launching only when all aspects of the model are adequately prepared and supported.



PART II:

The Impact Study Results



Description of the Impact Study

The primary purpose of the impact study is to assess the impact of 2Gen services on child support payment at six months after the start of the study. The secondary purpose is to determine if there are differences in entry into employment and child well-being within six months of entry into the 2Gen program. This section highlights key aspects of the study design.

The impact was measured through a randomized controlled trial (RCT), which is the gold standard for causal evaluation. RCTs are the most rigorous method of determining if a new intervention is more effective than regular services. For this study, child support cases were randomly assigned to the treatment (i.e., 2Gen) or control group (i.e., regular services) after completing the initial assessment.

- The outcomes were measured based on an intent-to-treat model, meaning that all cases offered 2Gen services were considered part of the treatment group, even if they did not fully engage in those services or discontinued services.
- The RCT is a blocked design, meaning that counties with a history of similar payment rates are grouped together in blocks to create a more efficient estimate of treatment effect.

Research Questions

The impact study explores one confirmatory research question and four exploratory research questions.¹⁰

Confirmatory Research Question

- Confirmatory Research Question 1: What is the impact of the 2Gen Project on the child support payment of noncustodial parents (NCPs)?

Exploratory Research Questions

- Exploratory Research Question 2A: What is the impact of the 2Gen Project on employment status?
- Exploratory Research Question 2B: What is the impact of the 2Gen Project on number of hours worked?
- Exploratory Research Question 2C: What is the impact of the 2Gen Project on barriers to getting or keeping employment?
- Exploratory Research Question 3: What is the impact of the 2Gen Project on NCP's perceptions of their relationships with their children and frequency of contact?

¹⁰ Questions were included in the evaluation plan to explore the outcomes of custodial parents in addition to noncustodial parents. However, data collection systems were not in place to capture information on custodial parents at the time of this analysis.



Data Sources and Data Collection

The impact study relies on two primary data sources:

1. **Child Support State Administrative Data.** This data set includes payment data on study participants for the six months following their entry into the study. Payment data was available for 382 of the 406 study participants. Missing data is likely attributed to system issues or entry errors in unique ID numbers. Some participants (about 14%) did not have a child support order and therefore did not owe any child support in the six-month period following their entry into the study. These cases were dropped from the analysis of the confirmatory research question. The number of cases for whom no child support was owed was nearly identical in the treatment and control groups.
2. **Family Resource Assessment.** This baseline FRA was administered from April 2018 through November 2018. Due to system errors or matching issues, responses were not available for 19 cases. The FRA was administered again by caseworkers on a rolling basis at six months after participants were randomized into the study. The six-month follow-up FRA included the same questions as the baseline FRA. Because of its voluntary nature and the amount of time that passed, attrition was higher for the exploratory sample than for the confirmatory sample. In total, 165 of the 406 study participants completed the follow-up FRA.

Key Findings

The 2Gen Project had no statistically significant impact on child support payment among noncustodial parents.

Analysis of administrative data shows that receiving partially implemented 2Gen supportive services did not have a statistically significant average treatment effect, or impact, on NCP's child support payment behavior (measured as a percentage of payment and frequency of payment across the six-month period).

- All NCPs paid the same amount of child support, on average, whether they were in the 2Gen treatment group or the regular services control group. NCPs who received 2Gen services paid an average of 33% of their child support that was owed, and NCPs who received regular services also paid an average of 33%.
- Sixteen percent of NCPs who received 2Gen services paid at or above 80% of the amount owed compared to 14% of NCPs in the control group. This difference was not statistically significant.
- All NCPs, regardless of whether they received 2Gen or regular services, made child support payments for three months out of six, on average.

These findings are associated with transitioning to 2Gen services.

One county that fully implemented 2Gen services showed more promising results.



Although the impact study did not find any statistically significant results, it is important to consider the context of the relatively short length of time between entering the study and measurement of outcomes. Finding employment and seeing returns may be a lengthy process, especially when transportation is the first step:

“If you don’t have transportation, you can’t work, and you especially can’t work in jobs that pay any real money.”

-Noncustodial parent, during implementation study interview

The implementation study highlighted the case-by-case evidence of the benefit of the 2Gen model from the perspective of noncustodial parents. NCPs who were interviewed described their caseworkers as:

“He’s like a life manager.”

“Like a light in my life.”

“We built a really strong relationship – that’s something I really enjoy.”

The 2Gen Project had no statistically significant impact on exploratory outcomes for noncustodial parents.

Exploratory outcomes included employment status, number of hours worked, barriers to getting or keeping employment, and perception of relationship with children. This aspect of the study had a smaller sample size (n=165) and detecting small or moderate improvements was not possible. The descriptive findings show promise in the following areas:

- More NCPs who received 2Gen services felt like they were able to pay child support at the end of the six-month study period. Almost 66% of NCPs who received 2Gen services reported that they were able to pay child support sometimes or all of the time as compared to 55% of NCPs who received regular services.
- Similarly, more NCPs who received 2Gen services reported that they were employed at the end of the pilot period (63.5% compared to 57.5% of parents in the control group). However, when looking at employment records across the entire sample, and not just those who completed the follow-up FRA, employment was higher among the control group (81% compared to 75% in the treatment group). Regardless of the type of service received, employment rates rose for NCPs across the six-month study period.
- While this study’s findings show that 2Gen services did not significantly improve child support payment behavior after six months as compared to regular services, there was observable positive change among all NCPs (across the treatment and control groups). After six months, overall, NCPs reported: feeling like they were better able to pay their child support; facing fewer barriers to getting and keeping employment; and improving relationships with their children.



Fully Implementing the 2Gen Model, with Specialized Caseworker(s) who have a Smaller Caseload, Shows Promise

One county with a specialized 2Gen caseworker serving a smaller number of NCPs and an implementation rating of *fully implementing* the 2Gen model had better payment and employment outcomes in the 2Gen (treatment) group than the regular services (control) group. In this county: (1) the payment rate for the 2Gen group was 13.3 percentage points higher than the control group; and (2) more NCPs were employed, and they reported fewer barriers to keeping their jobs.

One possible marker of strong relationships between 2Gen caseworkers and their 2Gen parents is the rate of 2Gen caseworkers reconnecting with NCPs six months after beginning 2Gen services. In this county with a smaller caseload of NCPs, 88% of the NCPs completed the follow-up FRA. The relatively small caseload size and the 2Gen caseworker's advanced motivational interviewing skills may have contributed to building strong relationships with NCPs in this county.

While encouraging, these promising findings are descriptive and cannot be attributed to the model. Replication and ongoing evaluation are needed.

In addition, although the impact study did not look at quantitative indicators measuring job satisfaction among 2Gen caseworkers, interviews with caseworkers during the implementation study revealed that participating in the 2Gen Project led to a deeper sense of purpose and fulfillment in their jobs. Participating in the 2Gen Project appeared to create opportunities for deeper connections with parents and feeling more helpful overall in their roles, especially if there was a smaller caseload. Future study of job satisfaction among caseworkers would be warranted.

"My caseworker and others came up with rent or I would've been homeless without a doubt. [My caseworker] has been very understanding. She's been like a light in my life because I've had some very dark moments...Just knowing I had somebody there that could help me keep track of all this information."

-Custodial parent, during implementation study interview



Implications

As previously described, delivering 2Gen child support services (a holistic and integrated model) is a major systemic shift in practice. The 2Gen Project described in this report is intended to be a substantial step toward systems change, not a stopping point. The findings from this impact study paired with the implementation study suggest a need to improve implementation before reassessing the impact of 2Gen services. Transitioning towards implementing 2Gen services (i.e., Level 2) did not significantly improve payment behavior on average, but it remains to be seen whether full implementation (i.e., Level 3) in the pilot counties would have a significant impact. The success in the one county with specialized caseworker staffing and a small caseload suggests promise.

But transitioning to the 2Gen model has clearly had a positive influence on individual parents, as evidenced in interviews with caseworkers, NCPs, CPs, and CSS leaders. Establishing the evidence base for innovative social services programs simply remains challenging.

The large, national CSPED full evaluation (detailed to the right) also did not find statistically significant improvements in child support payment behavior.

Why is it so challenging to establish the evidence base for new social services programs? In the complex environment of client-facing government agencies, difficulties related to implementation can prevent studies from finding significance, as with the possible [spillover effects](#) in this study. At a more fundamental level, it often requires a process of trial and error, or design and redesign, to identify the most effective program design for a given model.

The CSPED researchers concluded by questioning the program design: “Given the substantial barriers to employment many participants faced, a more intensive set of services may be required to substantially improve their [NCP’s] labor market outcomes and, ultimately, their ability to meet their child support obligations” (Cancian et al., 2019, p. 51).

The 2Gen Project Shows Similar Findings to CSPED National Study

In fall 2012, OCSE launched the Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration Project (CSPED) to identify effective policy alternatives to address the needs of NCPs (Meyer et al., 2015). OCSE competitively awarded grants to child support agencies in eight states, including Colorado, to provide enhanced child support, employment, parenting, and case management services to NCPs who are having difficulty meeting their child support obligations. In Colorado, this project was called the Colorado Parent Employment Program or CO-PEP, and five counties chose to participate: Arapahoe, El Paso, Jefferson, and Prowers (Bicha & White, 2018). The study involved 1,500 parents who were behind on their support payments. Half of this cohort were handled with traditional child support enforcement practices while the other half were assigned a caseworker whose mission was to determine why parents were not making payments and to help them overcome those barriers (Meyer et al., 2015).

In line with this 2Gen Project impact study’s findings, the full evaluation of the Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration Project (CSPED) and CO-PEP released in March 2019 showed that receiving employment services did not significantly improve child support payment outcomes, either in Colorado or in other participating states (Cancian et al., 2019).

However, receiving employment services had strong positive impacts on the extent to which NCPs agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with CSS, in Colorado and throughout the nation. This finding speaks to the positive influence of the 2Gen philosophy in changing, at the systems level, the culture of CSS, and at the individual level, caseworker communication styles and interactions with parents.



