

BRIEF

Survey of Shared Site Intergenerational Programs

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Companion to All In Together: Creating Places Where Young and Old Thrive

Background

Intergenerational programs have proliferated and diversified greatly since the launch of the Foster Grandparents program in 1965. Participants and programming vary widely and now range from environmental advocacy to arts to employment opportunities that help to meet the needs of both generations by uniting them. A specific type of intergenerational program, the shared site program, is also diversifying. These deliver services to young and old simultaneously and in an ongoing manner. Programs such as Bridge Meadows (its North Portland site opened in 2011) and San Pasqual Academy (opened 2001) have developed in the last 17 years in response to national and local contextual changes, such as the increasing number of children in the foster care system and a growing aging population. Some of these programs have been recognized by Generations United's Programs of Distinction, such as Together Transforming the Experience of Aging at the Kendal at Oberlin program. Their proliferation was one driver to conduct a national survey to represent the landscape of shared site programs. Following a 20-year gap since the last national survey of intergenerational shared site programs was conducted, the time was ripe to assess how these programs have evolved with regard to their participants, staffing, programming, successes and challenges. With support from The Eisner Foundation and coordination by Generations United and The Ohio State University, a survey replication was launched in 2018 to do just that.



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First Shared Site Survey –1995

The 1995 study conducted by Goyer for AARP¹ offered valuable insight to a type of program that was not otherwise catalogued. While the most common components of shared site programs, nursing homes and child care centers, have their own licensing and regulatory bodies, no one tracked their co-existence. The AARP study team coordinated a significant effort with tens of thousands of paper surveys distributed via national child care, Head Start, parks and recreation departments, adult day services, health care, residential care, and hospital networks.

Key findings include:

- The creation of a typology consisting of 72 possible youth and elder program pairings, which identified that co-location of a child care center with a nursing home was the most common type of shared site program.
- Identification of key participant and programming characteristics. For example, more than half of the elder participants possessed some form cognitive impairment, such as dementia.
- Intergenerational programming was most frequently implemented as “planned, ongoing activities.” About half of the sites relied on an intergenerational coordinator or dedicated staff person to implement INTERGENERATIONAL activities.
- A large number of elders (nearly 17,000) and children (about 19,000) were served daily by 281 responding programs offering opportunities to engage in INTERGENERATIONAL programming.
- Funding was identified by respondents as the most common challenge sites face. This challenge clustered with other barriers, such as locating resource materials and other INTERGENERATIONAL programs.

Benefits identified by respondents clustered around administrative benefits, such as cost savings and public relations, and personal benefits to staff and participants, which included affective benefits and informal interactions.

2018 Shared Site Survey

The survey results presented here contribute to the goal of establishing a new national baseline of shared site intergenerational programs that includes the number of sites, types of program models, funding sources, and suggestions from the field about what would encourage replication of these models. The current report presents the methods used to conduct the national survey, survey results, and implications for practice and research in the field that can foster replication of shared site intergenerational models. Study results were incorporated into [**All In Together: Creating Places Where Young and Old Thrive**](#), a report issued by Generations United and The Eisner Foundation.

¹ Amy Goyer and Rosalind Zuses. (1998). “Intergenerational Shared Site Project: A Study of Co-located Programs and Services for Children, Youth and Older Adults – Final Report.” Washington, DC: AARP.

Methods

The survey research team designed, administered, and analyzed the results of a national survey to identify the intergenerational programs currently operating in the United States. The survey targeted educational, health, social and cultural programs serving older adults (50+) and youth 24 and under. Jarrott and Dabelko-Schoeny (The Ohio State University [OSU]) developed the survey. Items were constructed to capture input from three groups of respondents: persons providing intergenerational programming at non-shared sites; persons interested in intergenerational programming who were not currently providing such programming; representatives of shared site intergenerational programs. Findings presented in this report focus exclusively on those providing services at shared site intergenerational programs.

