

Data Snapshot: Impact of the Whole Family Approach on Family Well-Being

FEBRUARY 2020

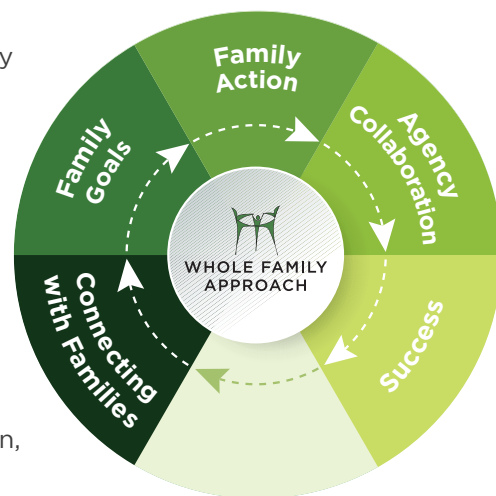


Overview

The **Whole Family Approach** is a family-led strategy which provides adults and children with the tools to set, plan for, and achieve their goals. The aim is to empower working, low-income families to establish financial stability, strengthen their relationships, and reach their full potential. This approach is best implemented through a model in which multiple agencies collaborate to provide coordinated services to the entire family.

With funding from the **Pascale Sykes Foundation**, a research team at the University of Pennsylvania is collecting survey data from 138 families served by two collaboratives applying the Whole Family Approach in the New York City metro area — **Familia Adelante** in the South Bronx, and **Families for Literacy** in Jersey City, NJ. The research captures changes from December 2018 (Wave 3) to June 2019 (Wave 4) among these families. While the program implementation is ongoing, and it is too early to report outcome data, early analysis reveals promising trends:

1. Child well-being is improving with young people expressing optimism and a sense of agency about their future.
2. Relationships between parents and children are improving.
3. Adult well-being is improving, particularly mental health.
4. Feelings of financial competence are increasing. Parents, especially women, feel more confident in their ability to effectively manage money.



How is the Whole Family Approach delivering results?

These initial research trends show that the family-centered and collaborative model of the Whole Family Approach is having a positive impact on families by enabling agencies to flexibly adapt their services to suit clients from drastically different cultural backgrounds who are immersed in challenging economic and housing environments. The multifaceted improvements suggest that both collaboratives are cultivating relationships not only within the families that they serve, but among them too. This builds valuable social capital and surrounds families with social support networks that are the foundation of socially and economically resilient communities.

Next Steps?

Data collection will continue to track families' long-term progress. More preliminary findings will be shared in December 2020 with final research outcomes anticipated in late 2021 or 2022 when the research concludes. Research will continue to look at the relationship between family well-being, mental health and financial stability, as well as how the collaboratives are adapting to fit changing housing markets.

1) Children are significantly more optimistic about their future:

Children's mean score for "hope" significantly increased from December 2018 (Wave 3) to June 2019 (Wave 4). Hope was measured by children's sense of agency in achieving their goals and whether they feel they have various options or "pathways" to achieve those goals. Pathways measured how much children agree with the following statements: "I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me" and "Even when others want to quit, I know that I can find ways to solve the problem."

Without hope, people often lack the psychological space to re-imagine an alternative future and then act on it. Research (Lybbert & Wydick, 2018) shows that financial coaching and economic mobility programs that foster hope and meaningful social ties among their participants generate the greatest lasting results. Whole Family Approach collaboratives have adopted this same mentality. This is particularly important in areas like Jersey City and the South Bronx that are experiencing rapid rises in housing costs and risky health factors which makes life for families living paycheck-to-paycheck particularly volatile.

2) Parent-child relationships are improving:

Mothers and fathers feel more confident about their relationships with their children. The data showed an increase in parents rating their relationship with their child as "Good," "Very good," and "Excellent." For example, from December 2018 to June 2019, the percentage of mothers who described their child relationship as "excellent" grew from 39.81% to 53.33% (13.53% increase).

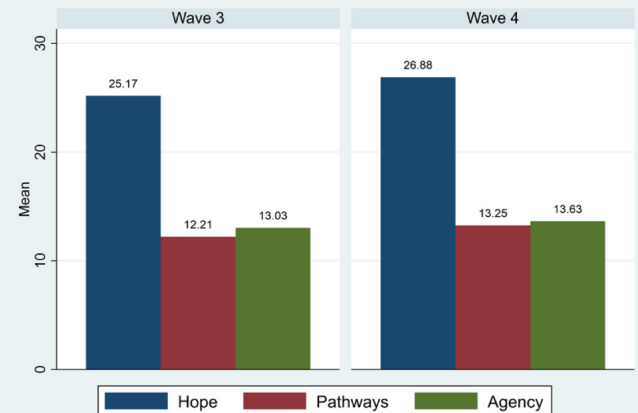
3) Financial competence and employment rate among parents is significantly increasing:

Parents' mean scores in the Financial Capability Index were significantly higher in June 2019 (Wave 4) than in December 2018 (Wave 3) for both mothers and fathers. This means parents feel significantly more confident in managing their money, perceive having greater access to financial services, generally earn more than they spend, and are planning for their financial futures. Parents, especially fathers, are working more hours, more consistently. More mothers are also entering the workforce.

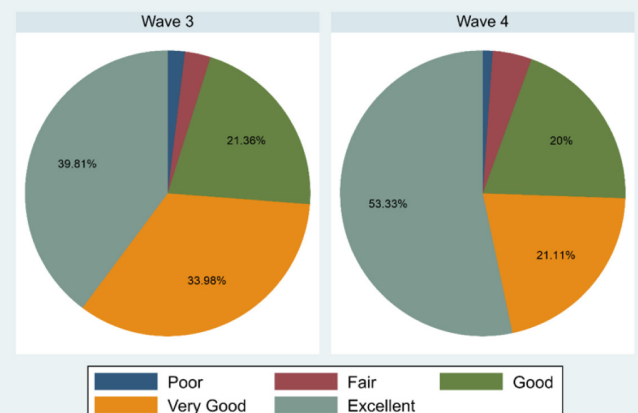
4) Parents' mental health is improving, especially for mothers:

Adults reported improvements in their general well-being and mental health, including being in a better mood and experiencing more positive feelings, less stress about financial and relationship responsibilities, and feeling more hopeful about the future.

Children's Hope, Pathways, and Agency scores across Waves



Relationships with Children, perceived by moms across Waves



Financial Capability Index across Waves