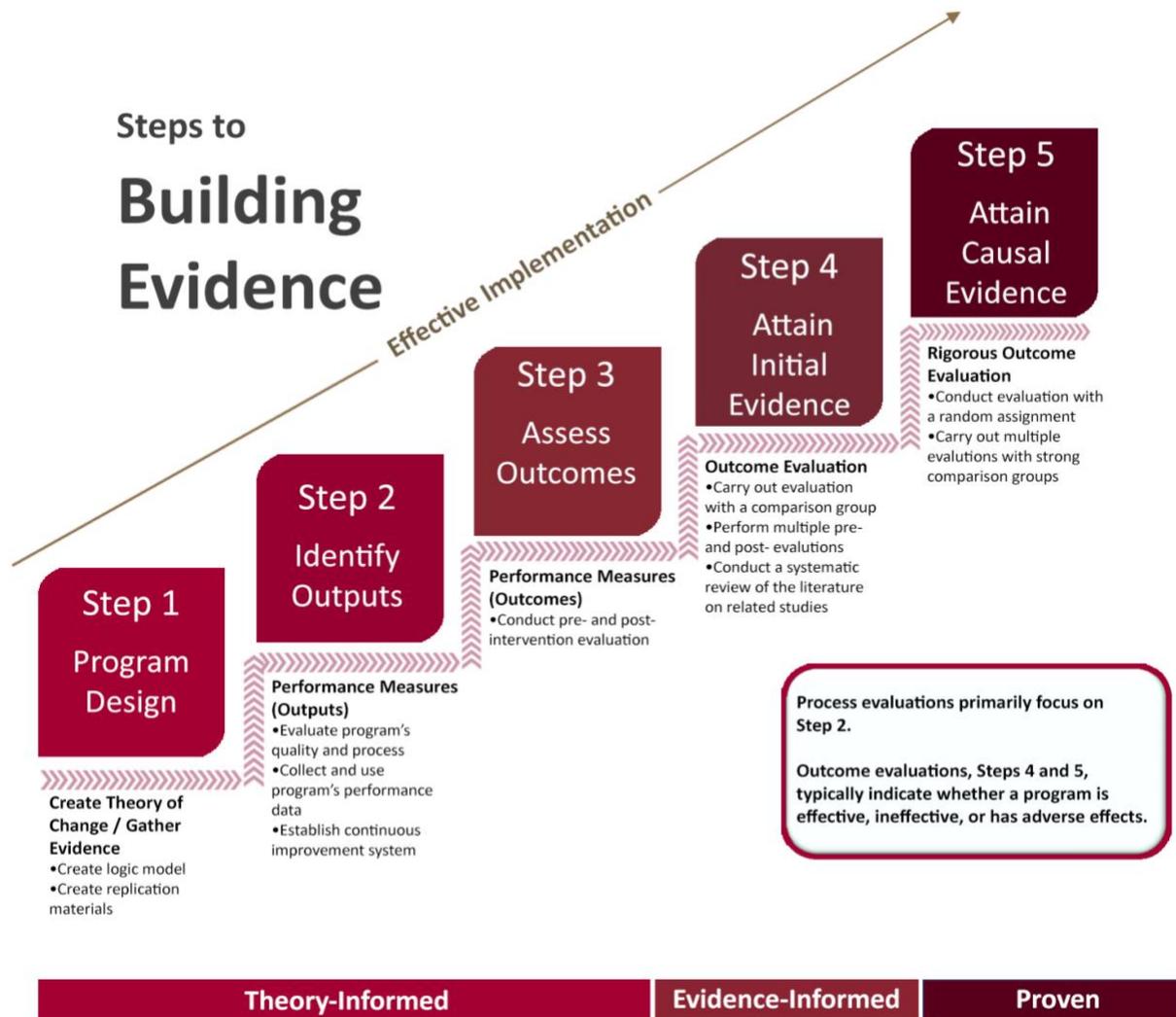
Is an even more comprehensive, intensive program design needed to achieve the ideals of the 2Gen model in Colorado? Findings suggest the possibility that the 2Gen model may only be effective when implemented by a specialized 2Gen caseworker who provides services to a relatively small number of parents. More study is required to determine causality though.

This trial and error, design and redesign process of building evidence for a new model or program can be understood in the context of the evidence continuum, and moving programs along the evidence continuum is often a cyclical process.

Evidence Continuum

The figure below illustrates the evidence continuum that was adopted in 2019 by Colorado’s Joint Budget Commission and the Office of State Budget and Planning. The activities aimed at attaining initial evidence for the 2Gen model suggest a need to cycle back to continuous improvement cycles (Step 2) and assess whether modifications are needed to the program design (Step 1).

Figure 1: Steps to Building Evidence





Evidence Continuum Step 1

The 2Gen Child Support Services Advisory Board might consider reviewing findings from this study in tandem with CSPED evaluation results. There may be a need to identify additional strategies to improve payment for those NCPs who lack the ability to pay or opportunities to improve current strategies. For example, is an even more intensive program design needed to achieve the ideals of the 2Gen model in Colorado? How can the program put a greater focus on the common barriers to getting and keeping employment (e.g., transportation)? The advisory board may also consider if the benefits of the program might lie in alternative measures of success.

Evidence Continuum Steps 2 and 3

The implementation study's findings provide a snapshot of the 2Gen program's "quality and process"—the foundation of Steps 2 and 3. In order to successfully roll out the 2Gen model across the state, a pre-intervention, readiness assessment could be performed for all other counties. Assessing each county's readiness and capacity to implement the 2Gen model can inform technical assistance and continuous quality improvement. Readiness can be assessed using the implementation fidelity rubric as a guide (see [Appendix A](#)). Key areas of focus might include (1) engaging CPs; (2) providing motivational interviewing supervision (e.g., direct observation, feedback and support to develop more advanced motivational interviewing skills); and (3) staffing models that provide the time necessary to fully implement the model.

Once implementation is shored up, and Colorado moves from transitioning to 2Gen Services to fully implementing 2Gen Services, then performance management data can be used to benchmark progress.

Evidence Continuum Steps 4 and 5

If, or when, the 2Gen Project is ready for another impact evaluation, one important area for future research on the 2Gen model is related to the exploration of outcomes for custodial parents and the differences between CP and NCP outcomes. Questions focused on other family aspects (e.g., health insurance, availability of a parenting plan) also merit further research. Below are the research questions that may be explored in future analyses.

Custodial Parent (CP) Questions:

- What is the percent change in CP's part- and full-time employment status?
- What are the changes in barriers to getting or keeping employment for CPs?
- What percentage of CPs report a positive, negative, and no change in the quality of relationships NCPs have with their child(ren)?

Family/Child Questions:

- What percent change in the number of 2Gen cases that have a parenting plan in place?
- What is the percent change of 2Gen parents (NCP and CP) and children with health insurance?



Methods

County Recruitment and Eligibility for Participation

CDHS recruited counties for participation in the study. All participating counties were part of the implementation and the impact study. Counties were eligible for participation in the study if it was ethical and feasible to: (1) define a treatment and control group within the county, and (2) randomly assign cases to the treatment and control groups. Randomly assigning cases to a treatment group (i.e., the 2Gen model) and control group (i.e., regular services) is ethical because there is not substantive evidence indicating that the new treatment (i.e., the 2Gen model) is better than business as usual and because all cases have an equal chance of receiving the 2Gen model or regular services. The identified counties are those that were interested in piloting a transition to 2Gen service delivery but lacked the resources to offer the 2Gen model to all cases.

Noncustodial Parent Recruitment and Eligibility for Participation

NCPs were recruited to participate in the study by CSS caseworkers in the county. Caseworkers were trained to administer the *Family Resource Assessment* (detailed to the right) to new cases or cases that were established through a court administration processing action (APA) and those that were rated as a “Cat 2/3” case, meaning that the NCP had a pattern of not paying child support fully or regularly. NCPs who were assessed to be at on-going risk for low or no payment were invited to participate in the study and informed consent was secured.

The following exclusions apply to the above case eligibility criteria:

- (1) Foster care cases
- (2) Social security income cases
- (3) Interstate cases
- (4) Parents who are under the age of 18
- (5) NCPs with a monthly support order of \$0 (payment questions only)

Sample

The study sample of NCPs was largely comprised of men (79%). Of all parents in the sample, the average age was 36.9 years old. Fifty-nine percent identified as White, 12% identified as Black or African American, and another 23% identified as Other or chose not to say. Participants were asked in a separate question whether they identified as Hispanic or Latino, 31% of whom said they did.

Family Resource Assessment

The Family Resource Assessment (FRA) is a universal screener developed by the evaluation team to systematically identify NCPs likely to benefit from 2Gen services. The FRA captures information on the needs of families as they relate to child support services. In addition to demographic and case-related questions, it includes questions on the nature of the parent-child relationships, barriers that parents face in paying their child support, and employment status (Clemens, Wright, & Harding, 2018).

The FRA was administered to all NCPs at the time of entry into the study (to check for eligibility and collect baseline data) and again six months later. The follow-up FRA was voluntary, leading to some attrition in its completion.



Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

	<i>Frequency (n)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Total (Overall)	406	100.0
Gender		
Male	319	78.6
Female	85	20.9
Do not wish to say	2	0.5
Age Group (Years) (M=36.9)		
20-24	18	4.4
25-29	52	12.8
30-34	105	25.9
35-39	94	23.1
40-44	71	17.5
45+	66	16.3
Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	126	31.3
Race		
White	241	59.4
American Indian or Alaska Native	9	2.2
Black or African American	49	12.1
Other	54	13.3
Do not wish to say	39	9.6
Not reported	14	3.4
County		
Denver	85	22.0
Mesa	80	20.7
Morgan	38	9.8
Montrose	35	9.0
Fremont	34	8.8
Douglas	29	7.5
Delta	26	6.7
Prowers	25	6.5
La Plata	16	4.1
Routt	10	2.6
Eagle	9	2.3
Case Type		
Enforcement	372	96.1
Establishment	15	3.9

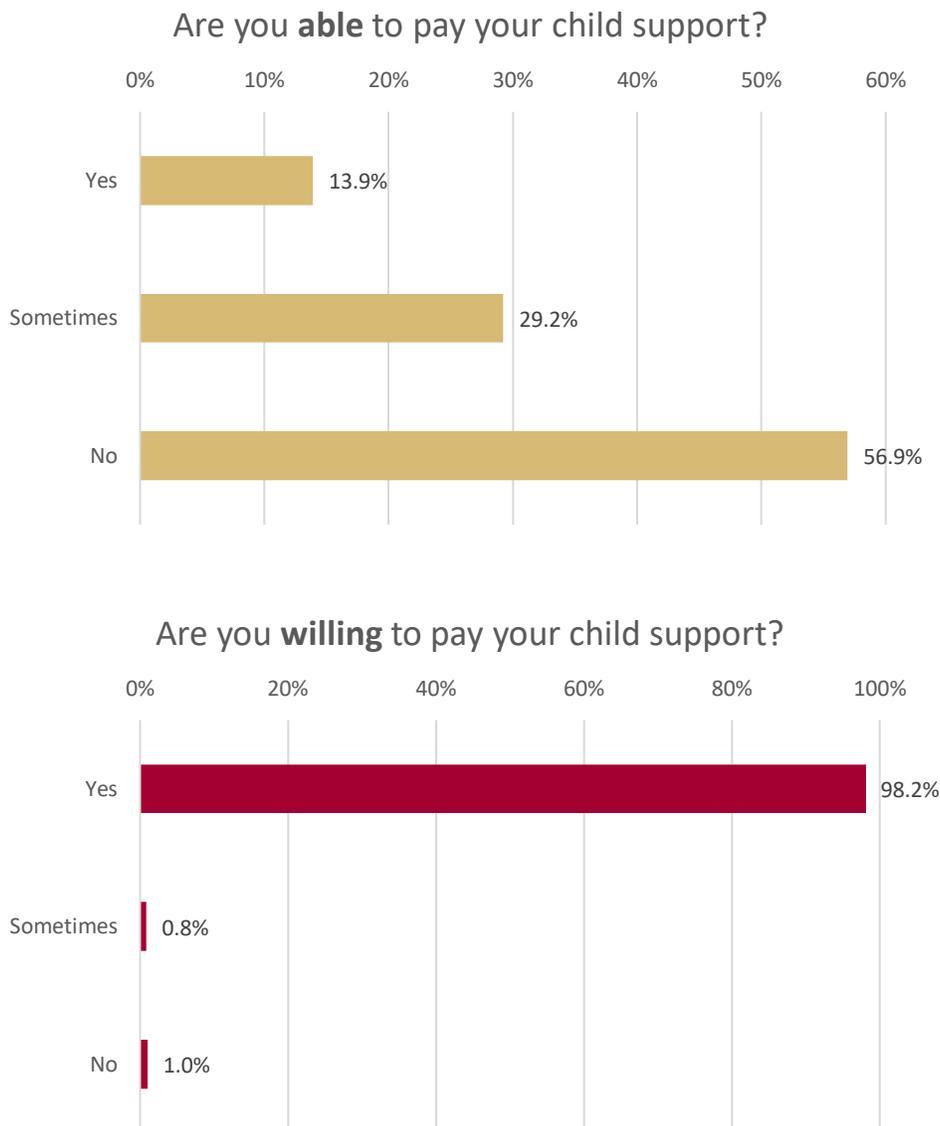
N=406; demographic data missing for some participants.