Generations United convened an advisory group comprised of representatives of youth and elder service professional organizations, advocacy groups, and research institutes. Table 1 presents the organizations targeted for survey distribution. The group offered feedback on the survey content, and a sub-group of members practiced taking the survey to ensure clarity and estimate the time needed to complete the survey. OSU project staff developed the survey to be completed in multiple formats, including electronically (Qualtrics), as a paper survey, and over the phone in an abbreviated version. The OSU Institution Review Board authorized the study as meeting ethical standards for research (#2018E0058).

With the survey developed and piloted, advisory group members committed and secured commitment from other key agencies to distribute the survey through their distribution networks. The survey was launched on February 16, 2018 and remained open for four months. The survey link was posted to Generations United's and other organizations' (such as the National Association for Adult Day Services and Child Care Aware® of America) web and social media sites (e.g., Twitter and Facebook). Weekly email reminders were sent for six weeks (mid-February through March) via Generations United distribution methods. Partners shared the survey via their distribution methods multiple times. As well, Generations United staff made over 100 phone calls after the survey launched to encourage responses from organizations that had been identified as actual or potential shared site intergenerational programs.

Given the descriptive nature of the study, we analyzed most of the data with frequencies. Open-ended items were analyzed for themes.



Table 1. Targeted organizations for survey distribution.

Organization	Organizational Networks
<i>Alliance for Strong Families and Communities*</i>	Religious-based and non-secular as well as private and nonprofit human service and community-building organizations and federations
<i>American College of Health Care Administrators</i>	Includes Senior Rehab Solutions, The Academy of LTC Leadership and Development, and other long-term care industry professionals
<i>American Healthcare Association</i>	Healthcare and long-term care associations, hospitals, long term care providers (such as centers for assisted living) and long-term care vendors
<i>Child Care Aware® of America*</i>	Over 400 US state and local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies
<i>Child Welfare League of America*</i>	Public and private service organizations for vulnerable children and families; national, regional, state and local advocacy groups and corporate partners
<i>Corporation for National and Community Service*</i>	Includes AmeriCorps, SeniorCorps, the Social Innovation and Volunteer Generation Funds
<i>Easter Seals*</i>	Caregivers to individuals with disabilities and their family members
<i>Families and Work Institute</i>	National and worldwide employers that collaborate with Families and Work Institute to influence the greater workforce or workplace
<i>Generations United*</i>	Nationally organization representing intergenerational issues to practitioners, advocates and policy makers, researchers, individuals, and families.
<i>LeadingAge*</i>	National network of non-profit leaders committed to aging services.
<i>National Adult Day Services Association*</i>	National organization for Adult Day Services
<i>National Association for the Education of Young Children</i>	NAEYC state affiliates, local affiliate chapters, and affiliate alliances as well as accreditation systems, accredited programs and educators
<i>National Association of Area Agencies on Aging*</i>	Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), Title VI Native American aging programs and state associations of AAAs
<i>National Association of Long Term Care Administrator Boards</i>	Association of regulatory agencies responsible for licensing long term care administrators in the US.
<i>National Child Care Information Center</i>	Early childhood systems and federal grantees that oversee programs at the state level through the Child Care Development Fund
<i>National Council on Aging* and National Institute of Senior Centers*</i>	Advocates, professionals, older adults and caregivers as well as various community partners and senior service providers and network of over 3,000 senior center professionals.
<i>National Head Start Association</i>	Advocates, supporters of Head Start, Head Start staff and parents, scholars, students as well as national, regional, and state Head Start associations

** Investigators at Generations United and OSU have working relationships with these organizations.*



Results

Respondents

The first survey response was received February 16, 2018 with the last response dated June 22, 2018. Surveys were completed by 257 unique organizations. Surveys were excluded from the presenting report if they did not deliver intergenerational programming (n=36) or delivered intergenerational programming at a non-shared site (n=110). One international program was excluded (n=1) given the focus on US programs. The 110 responding shared site programs represent 34 states and the District of Columbia. The greatest number of responses came from California (n=10) followed by Minnesota (n=9). Directors or Executive Directors completed 60% of the surveys with one-third completed by persons in other roles, such as outreach and special projects coordinators.