Baseline Family Resource Assessment

Based on the baseline FRA, NCPs largely struggled with maintaining employment and the financial ability to pay child support, despite a high willingness to do so. Sixty percent of NCPs were unemployed at the time, and only 22% of those employed reported working over 30 hours per week. Given this context, it follows that many NCPs faced difficulty making their child support payments. As depicted in the figures below, there was a significant gap between willingness and ability to pay child support. While 98% of the sample reported willingness to pay child support, only 14% confirmed that they were able to pay child support. Fifty-seven percent were not able to pay child support at all, and 29% were only sometimes able to pay child support.

Figure 2: Ability vs. Willingness to Pay Child Support from Baseline FRA





The baseline FRA results support the quote below related to willingness to pay:

“Historically, the child support system was built on a philosophy that people had the ability, but not the desire, to pay. That’s why it was punitive...Over the last five years in Colorado, we’ve been flipping that on its head. What would a system look like if it were acknowledging that actually most noncustodial parents have the desire to pay, but not the ability?”

-Ki’i Powell, Director of the Office of Economic Security as quoted in the September 2019 New York Times article by Courtney E. Martin

In the baseline FRA, many NCPs also expressed dissatisfaction in their relationships with their children (see Figure 6). In addition to varying levels of satisfaction, responses to how often NCPs saw their children were wide-ranging, from 37.5% reporting at least once most weeks to one out of every four NCPs reporting that they never saw their children.

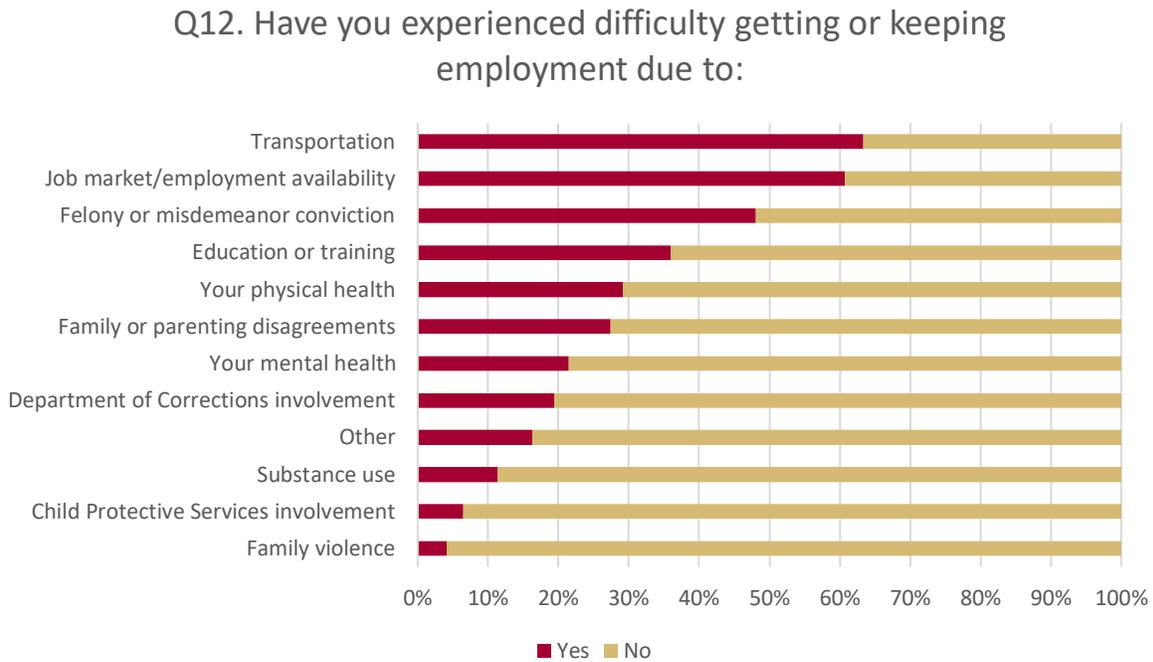
To understand how 2Gen services might be able to increase ability to pay child support, the FRA asked NCPs about barriers they experienced to securing or maintaining employment. The largest reported barrier to getting or keeping employment was transportation (63.3% of parents struggled with getting or keeping a job due to transportation difficulties), closely followed by job market/employment availability (60.7% of parents noted job availability was an issue). Many NCPs faced not only one, but multiple barriers to consistently paying their child support. Only 3.4% of those surveyed said they faced no barriers at all.

“If you don’t have transportation, you can’t work, and you especially can’t work in jobs that pay any real money.”

-Noncustodial parent, during implementation study interview



Figure 3: Barriers to Employment from Baseline FRA



Randomization Procedures

NCPs who met eligibility requirements for the study were invited to participate by caseworkers using an Institutional Review Board-approved script. Those NCPs who consented were randomly assigned to either the treatment or control group via an online survey. The random assignment was conducted within blocks. Participants had an equal chance of being assigned to the treatment or the control groups.



Treatment is defined, for the purposes of this study, as cases receiving 2Gen services.

Whereas control is defined, for the purposes of this study, as receiving regular services, which is more traditional enforcement-based case management.

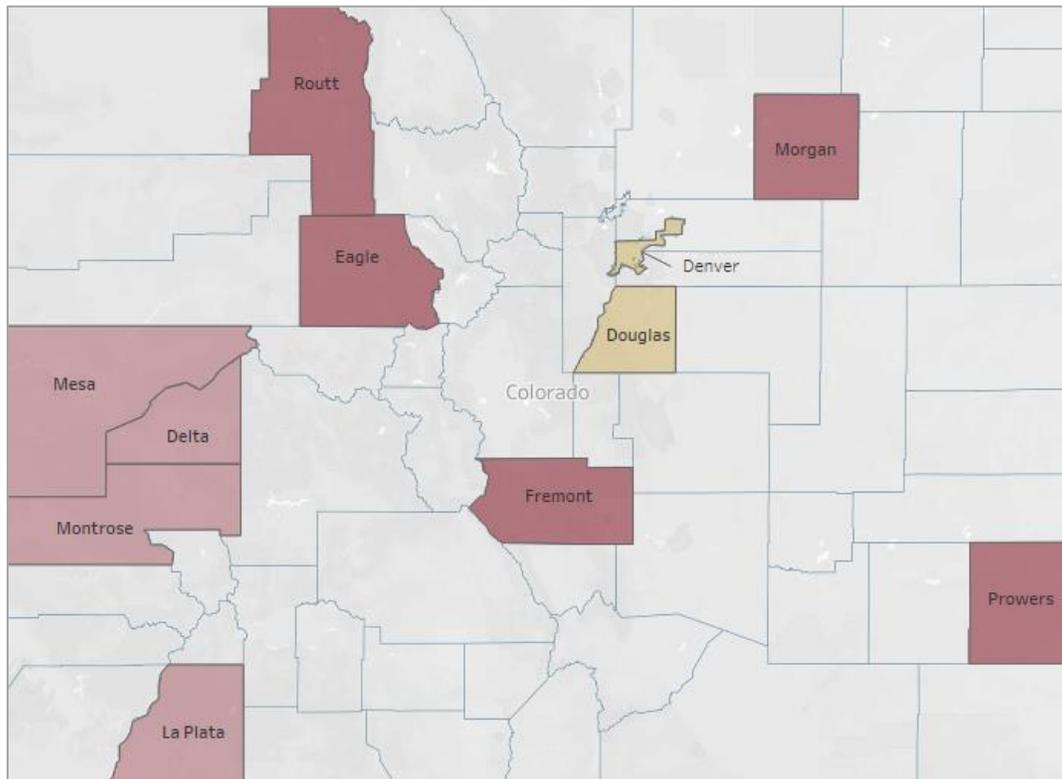
Block Design

A block design reduces the noise or error that comes from multi-site implementation because it allows researchers to first estimate the effect within a block and then for the pilot as a whole.

Counties similar in payment track records and characteristics have been grouped together to form blocks. Figure 4 illustrates the blocks that have been established for the purposes of this study.¹¹

¹¹ Note that the initial study design anticipated a larger number of blocks. Early in the study, the number of blocks were reduced as it was clear that was necessary to achieve an adequate within block sample size.

Figure 4: Map of County Blocks



Spillover Effects

The exploration of [caseworker communication style](#) in the implementation study crystallizes an important issue that may have affected the results of the impact study in the form of spillover effects, although the exact effects cannot be quantified. The caseworkers selected for this pilot study appear to have been notably empathic individuals, who were then trained in motivational interviewing. Due to the 2Gen Project's constraints on caseworker staffing, most of these caseworkers also had to maintain a regular services caseload. This created a situation, which was acknowledged by caseworkers in interviews, wherein caseworkers frequently used motivational interviewing skills with control group/regular services parents and also referred control group/regular services parents to 2Gen supportive services (but without any financial support).

Statistical Model

The impact study estimates the average treatment effect of the 2Gen Project on outcomes stated in the research questions. In this model, cases were randomly assigned within each block or a predetermined grouping of counties. A blocked RCT was used to estimate the fixed effects at the block level and case status (i.e., establishment or enforcement) level. The effects are fixed, rather than random, because the sample is a purposeful selection of counties who demonstrated interest and readiness in transitioning to the 2Gen approach to delivering child support services (Schochet, 2005).



$$Y_{ihj} = \sum_{b=1}^3 \beta_b T_{ih} I_i^b + \sum_{k=1}^K \gamma_k X_i^k + \sum_{g=1}^5 \lambda_g R_h^g + \sum_{b=1}^2 \eta_b I_h^b + \varepsilon_{ihj}$$

where

Y_{ihj} = outcome for case i with a status of h in randomization block j

β_b = impact estimate for the b^{th} randomization block ($b=1,2,3$)

T_{ih} = treatment indicator for if case i with a status of h is randomly assigned to 2Gen

$I_{(\cdot)}^b$ = indicator variable for cases or case status in the b^{th} randomization block

γ_k = association between the k^{th} case covariate and the outcome

X_i^k = k^{th} case – level baseline characteristics: NCP age, gender, race, and number of cases

λ_g = association between case status fixed effect and the outcome

R_h^g = case status fixed effect

η_b = associating between b^{th} block-level fixed effect and the outcome

ε_{ihj} = error term for case i with a status of h in randomization block j

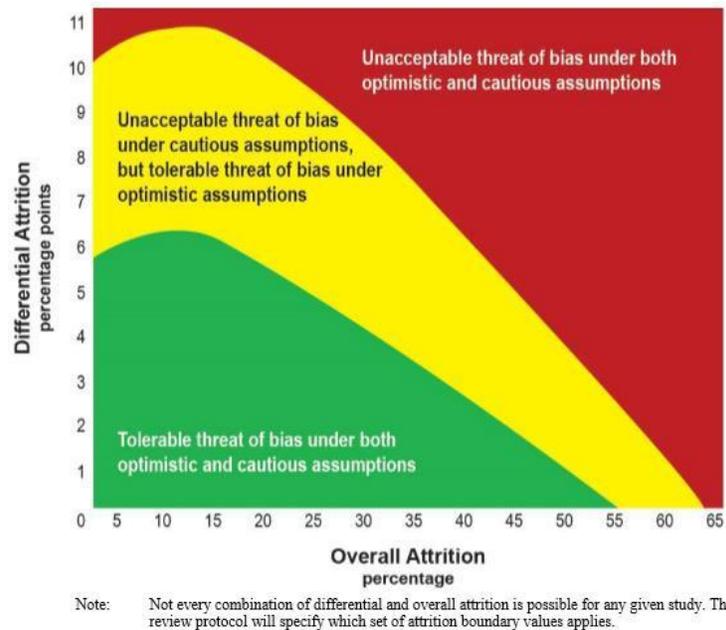
The coefficients of interest are represented by the vector β , estimates of the treatment effect at the block level. The model was also estimated with a single treatment effect that combined blocks.

Attrition

Attrition occurs in an intent-to-treat design when study or outcome data are missing. There are two types of attrition: differential and non-differential. Differential attrition refers to the difference in attrition rates between the entire assigned intervention group and entire assigned comparison group; whereas, non-differential attrition refers to the rate of attrition for the entire sample, measured as the percentage of the randomized sample that has been lost.

The What Works Clearinghouse offers the threshold for each type of attrition as illustrated in Figure 5. The What Works Clearinghouse (2017) depicts potential bias as a function of the rates of overall and differential attrition and the relationship between attrition and outcomes. A tolerable level of bias is defined as an effect size of .05 standard deviations or smaller on the outcome. An unacceptable threat of potential bias of an effect size exceeds .10 standard deviations on the outcome. The portion between a tolerable effect size of .05 and unacceptable effect size of .10 allows the researcher to make statistical adjustments to account for attrition. This depends on whether the researcher believes the attrition is exogenous and unrelated to the intervention or endogenous and related to the intervention.

Figure 5: Attrition and Potential Bias from What Works Clearinghouse, 2017



Attrition was calculated as follows:

- The Base Treatment or Control number is the number of randomly assigned treatment or control cases.
- The Assessed Treatment or Control number is the number of cases with non-missing outcome data included in the impact analyses.
- Attrition in the treatment group is calculated as $1 - (\text{Assessed Treatment} / \text{Base Treatment})$
- Attrition in the control group is calculated as $1 - (\text{Assessed Control} / \text{Base Control})$
- Overall attrition is calculated as $1 - (\text{Total Assessed} / \text{Total Base})$
- Attrition is calculated separately for confirmatory and exploratory questions.

Attrition Rates for Confirmatory Questions

The overall attrition for the confirmatory sample was low at 8.87%. With attrition rates of 7.3% for those in the treatment group and 10.5% for those in the control group, the differential attrition was 3.2 percentage points. According to the What Works Clearinghouse, this is considered a tolerable threat of bias under both optimistic and cautious assumptions (the area shaded in green in Figure 5).

Attrition for the confirmatory sample can largely be attributed to discrepancies in ID numbers between the cases randomized at the outset of the study and payment data records in the CDHS data system. Due to these errors, complete data were not able to be identified and matched to 36 cases in the original study sample.



Attrition Rates for Exploratory Questions

Exploratory questions experienced higher rates of attrition due to their reliance on study-specific data collection.

Research participants were asked to complete the FRA once again six months after they were randomized. Research questions 2B, 2C, and 3 drew from these follow-up FRA responses. Of the 406 noncustodial parents included in the study, 165 (or 41%) completed the six-month follow-up FRA. The overall attrition for these questions was 59%. With attrition rates of 58.7% for those in the treatment group who completed the follow-up compared with 60% for those in the control group who completed the follow-up, the differential attrition was 1.3 percentage points. By the What Works Clearinghouse standard, this is an unacceptable threat of bias under cautious assumptions but a tolerable threat of bias under optimistic assumptions (the area shaded yellow in Figure 5). Thus, the results of the exploratory analysis should be applied with caution.

Baseline Equivalence

Due to attrition rates that were higher than expected, each subject group was compared at baseline using the score on the FRA, employment status, and the demographics of age, gender, and race/ethnicity. For the full sample, the groups were equivalent on all baseline measures tested. No additional statistical procedures were required to ensure comparability between the intervention and control groups at the time of random assignment.

Baseline equivalence was also tested for the exploratory sample (i.e., those who completed the FRA follow up six months post-randomization). For the exploratory sample, each subject group was equivalent on all baseline measures tested, including employment status.

Answer to the Confirmatory Research Question

Confirmatory Research Question 1: What is the impact of the 2Gen Project on the child support payment of noncustodial parents?

CSS uses multiple metrics to assess progress on increasing payment, thus the outcome of child support payment was assessed in three ways:

- (1) Percentage of payment or the amount of child support due that was paid over the six-month period.
- (2) Percentage of cases paying at or above 80% of their monthly support orders over the six-month period.
- (3) Frequency or number of months where a payment was made during the six-month period.

As depicted in Figure 8, the average percent of child support paid was very similar for the control and treatment groups. Figure 9 shows that the frequency of payment was also comparable across groups—on average, both groups made a payment (whether partial or full) roughly three months out of six months.



Figure 8: Average Percent of Child Support by Group

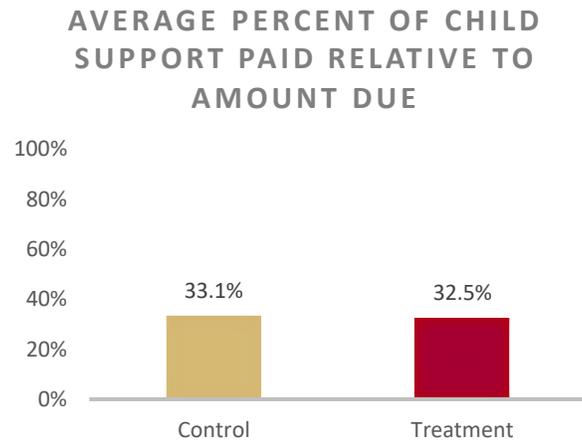
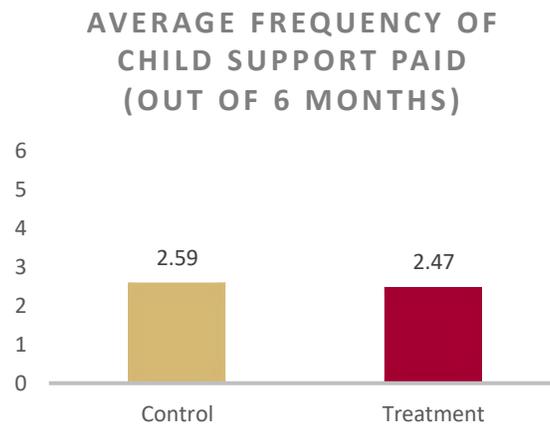


Figure 9: Average Frequency or Number of Months a Child Support Payment Was Made by Group



All research questions were estimated with both a single treatment indicator, regardless of block, and with treatment effect at the block level. Because findings across both estimations did not differ significantly, only the results of the treatment effect at the block level are presented in this report. Estimating this research question with treatment effect at the block level resulted in no statistically significant impact (see Tables 2 and 3). The results of statistical analyses indicate that participation in 2Gen did not impact child support payments of NCPs.

Table 2: Impact of 2Gen on Child Support Payment (Percentage)

	Coef.	SE	P-value
<i>Treatment*block 1</i>	-0.02	(0.07)	0.796
<i>Treatment*block 2</i>	0.03	(0.06)	0.548
<i>Treatment*block 3</i>	-0.05	(0.07)	0.507
<i>Case</i>	-0.21	(0.10)	0.043
<i>Female</i>	-0.05	(0.05)	0.301
<i>Age</i>	0.001	(0.003)	0.710
<i>Non-white</i>	-0.01	(0.04)	0.744
<i>Child support orders</i>	-0.01	(0.02)	0.693

N=322

*p-value<0.10; ** p-value<0.05; *** p-value<0.01



Table 3: Impact of 2Gen on Child Support Payment (Frequency)

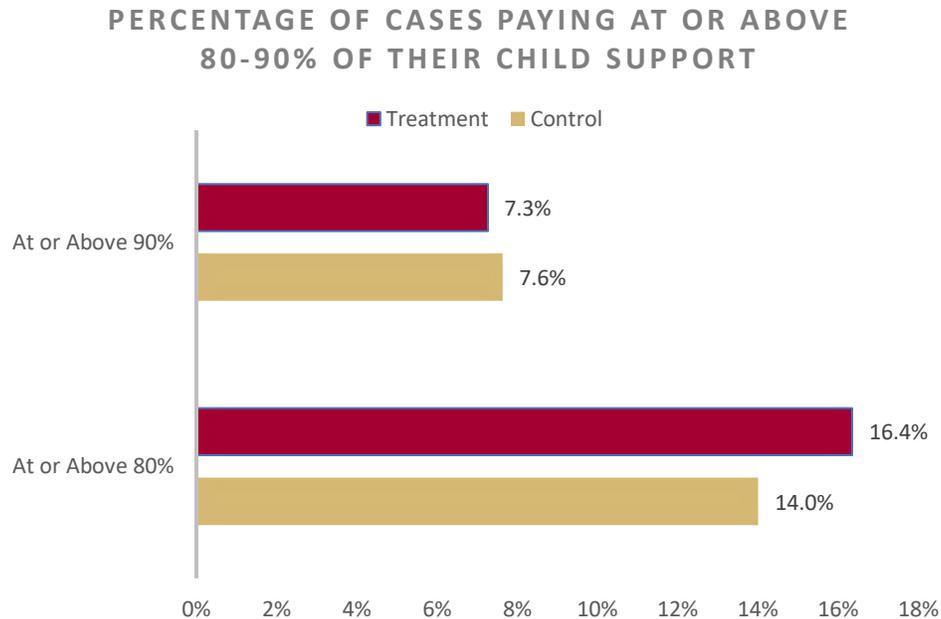
	Coef.	SE	P-value
<i>Treatment*block 1</i>	-0.18	(0.45)	0.682
<i>Treatment*block 2</i>	0.14	(0.37)	0.701
<i>Treatment*block 3</i>	-0.39	(0.45)	0.390
<i>Case</i>	-0.78	(0.65)	0.236
<i>Female</i>	-0.41	(0.31)	0.193
<i>Age</i>	0.01	(0.02)	0.748
<i>Non-white</i>	-0.11	(0.26)	0.670
<i>Child support orders</i>	0.03	(0.15)	0.864

N=322

*p-value<0.10; ** p-value<0.05; *** p-value<0.01

The treatment and control groups were also similar in the number and percent of cases paying at or above 80% and 90% of their child support orders. For the treatment group, 16.4% (27 out of 165 noncustodial parents) paid at or above 80%, while 12 of those parents paid at or above 90%. In the control group, 14% (22 out of 157 noncustodial parents) paid at or above 80%, while 12 of those parents paid at or above 90%.

Figure 10: Cases Paying 80% or More by Group



This research question was also estimated using logistic regression to assess the impact of the 2Gen model on child support payment at or above 80% of the total amount due (see Table 4). Once again, the results do not show a significant impact of participation in the 2Gen program, even when considering higher levels of child support payment.



Table 4: Impact of 2Gen on Child Support Payment at or above 80%

	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>P-value</i>
<i>Treatment*block 1</i>	0.01	(0.75)	0.899
<i>Treatment*block 2</i>	0.56	(0.48)	0.246
<i>Treatment*block 3</i>	-0.21	(0.55)	0.699
<i>Case</i>	-1.23*	(0.67)	0.067
<i>Female</i>	0.35	(0.38)	0.362
<i>Age</i>	-0.01	(0.02)	0.787
<i>Non-white</i>	-0.42	(0.37)	0.265
<i>Child support orders</i>	-0.0003	(0.21)	0.999

N=322

*p-value<0.10; ** p-value<0.05; *** p-value<0.01

Answers to Exploratory Research Questions

The sample size for the exploratory questions is less than half of the confirmatory sample. This aspect of the study is “underpowered,” meaning that there is a risk of false negatives or failing to detect a difference. The current sample size was not sufficient to determine if small to medium differences were due to chance alone or the intervention.