Types of Programs

The most common shared site program involves young children under the age of 5, either through childcare or pre-school services. This group is paired with the following adult programs, listed from most to least common. Note: totaling representation of the programs exceeds 100% because many programs provide multiple elder services.

- Adult day services (42%)
- Assisted living (41%)
- Nursing home (39%)
- Independent senior housing (36%)
- Short-term rehabilitation (36%)
- Senior Center (21%)
- Congregate meal site (18%)
- Rec Center (17%)

Beyond childcare and pre-school, the most commonly paired youth program is summer programs (17%) and before/after school care programs (11%).

Organizational Profiles

Layout. Nearly half of the responding shared site programs operate in a single building with separate space provided to youth and elders (43.4%). Space shared within a building is next most common (19.2%). Examples include groups where participants might only attend briefly, such as Dance Generators or City of Mesa Parks and Recreation, or where youth and elders truly integrate through the day, such as the Intergenerational School in Ohio. A shared campus was also reported, such as a continuing care retirement community (17.2%) where multiple buildings are located close to each other and elders live and receive services in a variety of different spaces with a single child or youth program located in one building.

Services provided. Respondents were asked to “check all that apply” from a list of services commonly provided by elder service providers paired with a youth program. As well, respondents could specify “other” services their organization provides. More than one-half of respondents provide two or more services to children/youth at their locations, with one quarter (36%) offering a single service. Turning to older adult services, similar proportions provide a single service (37% of respondents providing the information) or multiple elder services (63% valid percentage). Information about services provided was not specified by approximately 20% of those completing the survey.

Affiliation. The most common affiliation reported by survey respondents was private, not-for-profit affiliation (61%). Another 17% operate as public or government entities, 11% as private, for-profit organizations, or other (3%).

Participant Profile

Vulnerable populations. To get a sense of the populations served by responding organizations, respondents were prompted to indicate the percentage of vulnerable youth and older adults their program serves, that is persons at risk of not having their basic needs met. The average for percent of vulnerable youth served by an organization is 23% but varies greatly; nearly 20% do not serve vulnerable youth, but at 15% of the programs vulnerable youth represent 50-100% of their young participants.

Among older adult participants served at responding programs, the mean percent of vulnerable participants is 33%. Only 10% do not serve vulnerable elders, while approximately 30% serve an older population where 50-100% of their participants are vulnerable such as the Champion Intergenerational Center in Van Nuys, California.

Intended populations. Because examples of intergenerational programs highlight the diverse purposes that may be served by connecting the generations, we asked about intended program participants, providing a list and allowing respondents to indicate all that applied and specify other groups. While some programs focus their intergenerational programs to serve distinct groups, such as veterans, LGBTQ individuals, or persons with physical disabilities, in comparing responses to organizations’ stated purposes, it appears that groups are inclusive of diverse groups rather than focused on serving distinct groups.

Intergenerational Profile

Purpose of intergenerational programming. Program representatives selected from a range of possible goals for implementing intergenerational programming. They primarily stated a purpose of fostering positive intergenerational relationships (72.2%), individual development (64.5%), and favorable attitudes towards participant groups (70%). Most selected additional goals as well, such as:

- utilizing community members' talents (59.1%)
- improving attitudes towards other groups, such as immigrants (48%)
- reducing caregiver stress (35%)
- financial stability (36.4%)
- optimizing use of space (38.2%)
- and improving workplace climate (34.5%)

One representative reflected on the joy they experience from supporting intergenerational contact, indicating "...it brightens your day when you realize you can make this joy happen."

Participation in intergenerational programming. Not surprisingly, rates of intergenerational program participation is quite high at responding, shared site programs, with 53% of older adults and 80% of children joining intergenerational programming facilitated at the site.