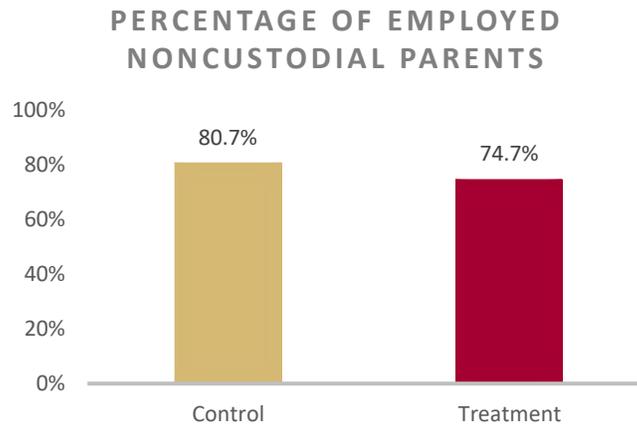
Due to attrition, exploratory research questions were estimated with a single treatment indicator rather than with treatment effects at the block level.

Exploratory Research Question 2A: What is the impact of the 2Gen Project on employment status?

At the end of the six-month study period there was not a statistically significant difference in employment status. Verified employment data were not readily available at the time of this analysis. Employment status is based on income withholding from an employer in the child support payment database. For cases that did not owe payment over the six-month period, self-reported employment status in the follow-up FRA was used when available. As shown in Figure 11, 80.7% of NCPs in the control group were employed, compared to 74.7% of NCPs in the treatment group. However, when looking at self-reported employment for NCPs who completed the follow-up FRA, more NCPs who received 2Gen services reported that they were employed at the end of the pilot period (63.5% compared to 57.5% of parents in the control group). This discrepancy between self-reported data and employment records may be due to parents considering self-employment or alternative forms of employment when responding to the FRA.



Figure 11: Employment Status by Group



Logistic regression was performed to answer this question based on the binary outcome (employed or unemployed).

Table 5: Impact of 2Gen on Employment Status of Noncustodial Parents

	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>P-value</i>
<i>Treatment</i>	-0.38	(0.27)	0.163
<i>Block 1</i>	0.33	(0.37)	0.375
<i>Block 2</i>	0.05	(0.32)	0.887
<i>Case</i>	-0.06	(0.82)	0.943
<i>Female</i>	0.07	(0.36)	0.849
<i>Age</i>	-0.03	(0.02)	0.126
<i>Non-white</i>	-0.17	(0.29)	0.583
<i>Child support orders</i>	-0.34**	(0.14)	0.013

N=342

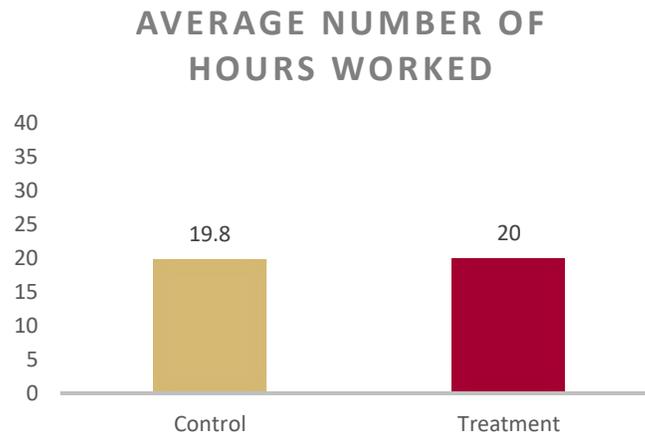
*p-value<0.10; ** p-value<0.05; *** p-value<0.01

Exploratory Research Question 2B: What is the impact of the 2Gen Project on number of hours worked?

While the control group demonstrated higher levels of employment than the treatment group, both groups were comparable in the average number of hours worked (see Figure 12).



Figure 12: Number of Hours Worked by Group



Once again, estimating this research question with treatment effect at the block level resulted in no statistically significant impact (see Table 6). Participation in 2Gen did not lead to a marked change in the number of hours that NCPs worked relative to the control group. Not surprisingly, NCPs who worked more hours had fewer child support orders.

Table 6: Impact of 2Gen on Number of Hours Worked by Noncustodial Parents

	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>P-value</i>
<i>Treatment</i>	-0.76	(3.03)	0.802
<i>Block 1</i>	9.38*	(5.14)	0.070
<i>Block 2</i>	5.89	(4.62)	0.205
<i>Case</i>	8.06	(9.70)	0.407
<i>Female</i>	-2.80	(3.72)	0.453
<i>Age</i>	-0.08	(0.21)	0.718
<i>Non-white</i>	-2.26	(3.37)	0.504
<i>Child support orders</i>	-3.74**	(1.8)	0.039

N=158

*p-value<0.10; ** p-value<0.05; *** p-value<0.01

Exploratory Research Question 2C: What is the impact of the 2Gen Project on barriers to getting or keeping employment?

NCPs were asked whether they faced barriers to getting or keeping employment across 12 areas:

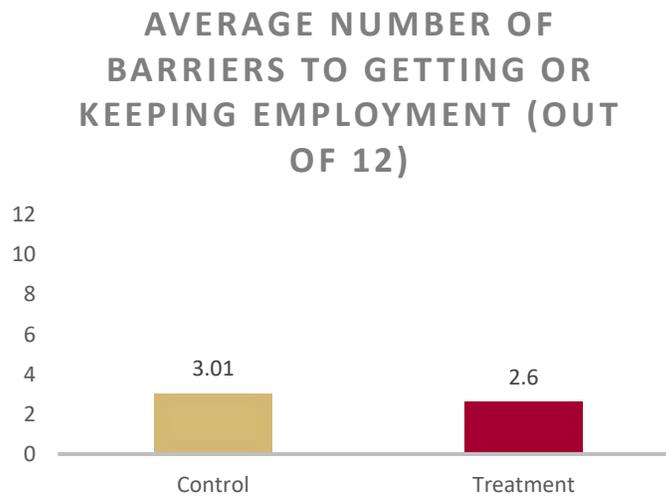
1. Job market/employment availability;
2. Education or training;
3. Transportation;
4. Physical health;
5. Mental health;
6. Substance use;



7. Family or parenting disagreements;
8. Family violence;
9. Felony or misdemeanor conviction;
10. Department of Corrections involvement;
11. Child Protective Services involvement; and/or
12. Some other reason.

The difference in the number of barriers to employment reported by the treatment versus the control group was not significant. This means that while on average, the treatment group reported facing fewer barriers to employment than the control group in the follow-up FRA administered at the end of the six-month study period (see Figure 13), it may be due to chance and cannot be attributed—with confidence—to the 2Gen intervention.

Figure 13: Reported Employment Barriers



Estimating this research question with treatment effect at the block level resulted in no statistically significant impact (see Table 7). Participation in 2Gen did not lead to a change in the number of barriers to getting or keeping employment that NCPs faced relative to the control group.

Table 7: Impact of 2Gen on Noncustodial Parents’ Barriers to Getting or Keeping Employment

	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>P-value</i>
<i>Treatment</i>	-0.31	(0.33)	0.347
<i>Block 1</i>	-1.39**	(0.56)	0.015
<i>Block 2</i>	-0.69	(0.51)	0.172
<i>Case</i>	-0.34	(1.06)	0.750
<i>Female</i>	0.42	(0.41)	0.308
<i>Age</i>	-0.0005	(0.02)	0.982
<i>Non-white</i>	0.36	(0.37)	0.327
<i>Child support orders</i>	0.08	(0.20)	0.689

N=158

*p-value<0.10; ** p-value<0.05; *** p-value<0.01



Exploratory Research Question 3: What is the impact of the 2Gen Project on NCP’s perceptions of their relationships with their children and frequency of contact?

Figure 14 displays how NCPs perceived their relationship with their children at six months after being randomized into the study. Figure 15 shows the frequency of contact that parents reported in the six month follow-up FRA. The differences between the treatment and control group are not statistically significant, they cannot be attributed to the 2Gen intervention, and they may be due to chance.

Figure 14: Noncustodial Parents’ Perceptions of Their Relationships with Children

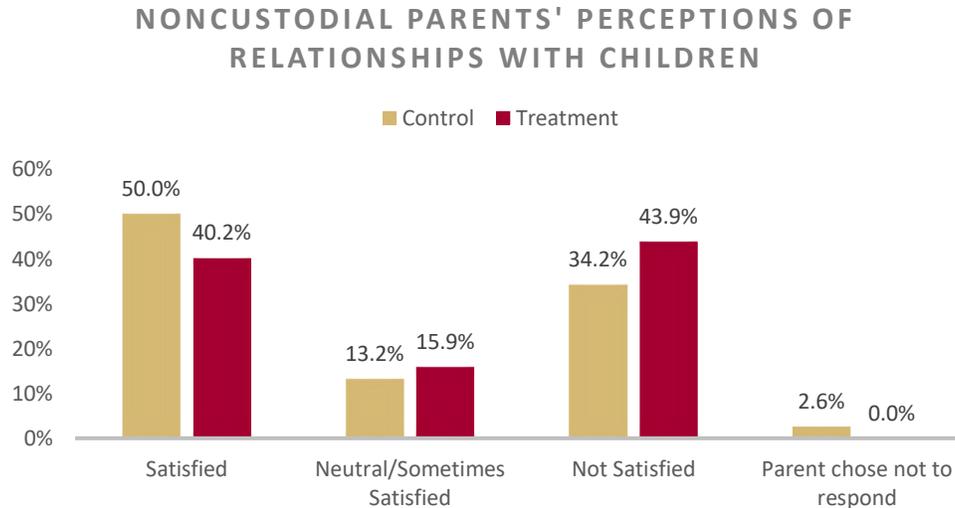
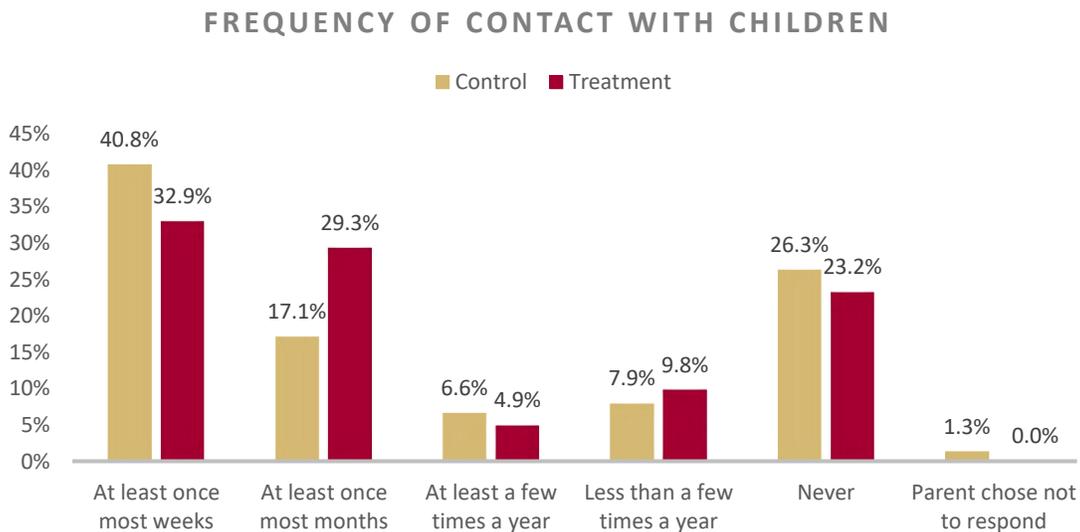


Figure 15: Noncustodial Parents’ Frequency of Contact with Children



Estimating this research question with treatment effect at the block level resulted in no statistically significant impact (see Tables 8 and 9). Participation in 2Gen did not lead to a significant change in how NCPs perceived their relationships with their children relative to the control group.



Table 8: Impact of 2Gen on Noncustodial Parents' Perceptions of their Relationships with Children

	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>P-value</i>
<i>Treatment</i>	-0.12	(0.16)	0.428
<i>Block 1</i>	-0.12	(0.26)	0.658
<i>Block 2</i>	-0.20	(0.24)	0.395
<i>Case</i>	-0.57	(0.50)	0.255
<i>Female</i>	-0.20	(0.19)	0.286
<i>Age</i>	0.0002	(0.01)	0.985
<i>Non-white</i>	0.19	(0.17)	0.274
<i>Child support orders</i>	0.07	(0.09)	0.428

N=158

*p-value<0.10; ** p-value<0.05; *** p-value<0.01

Table 9: Impact of 2Gen on Noncustodial Parents' Frequency of Contact with Children

	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>P-value</i>
<i>Treatment</i>	0.05	(0.27)	0.866
<i>Block 1</i>	0.52	(0.45)	0.256
<i>Block 2</i>	0.02	(0.41)	0.967
<i>Case</i>	0.30	(0.85)	0.726
<i>Female</i>	0.50	(0.33)	0.127
<i>Age</i>	-0.03*	(0.02)	0.079
<i>Non-white</i>	0.21	(0.30)	0.480
<i>Child support orders</i>	0.21	(0.16)	0.198

N=158

*p-value<0.10; ** p-value<0.05; *** p-value<0.01

Additional Descriptive Analyses

In the follow-up FRA, 65.9% of NCPs who participated in 2Gen reported that they were able to pay child support sometimes or all the time (compared with 55% of the control group). Within the treatment group, 63.5% of NCPs were employed at the time of the follow-up FRA (compared to 57.5% of NCPs in the control group). These results were not statistically significant and may be due to chance. Because of that, they cannot be attributed—with confidence—to the 2Gen intervention.

In the follow-up FRA, 84.7% of NCPs who participated in 2Gen reported experiencing four or fewer barriers to getting or keeping employment (compared to 82.5% of the control group). Across both treatment and control groups, more NCPs reported experiencing zero barriers in the follow-up FRA compared with baseline FRA results. In the follow-up FRA, 16.5% of NCPs in the treatment group reported zero barriers (compared to 7.5% of the control group). Again, these results were not statistically significant and may be due to chance.

In the follow-up FRA, only 33.8% of NCPs who participated in 2Gen reported that they were satisfied with the relationship with their children (compared to 48.8% of the control group). Thirty-three percent of NCPs in the treatment group reported seeing their children at least once most weeks (compared to 40% of the control group). Again, these results were not significantly significant.



Exploratory Analyses for the Two Counties with Specialized 2Gen Caseworkers that Implemented 2Gen with Full Fidelity

As noted in the implementation study results, only two out of 11 counties implemented the 2Gen program with full fidelity to the 2Gen model. These counties demonstrated the required Level 3 implementation fidelity in all three parent interaction indicators, largely as a result of having sufficient resources devoted to caseworker staffing. Both of these counties had specialized 2Gen caseworkers, but in one county, the caseload was notably smaller (i.e., there were fewer NCPs to provide services to). The purpose of this section is to describe outcomes for those counties to gain initial insight into the promise of the 2Gen model when it is implemented with fidelity.

The findings suggest the 2Gen model may be promising when fully implemented by specialized 2Gen caseworkers who have a smaller caseload of parents.

In one county with a specialized 2Gen caseworker (providing services to a small number of NCPs), the 2Gen model was associated with better child support payment rates and employment rates.

2Gen implementation with a mixed caseload (of 2Gen and regular services parents) was not associated with better outcomes.

Note that due to the small sample sizes, the results presented in this section are descriptive only and cannot be attributed with confidence to the 2Gen intervention.

County with Smaller 2Gen Caseload and Specialized 2Gen Caseworker: Better Payment and Employment Outcomes

Payment Outcomes

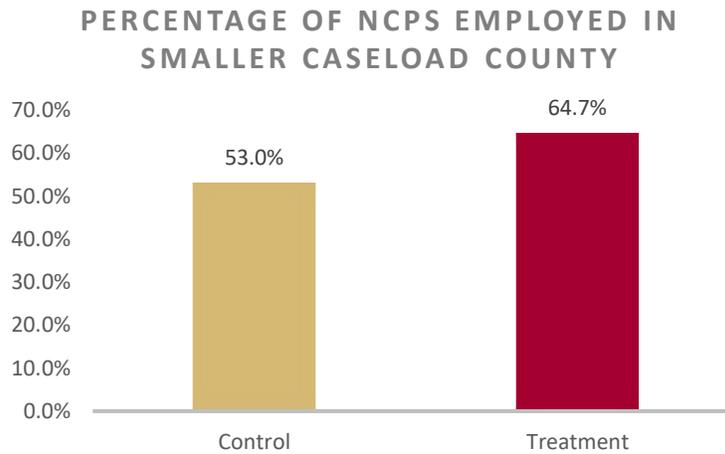
The treatment group in the county with the smaller 2Gen caseload demonstrated better payment outcomes than the control group. NCPs who participated in 2Gen paid a higher average percent of child support relative to the control group (13.3 percentage points higher) and paid more frequently—an average of 3.3 months out of six for the treatment group compared to 2.7 months out of six for the control group. The observed differences in this county are practically meaningful.

Employment Outcomes

NCPs who received 2Gen services in the county with the smaller 2Gen caseload were more likely to be employed at the end of the study. While implications about causality cannot be drawn, this indicates that NCPs who participated in 2Gen were more likely to be employed at the end of the study. The number of hours worked was comparable between the control and treatment groups in both counties.



Figure 17: Employment in County with Smaller 2Gen Caseload

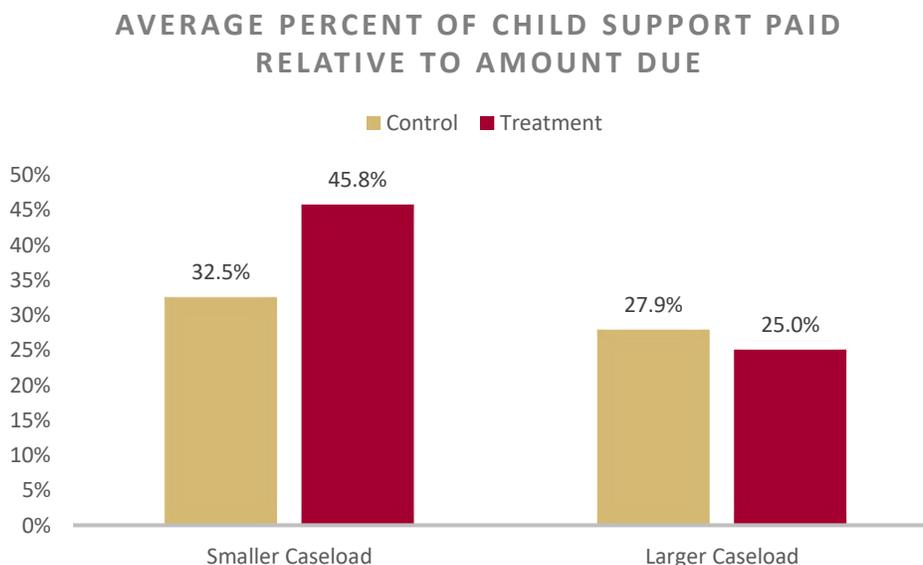


In both counties, the control groups reported facing more barriers to getting and keeping employment compared to the treatment groups. The control group faced an average of 2.8 barriers out of 12 in both counties. In the county with the smaller 2Gen caseload, the treatment group faced an average of 2.5 barriers, and in the county with the larger caseload, the treatment group faced an average of 2.6 barriers. These differences, however, may be due to chance.

County with Larger 2Gen Caseload and Specialized 2Gen Caseworkers: Static Payment Outcomes

In contrast, the average percentage of child support paid in the county with the larger 2Gen caseload was higher in the control group than in the treatment group (27.9% compared to 25%). The control group also paid at a slightly greater average frequency—2.3 months out of six compared to two months for the treatment group. The observed differences in this county are smaller and may not be practically meaningful.

Figure 16: Average Child Support Paid by Noncustodial Parents





NCPs in of these two both counties (across the treatment and control groups) did not demonstrate significant differences in their perceptions of their relationships with their children and frequency of contact.

Limitations

As noted in the discussion of the implementation study, the pilot study's launch timeline has been driven, in part, by the goal of completing the study before a change in political administration, not by readiness. While the evaluation team recognizes the political pressures inherent in launching an innovative social policy initiative, the timeline made it difficult for counties shift their practice to *fully implementing the 2Gen model*. Practically, this means that this RCT tested the impact of *transitioning to the 2Gen model*. It is critical to make sure that there is readiness to launch across all areas of implementation of the 2Gen model: state leadership, county leadership, partnerships, caseworker staffing, staff training, and data collection.

If CSS had been able to devote the resources towards ensuring that a 2Gen caseworker with a specialized 2Gen caseload delivered comprehensive 2Gen services, there would have been less likelihood of [spillover effects](#) possibly affecting the results (although impossible to quantify). The non-significant findings in this report are associated with delivery in what is currently the "usual care" approach in Colorado. This means that caseworkers were expected to change their service delivery on a case-by-case basis, depending on whether the NCP had been randomized into the treatment or control group.

In addition, the short length of time between entering the study and measurement of outcomes may have made it difficult to identify significant findings, especially related to payment behaviors. Even with support, finding a job and seeing returns can take time. All outcomes were assessed at six months from entry into the program. A stronger design would consider these outcomes at six months (as designed) and again one year later.

Other specific limitations include:

- (1) The inability to consider clustering with caseworkers. Caseworkers may naturally differ in their effectiveness with parents. Given the relatively small amount of funding available for implementation, differences in county size, and practices for assigning cases, it is not practical to treat this study as a clustering within caseworker in order to control for the influence of caseworker efficacy.
- (2) The relatively high level of attrition for NCPs who participated in the follow-up FRA six months after being randomized into the study. The attrition level for the exploratory sample resulted in the potential for bias in the analyses.
- (3) The small sample size for the exploratory study means that this aspect of the study was underpowered. False negative findings are possible.



Conclusion

The lack of significant findings across the impact study's research questions is indicative of the challenges that counties face in their early embrace of the 2Gen model. As discussed in the implementation study, fully implementing the 2Gen model requires a significant change in practice for counties and adequate time to develop the partnerships and staffing plans that support strong program design. Most counties participating in the pilot were in the transition stage of transforming their child support services. It is possible that as counties hone their practices and partnerships to reach full fidelity along the key indicators of the 2Gen model, they will experience greater success and see more impactful payment results for the families who participate, especially if future studies are able to track outcomes for a longer period of time. It may take more than six months for some NCPs to reap the potential benefits of employment-related support and for income withholding orders to be put into place.

More work is required to advance the 2Gen model along the [evidence continuum](#), and returning to program design and ensuring that it is feasible for more counties to fully implement the approach may be critical. A key finding from the implementation study included the concept of "launching when ready." This concept also applies to planning the next steps of the evidence building process. External timelines associated with a change in political administration drove the 2Gen Project's timeline and the pace exceeded readiness in many of the counties.

Comprehensively examining the impact and implementation of 2Gen programs across Colorado presents the opportunity for counties to think critically about the level of services and supports that NCPs need to meet their financial responsibilities to their children.