Frequency of programming. Almost one-third of sites offer programming once or more per day, reflecting the potential ease of contact when transportation need not be coordinated to connect the generations. Still, some shared site programs only offer seasonal intergenerational programming, such as holiday parties (5.5%)

Facilitators. Typically, more than one staff member supports intergenerational programming. Half of the respondents indicated that a staff member from the participating elder program is involved, with 42% of respondents staffing their program with a staff member from the participating youth program. Approximately one-quarter of respondents have an intergenerational coordinator, someone who may train staff and schedule and oversee programming. This individual may facilitate programming independently or work in collaboration with other program staff or volunteers. Volunteers are responsible for or share in facilitating programming at 17% of sites, such as ONEgeneration in Van Nuys, California.

Funding intergenerational programs. Most respondents indicated that offering intergenerational programming generates additional expenses (81.8%). Forty percent described associated costs being shared, while others indicated that the youth (10%) or elder (13%) programs financed the additional expenses. For example, Grace Living, a retirement community in Jenks, Oklahoma, pays the salary of the shared site's intergenerational coordinator. Nearly one-third rely on grant funding, likely in combination with other funding sources (respondents could indicate all applicable sources of support). A small number of respondents rely on other sources, such as private and corporate donations or tribal funds to implement their programs.

Challenges. Respondents had options to indicate how much issues commonly identified by intergenerational practitioners challenge their organizations. The top challenges were demonstrating impact of their intergenerational program (63%), funding intergenerational programming (60%), and finding other programs with whom to share intergenerational ideas and strategies (58%). Other frequent challenges included issues of safety (45%) and space (e.g., accessibility of space for all participants; 48%). Less commonly described challenges related to difficulty staffing programs (30%) and locating resources for training staff (33%) and intergenerational programming (38%). Interest among key stakeholders, that is lack of interest in intergenerational programming, challenges some programs whether related to youth (45%), elders (52%), or staff (53%). Administrators were most commonly cited as lacking interest in programming (62.7%).

Next Steps

The survey results presented here help to fill a gap in the literature about the nature of contemporary shared sites. Insights to the diversity of missions and client populations supported convey the potential for shared sites to meet a range of needs using a strengths-based approach.

At the same time, the survey left many organizations unrepresented who did not respond to the survey. Cross-checking databases of respondents to the 1995 survey and Generations United's directory of shared site programs yielded evidence that a number of programs remain in operation but did not complete the survey. Next steps should be to reach out to these organizations personally to secure a response, whether electronically, in print format, or using an interview approach; the project timeline did not allow resources to engage in this time-intensive step.

Next steps stemming from survey results should focus on program strengths, such as the diversity of persons served and objectives supported.

Responding to respondents' greatest challenges is a responsibility shared by intergenerational researchers, practitioners, and advocacy and funding groups. To **demonstrate the impact of intergenerational programming**, partners should study funding models to create a model for establishing the most common types of intergenerational programs.





Researchers can identify interdisciplinary partners with youth or gerontological expertise to demonstrate the impact of participation in intergenerational programs on participant education, developmental, and health outcomes. Experience Corps offers one highly successful example as gerontological social workers, geriatric practitioners, and child development experts documented the impact of programming on youth reading improvement and older volunteers' health. Studying these two areas – funding models and program outcomes – will enable analysis of the financial benefits of delivering intergenerational services. Financial benefits may include, in the immediate term, full enrollment (families prefer intergenerational services over age-segregated services), low staff turnover (staff enjoy the intergenerational work and diversity of participant, staff, and client contact it affords), longer participant tenure in a program (families are satisfied, elders experience health benefits and remain enrolled in a program for extended periods of time), and long-term outcomes like improved health in late life stemming from positive attitudes about older adults that were shaped when intergenerational program participants were young.

Besides documenting outcomes specific to program participation, researchers and practitioners can collaborate to develop and disseminate standardized measures that practitioners can use. In particular, measures of intergenerational relationships and the mechanisms by which program outcomes are achieved, such as knowledge about the other generation, empathy towards the other generation, or the nature of intergenerational contact, can yield results essential to interpreting outcome measures like reading ability, physical activity, or mental health.