Overall, the 11 counties participating in the 2Gen Project demonstrate substantial progress in transforming child support services to the 2Gen model despite facing obstacles to making this transition. Although the impact study focuses on the quantitative outcomes of the 2Gen Project (e.g., primarily, whether child support payments have increased), the implementation study reflects important lessons learned from the first eight months of the 2Gen Project, which include:

1. **Caseworker Staffing.** Implementation of the 2Gen service delivery model greatly benefits from 2Gen caseworkers with specialized training and dedicated time for 2Gen caseloads. 2Gen caseworkers are more able to deliver the model when they possess the skills to motivate parents to voluntarily participate in 2Gen services while matching parents with needed resources. Caseworkers report that comprehensive 2Gen service delivery requires more time and energy than the enforcement model, but that the 2Gen work often feels more fulfilling because it provides opportunities for more meaningful positive connections with parents. Caseload size and composition need to be considered when transitioning to the 2Gen approach.
2. **Routine Leadership-Level Meetings with Partners.** Partnerships are essential to implementing the 2Gen service delivery model and to ultimately improving family economic stability, the parent-child relationship, and child well-being. Consider establishing a schedule of consistent, routine meetings with leadership in partner programs and agencies (e.g., Workforce, public benefits, etc.) so that case-level issues can inform systems-level changes in program design.

3. **Rural CSS Offices.** Following the first eight months of the pilot study, the **2Gen case management procedures guide** was expanded to further recognize the resources and needs of rural settings and efforts to meet the spirit of the intent of the 2Gen model.
4. **Gaps in Services Available.** Counties indicate that local gaps in services are a barrier to fully implementing the 2Gen model. Availability of housing, substance abuse/mental health treatment, transportation, and parenting programs varied within and across counties. Working across sectors to address these local gaps is an essential step toward ensuring that comprehensive 2Gen services can be a reality for all parents, regardless of county of residence.
5. **Incentives for Transformation.** Transforming CSS to a 2Gen model is a heavy lift and needs to be incentivized if a statewide rollout of the 2Gen model is a goal of the current administration. The monthly accountability tracker, C-Stat, is not currently sufficient to gauge the success of the 2Gen model. The model is intended to address the root causes of non-payment and produce long-term sustainable benefits like improving overall child well-being and breaking the cycle of poverty. Addressing parents' abilities to pay child support requires identifying needs, building capacity, and reducing barriers before improvements can be expected. Thus, longer-term metrics for performance management may compliment the current C-Stat measures.
6. **Role for Enforcement.** The 2Gen model and the enforcement approach can continue to work hand in hand to advance child support service delivery throughout the state. The success of the 2Gen model relies on parents achieving the "action" stage of change, meaning that parents have made "specific overt modifications in their life styles" (i.e., behavioral changes related to gaining employment, paying child support, and strengthening relationships with their children [Prochaska & Velicer, 1997]). Participation must be at least partially self-motivated to be effective, and, in the absence of that motivation, enforcement retains an important role. Some noncustodial parents may not reach the level of change needed to participate in the 2Gen approach, even if their caseworker is highly skilled in motivational interviewing and services are tailored to identified needs



7. **Launching When Ready.** It is important to support readiness to launch across all areas of implementation of the 2Gen model: state leadership, county leadership, partnerships, caseworker staffing, staff training, and data collection. It may be beneficial during future 2Gen model rollouts to set aside a planning grant period or a county-building period to help at the county level with technical assistance related to preparing fully for launch. The implementation findings from this study can be used to proactively identify areas where counties are likely to need targeted support.



Together, the impact and implementation studies shine light on the reality that the 2Gen service delivery model is undeniably resource intensive, requires extensive collaboration and partnerships, and mandates dedicated, consistent leadership. This report documents significant progress towards fidelity to the 2Gen model but also highlights opportunities for growth. These lessons learned can inform future rollouts of the 2Gen model in Colorado and the nation as the impetus to provide more comprehensive 2Gen child support services grows.



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Appendix A: Implementation Fidelity Rubric

2Gen Service (3)	Transitioning to 2Gen Services (2)	Regular Services (1)
1. Leadership, Commitment, Culture – Evidence of a site’s leadership-driven culture of commitment to 2Gen principles		
<p>Leadership articulates why and how the 2Gen approach is central to the role of CSS and supports the goal of increasing payments.</p> <p>Leadership describe concrete changes they have implemented (or maintained) at the site to support 2Gen service delivery for eligible cases.</p> <p>Supervisors use 2Gen language in meetings or talk about service delivery for custodial parents and children.</p> <p>Caseworkers indicate that 2Gen services are an expectation for their work.</p>	<p>Leadership reports supporting the 2Gen model and describes a plan to transition to 2Gen services.</p> <p>Some caseworkers <i>may</i> be aware of a plan to transition toward 2Gen service delivery in the future.</p>	<p>Leadership and caseworkers indicate that their focus is on NCPs and primarily use enforcement remedies to increase CSS payment.</p> <p>Leadership <i>may</i> indicate interest in exploring 2Gen service delivery.</p> <p>Leadership and caseworkers <i>may</i> report that serving CPs and children directly is outside the scope of CSS.</p> <p>Some staff <i>may</i> not be aware of 2Gen CSS work in Colorado.</p>
Comments:		
2. Data Sharing/Use – Evidence of commitment to utilizing data to implement 2Gen services and engage in quality improvement		
<p>Evidence NCP, CP, and child data are collected, tracked, and utilized to improve the quality of 2Gen services provided at the site.</p>	<p>Evidence that data are collected, tracked, and utilized on a limited basis to inform 2Gen services (e.g., only for the NCP; data are collected for CP and children but not used to inform CSS or for improvement specific to 2Gen services). Agreements may be in place for CP and child data but have not been implemented.</p>	<p>Data and quality improvement work is not specific to 2Gen service delivery.</p>
Comments:		



3. Program Design – Evidence of effective program design that supports communication across agencies and coordination at the administrative level in order to provide enhanced 2Gen services

<p>Systematic opportunities for leadership to coordinate with workforce or public benefit agencies (e.g., regular meetings, leadership names point person or counter-part and how they communicate).</p> <p>Evidence of program design that <i>may</i> include procedures to ensure court has actionable information if the caseworker is unable to attend.</p>	<p>Evidence of documented 2Gen program design such as the use of the procedures manual and case management checklist.</p>	<p>Evidence that program design is aligned to an enforcement model.</p> <p>Communication across agencies is typically for purposes of tracking payment or implementing remedies.</p>
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Comments:

4. Partnerships – Evidence of cross-system and sector partnerships to meet 2Gen goals

<p>Evidence of formalized referral partnerships (including MOUs) with at partners in the community in various sectors of 2Gen services (e.g., at the employment office, etc.).</p> <p>Systematic referrals to public and community agencies for NCP and CP.</p> <p>The MOUs <i>may</i> allow for tracking of the outcomes of referrals, and, possibly, the application of enforcement remedies based on information shared by partner agencies (following parents’ use of these resources).</p> <p>Leadership communicates with partners to improve relationships and understand issues as evidenced by concrete examples or regularly scheduled meetings.</p> <p>Caseworkers demonstrate knowledge of partnerships, how to</p>	<p>Informal referral partnerships across various sectors of 2Gen services.</p> <p>Caseworkers report that they have a “contact” at a partner agency across various sectors of 2Gen services.</p> <p>-----OR-----</p> <p>Formalized referral partnerships that are limited to one sector (e.g., employment, adult education, early childhood education, health care).</p> <p>Caseworkers may report gaps in partnerships that are a barrier to 2Gen service delivery.</p> <p>Systematic referrals for NCP; <i>may</i> refer CP as well.</p>	<p>Partnerships <i>may</i> be in place; however, they are not specific to 2Gen goals or service delivery.</p> <p>Individual caseworkers <i>may</i> have informal partnerships developed and refer NCP on a case-by-case basis (i.e., non-systematic referrals).</p>
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<p>follow up on referrals, and strengths and limitations of available resources.</p>		
Comments:		
5. Court System – Evidence of navigating and partnering with the court system with the goal of increasing decisions that are in alignment with 2Gen philosophy		
<p>Court system is a consistent source of referrals for 2Gen service delivery.</p> <p>Court at least intermittently assists with review and expedited adjustment or modifications to child support orders when either NCP or CP is enrolled in an educational program.</p> <p>Documented plan or formalized procedures for how the 2Gen program staff communicates with the court, especially if the court conducts review hearings and applies appropriate incentives and sanctions.</p>	<p>Evidence that the court system is aware of existing or planned 2Gen service delivery.</p> <p>-----OR-----</p> <p>Evidence of a plan to engage the court in the transition to 2Gen service delivery (e.g., program design, initial conversations with state or local court liaisons, task group agendas).</p> <p>-----OR-----</p> <p>Court system is an intermittent or sporadic source of referrals for 2Gen service delivery (e.g., a couple of magistrates in a large county; evidence of occasional referrals).</p>	<p>Case leadership and/or caseworkers consistently report that court appears unsupportive of change from enforcement model to 2Gen approach.</p> <p>-----OR-----</p> <p>There is no evidence of CSS attempting to engage the court in 2Gen service delivery.</p>
Comments:		
6. Funding – Evidence of funding diversity that supports 2Gen service delivery		
<p>Concrete examples of integrated and flexible funding streams within the human services agency to support 2Gen service delivery.</p> <p>-----OR-----</p> <p>Concrete examples of blending funding or engaging in cost-sharing across multiple agencies.</p>	<p>Leadership reports being willing to explore more flexible funding approaches or blending funds between agencies, but the primary source of funds is from CSS.</p> <p>-----OR-----</p> <p>Evidence of actively pursuing county-appropriate opportunities for grant and local funding to support 2Gen services.</p>	<p>Leadership reports that the primary source of funds is from CSS, and there are no current plans to make changes.</p>
Comments:		



7. Caseworker Staffing – Evidence of hiring, training, and staffing practices that are necessary to support 2Gen service delivery

<p>Evidence of specialized caseload staff trained in 2Gen case management techniques (e.g., job descriptions, staffing plans, caseworker reports).</p>	<p>Evidence of utilizing a case management model with specialized caseloads (Note: only applies to sites with multiple staff).</p> <p>-----OR-----</p> <p>Caseworkers have specialized training in 2Gen case management techniques, but caseloads are not specialized.</p>	<p>Leadership reports that (if county has multiple staff) specialized caseloads (such as DOC, Cat 3) are utilized. Single staff counties have a trained staffer.</p>
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Comments:

8. Caseworker Communication Style – Evidence that caseworkers utilize motivational interviewing skills learned in training, consistent with 2Gen philosophy and service delivery

<p>Caseworkers consistently use basic helping skills, such as open-ended questions, affirmations, and reflection of feeling to build rapport with parents and understand barriers to payment.</p> <p>Caseworkers consistently demonstrate more advanced motivational interviewing techniques, such as developing discrepancies, expressing empathy, amplifying ambivalence, rolling with resistance, and supporting self-efficacy.</p> <p>Evidence of consistently developing Goal Setting Plan including signatures by NCP.</p> <p>Evidence of caseworkers referring to Goal Setting Plan to gauge progress.</p>	<p>Caseworkers consistently use basic helping skills, such as open-ended questions, affirmations, and reflection of feeling to build rapport with parents and understand barriers to payment.</p> <p>Some caseworkers may intermittently demonstrate motivational interviewing techniques, but the practice is not consistent within or across caseworkers.</p> <p>Caseworkers may report having received motivational interviewing training but needing more support to implement the skills.</p>	<p>Caseworkers primarily ask closed questions during each parent interaction (e.g., a question that elicits simply a “yes” or “no” response).</p> <p>-----OR-----</p> <p>Caseworkers are inconsistent in their use of basic helping skills.</p>
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Comments:



9. Caseworker Focus with NCP – Evidence of identifying NCP barriers to payment and taking a comprehensive, tailored approach to reducing these barriers

<p>Caseworkers consistently use the Family Resource Assessment to identify barriers to payment consistently for new cases and at least intermittently for modifications.</p> <p>In conversations with non-compliant NCPs, caseworkers consistently ask follow-up questions related to at least 1 barrier to payment previously identified and, when appropriate, discuss at least 1 supportive strategy for overcoming each identified barrier (e.g., if transportation to work is identified as a problem, the caseworker discusses how parent can obtain bus passes).</p> <p>Evidence of caseworkers following up on progress in overcoming barriers.</p>	<p>Caseworkers may use the Family Resource Assessment or another assessment tool on an inconsistent basis.</p> <p>Caseworkers intermittently ask follow-up questions related to identified barriers and discuss strategies for overcoming barriers.</p> <p>Caseworkers may refer to partnership agencies but the approach, hand off, and explanations are not tailored to the parent (e.g., standard list provided to all parents).</p>	<p>In conversations with non-compliant NCPs, caseworkers do not (or only sporadically) ask follow-up questions related to barriers to payment.</p> <p>In conversations with non-compliant NCPs, caseworkers appear to focus on conveying information about non-compliance rather than offering support for solutions to barriers.</p>
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Comments:

10. Caseworker Focus on Expanding Services to CP and Children – Evidence of identifying and addressing barriers to economic security, educational attainment, and child well-being

<p>Evidence of caseworkers consistently attempting to engage CPs.</p> <p>When contact is made with CP, caseworkers engage in conversations about any possible needs of children (e.g., possible needs include: medical, food, housing, educational, child care, etc.).</p> <p>When contact is made with CP, caseworkers engage in</p>	<p>Caseworkers demonstrate an understanding of possible needs of involved children and discuss isolated examples of how they have previously attempted to meet those needs.</p> <p>Evidence that services are available to both CP and NCP, but that engaging CP is not systematic.</p> <p>May be evidence of addressing access to children and visitation as</p>	<p>Caseworkers report that only NCP is offered additional services (e.g., employment, education, etc.).</p> <p>Caseworkers cannot provide examples of ways they have previously attempted to meet needs of involved children beyond facilitating payment.</p>
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<p>conversations about CP employment, parenting, or other needs and how CSS may be able to help or connect the CP to partner agencies.</p> <p>-----May Include-----</p> <p>Evidence of providing specialized services (e.g., such as parenthood classes) to both CP and NCP.</p> <p>Evidence of consistently addressing access to children and visitation as appropriate for each case (e.g., parenting time, DV screening, mediation, parenting plan).</p>	<p>appropriate for each case (e.g., parenting time, DV screening, mediation, parenting plan).</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Comments:</p>		



Appendix B: Detailed Implementation Study Methods

Guiding Research Question of the Implementation Study: To what extent (Level 3, Level 2, or Level 1) are participating CSS offices implementing the 10 key indicators of the 2Gen model?

The strategies used to gather data for the implementation study were the following:

- 1) Site visits, which included focus group interviews with leadership and caseworkers; observations of caseworker interactions with 2Gen parents; and case file reviews
- 2) Technical assistance provided to participating CSS offices
- 3) Interviews with NCPs and CPs

Site Visits

All 11 pilot study counties participated in a site visit, the purpose of which was to assess the level of implementation fidelity to the 2Gen model at each CSS office. Of the 10 key indicators of 2Gen child support services, indicators 1 through 7 (i.e., environmental and program indicators) were all assessed through focus group interviews with leadership and caseworkers. Indicators 8 through 10 (i.e., parent interaction indicators) required the evaluation team to observe parent interactions directly or through listening to recordings of caseworker and parent interactions. One county declined to allow direct observations or recordings due to parent privacy concerns. Two other counties were unable to obtain recordings due to lack of parent engagement with 2Gen Project caseworkers, which can be assumed to be due to lack of fidelity to the 2Gen model.

The rubric operationalizing 10 key indicators of implementing 2Gen child support services with fidelity was used to document the differences in practice between the cases receiving 2Gen treatment and those being served by regular child support practices (see [Appendix A](#)).

Communication Before the Site Visit

Prior to the site visit, the evaluation team oriented site leads to the goals of the visit, which were to:

- Collect information on how the 10 key indicators of 2Gen services were being implemented
- Identify opportunities to improve the 2Gen service delivery model, but noting that it was not a technical assistance visit, because training and support would be provided separately by the state

The evaluation team also collaborated with site leads to set an agenda for the day, which included:

- Individual or small group meetings with the site team leads (for a full list of questions asked during the meetings and focus groups, refer to the March 2018 document, “*2Gen Child Support Services Evaluation Plan: A Randomized Control Trial and Process Evaluation Design*”)
- Focus groups with caseworkers (in counties with specialized caseloads, separate focus groups could be conducted)
- Document review
- Case checklist review (i.e., number of cases and staff availability to review)
- Planning for direct observations (i.e., recording caseworker interactions with parents)



The evaluation team also set expectations, which included the following:

- Informal feedback provided to the CSS office at the close of the meeting (e.g., first reactions to strengths of delivery and any high-level concerns about fidelity)
- Within two weeks of the direct observations of caseworkers, the site leads received a draft scored rubric and the option to schedule a phone call with the evaluation team to discuss
- The rubric was scored in draft form, as the evaluators invited additional information and discussion with the CSS office
- CSS offices had two weeks to indicate they wished to provide additional information and/or schedule a phone discussion
- Ratings were not finalized and provided to the State team until after the site had the opportunity to provide additional information

Site Visit Schedule

The site visit schedule typically followed this outline:

9-10am	Individual or small group meeting with site leadership.
10:15 - 11:15 am	Focus group with a representative group of 2Gen caseworkers.
12 – 1 pm	Focus group with a representative group of regular service workers.
1 – 2 pm	Case-level checklist review of cases with one 2Gen caseworker and one regular services caseworker.

Fidelity Reporting Procedure

Counties received the rubrics marked as “draft” prior to the evaluation team finalizing the ratings. Leadership and caseworkers who participated in the site visit were able to provide feedback to the evaluation team related to the accuracy of the results. Once the ratings were finalized, the county-specific rubrics were provided to the State team at CDHS. County-specific rubrics remained confidential within the State team at CDHS.

Rubric

An example of the complete rubric utilized to document implementation fidelity at each CSS office/site is provided in [Appendix A](#). Feedback was provided to each CSS office below each indicator to communicate the evidence and reason for the rating.

Following the site visits, CSS offices uploaded recordings of parent interactions with caseworkers through a secure software system. After listening to these recordings, the evaluation team completed indicator 8 (Caseworker Communication Style) and indicator 9 (Caseworker Focus with NCP) of the rubric.

The 2Gen Project Team – state staff and evaluators – set an implementation fidelity goal for this pilot study as follows:

- Demonstrating Level 2 or Level 3 on environmental and program indicators 1 through 7 (see full rubric in [Appendix A](#))



- Demonstrating Level 3 on parent interaction indicators 8 through 10, as the threshold was higher for these parent-facing indicators (see full rubric in [Appendix A](#))

It was noted to each CSS office, “These ratings are based on a small snapshot of each site and the information provided.”

Technical Assistance

The evaluation team conducted on-going technical assistance utilizing the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) framework for the 2Gen Transformation Project. PDSA is a structured, cyclical process for developing, implementing, and refining a program. A version of this process was utilized for CO-PEP to monitor implementation and short-term outcomes in an effort to ensure the process was implemented to fidelity. In the PDSA framework, “Plan” means to collect and analyze data and develop solutions. “Do” means to implement the proposed program. “Study” means to measure any changes as the result of the proposed solution that was implemented, and “Act” means to adopt the solution of standard practice, or adjust the approach, before conducting another cycle of testing. This framework has been widely used in program and larger system design, with success in ensuring a strong implementation approach that leads to achieving intended outcomes.

From April 2018 to December 2018, the evaluation team provided on-going technical assistance related to implementing the 2Gen Project throughout the implementation study period. During this time, the evaluation team led hour-long technical assistance calls every month. For the first five months of program enrollment, researchers held county-specific technical assistance calls with individual CSS offices. Participants on the technical assistance calls varied by site depending on the structure within each county, however, typically participants included site supervisors, 2Gen caseworkers, and regular child support technicians, along with the evaluation team and a representative from the State team. A template was developed to guide each call, and implementation challenges, issues, and best practices were discussed and documented. Action items were taken from each call and issues that surfaced were documented and addressed immediately either by the evaluation team and/or the State team. Starting in October 2018, counties were grouped by cohort, which created a small learning community group where challenges and best practices could be shared peer-to-peer. The culmination of the technical assistance efforts was an all-sites learning community conference call in December 2018 which brought together all county-level leadership and 2Gen caseworkers, along with the evaluation team and the State team to share lessons learned during the implementation study and best practices to move the 2Gen model forward.

Technical assistance occurred through the following methods:

- Monthly county-specific technical assistance calls for the first five months of implementation.
- Monthly learning community calls in months 5-10 of implementation. The evaluation team assigned each county to one of three cohorts, based on the program design and implementation.

On each monthly call, the evaluation team provided technical assistance through utilization of the implementation fidelity rubric, review of parent referrals, random assignment, and program enrollment methods.

Data collected each month at each CSS office was presented, reviewed, discussed, and specific action steps and lessons learned were documented. Each month, progress on action items was assessed and documented to ensure consistent implementation, case work, and data collection were occurring routinely across all 11 counties.



CSS 2Gen Measurement and Outcomes Meetings

Monthly two-hour meetings with members of the evaluation team and the State team occurred during which issues related to the pilot study were discussed.

Decisions affecting caseworkers were documented in a weekly *2Gen NewsFlash* emailed to all participating caseworkers and leaderships at CSS offices.

Interviews with Noncustodial Parents and Custodial Parents

The evaluation team also conducted open-ended qualitative interviews with NCPs and CPs who received 2Gen services. During October and November 2018, the evaluation team reached out to approximately 20 parent 2Gen participants to gauge reactions to their experience with the 2Gen Project. Interviews were conducted over the telephone and lasted approximately 45 minutes. Parents were contacted from a list provided by each county and represented parents from nearly all sites, ultimately researchers conducted interviews with a total of 12 parents; four custodial and eight noncustodial parents. The goal of the interviews was to hear from parents who participated in the 2Gen Transformation project and to report on their reactions to receiving services, the impact of these services on their ability to provide economic stability for their family and perceptions of child support system and the new approach to 2Gen service delivery.



Appendix C: Goal Setting Plan Example from Denver County

Individualized Success Plan

Primary Technician Contact Information

Tech Name: _____ Date: _____
Tech telephone number: _____ Case Number: _____

Transferred to caseload: _____ Co-managed case: _____

Yes Yes
 No No

Participant's Basic Information

Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email: _____



Appendix D: Goal Setting Plan Example from Montrose County

PARENT GOAL(S) / INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN

Primary Goal(s)

<p>Pay \$XXX per month to Family Support Registry (FSR).</p> <p>Continue to pay monthly child support obligations ongoing.</p>
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Longer-term Goals

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First Steps

Who...	Will do What...	By When?
	<p>Pay \$XXX to FSR each month,</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Apply for services to Center for Independence in Grand Junction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Help with Application for Vocational Rehabilitation Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Help with assessment for job readiness ➤ Help with Application for Social Security benefits ➤ Help with Application for AND Program at Social Services office <p>Check in with Child Support office to provide progress update</p>	

I understand that this Plan does not overrule, reduce, or end my Child Support Order. The Goals and Activities described on this page are mine. It's my responsibility to complete these Goals and I intend to do that. I know that my Coach will listen, encourage, and support me. I know my Coach can't do it for me. If I have questions, or if my goals change, or my employment circumstances change, I will contact my Coach to discuss that.

Parent signature

Date

Coach signature

Date