Groups like Generations United can be a resource for a variety of means to **communicate about intergenerational programs**. For example, they can collaborate with researchers to create promotional materials representing researchers' intergenerational research. These can be adopted by a range of sites, akin to the infographics Generations United has created for the current and previous surveys. These may be useful in multi-media formats ranging from fliers to hand out, to memes, twitter messages, boiler plate language for use with funders, or digital media. Academic researchers often fail to disseminate research findings beyond research outlets or to diverse audiences; collaboration with writing and media experts can benefit both author and consumer.

Program respondents are hungry to connect with their peers. Whether to share in trials or successes, professionals seek intergenerational-specific resources and colleagues. Generations United supports this effort through its social media presence, Press Club and Hill Day events, as well as its biennial conference. With the current survey, Generations United can update its directory of intergenerational and shared site programs, making it easier for programs to locate others in their geographic area or delivering similar services. Anecdote has revealed that some organizations cannot afford the cost or time to travel to the conference, and they may not have the technical resources or time to join a synchronous webinar. Regional conferences or meetings organized by a Generations United subcommittee might enable site visit, networking, and resource exchange opportunities for survey respondents seeking to make connections. Another regional network option would be to launch intergenerational sub-committees or working groups in state departments of aging or associations for the education of young children that could adopt an intergenerational professional track at state meetings.

Beyond the need to respond to challenges identified by current program respondents, survey results can be used to support other organizations delivering intergenerational programming in a non-shared site or those interested in establishing a shared site to introduce intergenerational programming to an ever-expanding and diversifying population of youth and older adults. Greater depth of knowledge is needed about shared site programs that have navigated licensing and funding barriers and pursued staff development opportunities, achieving key indicators of program success and sustainability.

In sum, four key questions emerged from the 2018 shared site survey and the report, [**All In Together: Creating Places Where Young and Old Thrive:**](#)

- Why aren't intergenerational shared site programs in every community?
- How can we and the shared site programs demonstrate their impact?
- How can we connect with others doing this work to share ideas and strategies?
- What financing and funding opportunities exist to begin intergenerational shared site programs?

Continued collaboration among The Eisner Foundation, Generations United, and The Ohio State University will support the creation of replicable evaluation, networking, and funding models that organizations can adopt to continue growing the number of persons served by intergenerational shared site programs.

The support that The Eisner Foundation and Generations United, along with numerous dedicated practitioners, advocates, and researchers, afford their colleagues is impressive, yet more good work remains to be done. Survey results point to key areas for concentrating efforts and highlighting successes to champion.

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About Generations United

The mission of Generations United is to improve the lives of children, youth and older adults through intergenerational collaboration, public policies and programs for the enduring benefit of all. For over three decades, Generations United has catalyzed cooperation and collaboration among generations, evoking the vibrancy, energy and sheer productivity that result when people of all ages come together. We believe that we can only be successful in the face of our complex future if age diversity is regarded as a national asset and fully leveraged. To learn more about Generations United, please visit www.gu.org.

About The Eisner Foundation

The Eisner Foundation identifies, advocates for and invests in high-quality and innovative programs that unite multiple generations for the betterment of our communities. The Eisner Foundation was started in 1996 by Michael D. Eisner, then Chairman and CEO of The Walt Disney Company and his wife, Jane, to focus their family's philanthropic activities. The Eisner Foundation gives an estimated \$7 million per year to nonprofit organizations based in Los Angeles County. In 2015, The Eisner Foundation became the only U.S. funder investing exclusively in intergenerational solutions. To learn more about The Eisner Foundation, please visit www.eisnerfoundation.org.

About The Ohio State University College of Social Work

The College of Social Work, through excellence in teaching, research, and service, prepares leaders who enhance individual and community well-being, celebrate difference, and promote social and economic justice for vulnerable populations. The College fosters social change through collaboration with individuals, families, communities, and other change agents to build strengths and resolve complex individual and social problems. As an internationally recognized College, we build and apply knowledge that positively impacts Ohio, the nation, and the world. To learn more about The Ohio State University College of Social Work, please visit www.csw.osu.edu.



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