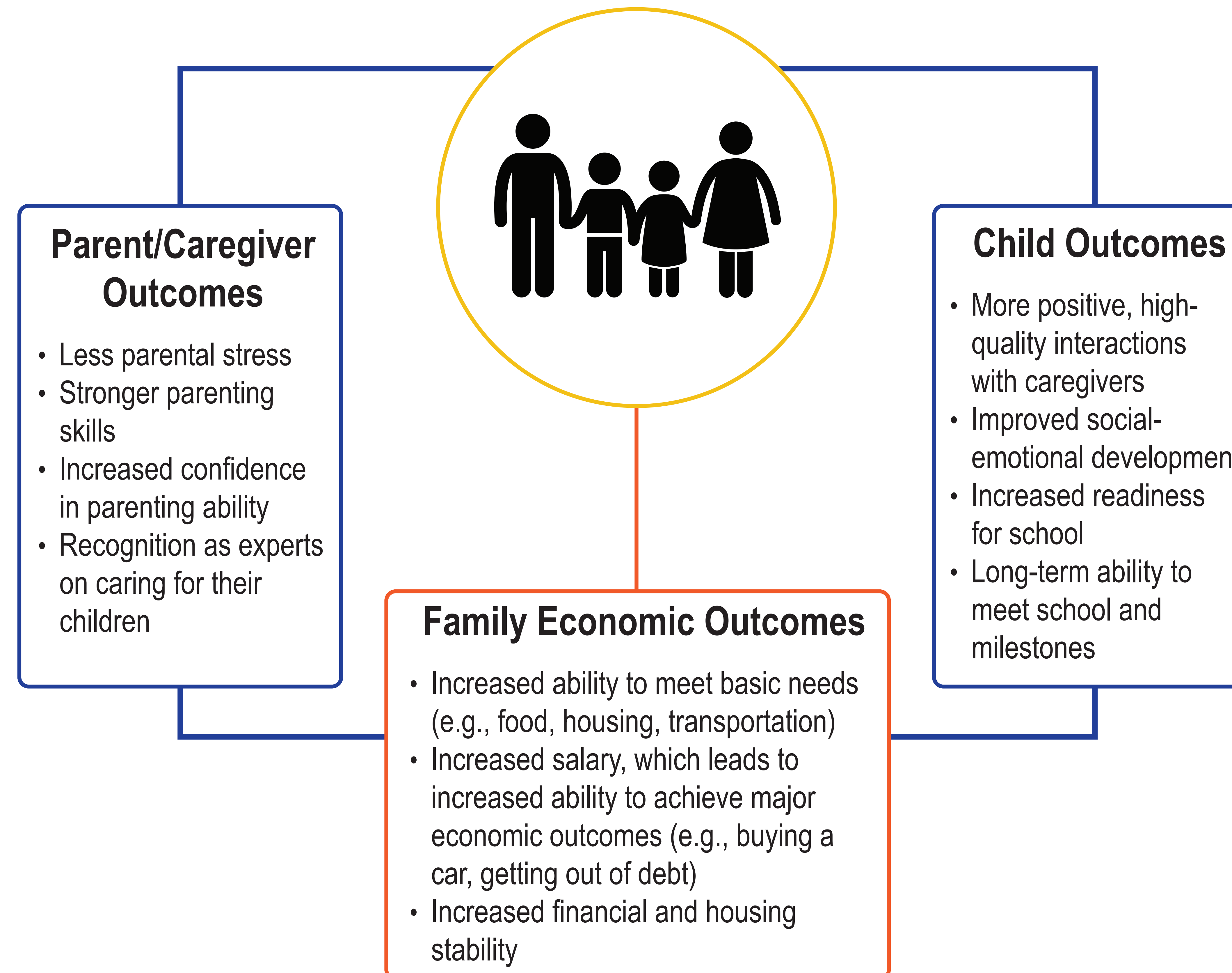


National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse

Fathers and Children Together: Two Generations, One Future

Example of Outcomes Targeted by a Whole Family Approach

*Adapted from diagram created by the Center for Working Families – Atlanta, GA



What is a Whole Family Approach?

Whole family approaches recognize the intersecting needs of children and their parents. The goal is to help the two generations thrive together by promoting children's learning and healthy development while also providing services to help their parents succeed as caregivers and breadwinners. Rather than operating in separate child-centered or parent-centered "silos," whole family programs create opportunities for families by simultaneously equipping parents and children with the tools they need to thrive while removing the obstacles in their way.



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What kinds of services can whole family programs provide for fathers & children?

Services for fathers can enhance parenting skills and knowledge; build social capital; improve health and well-being; and provide workforce development opportunities. Services for children may include early childhood care and education to boost school readiness; home visiting to enhance child health and nutrition; and specialized services for children with special needs or children who have been exposed to trauma. □

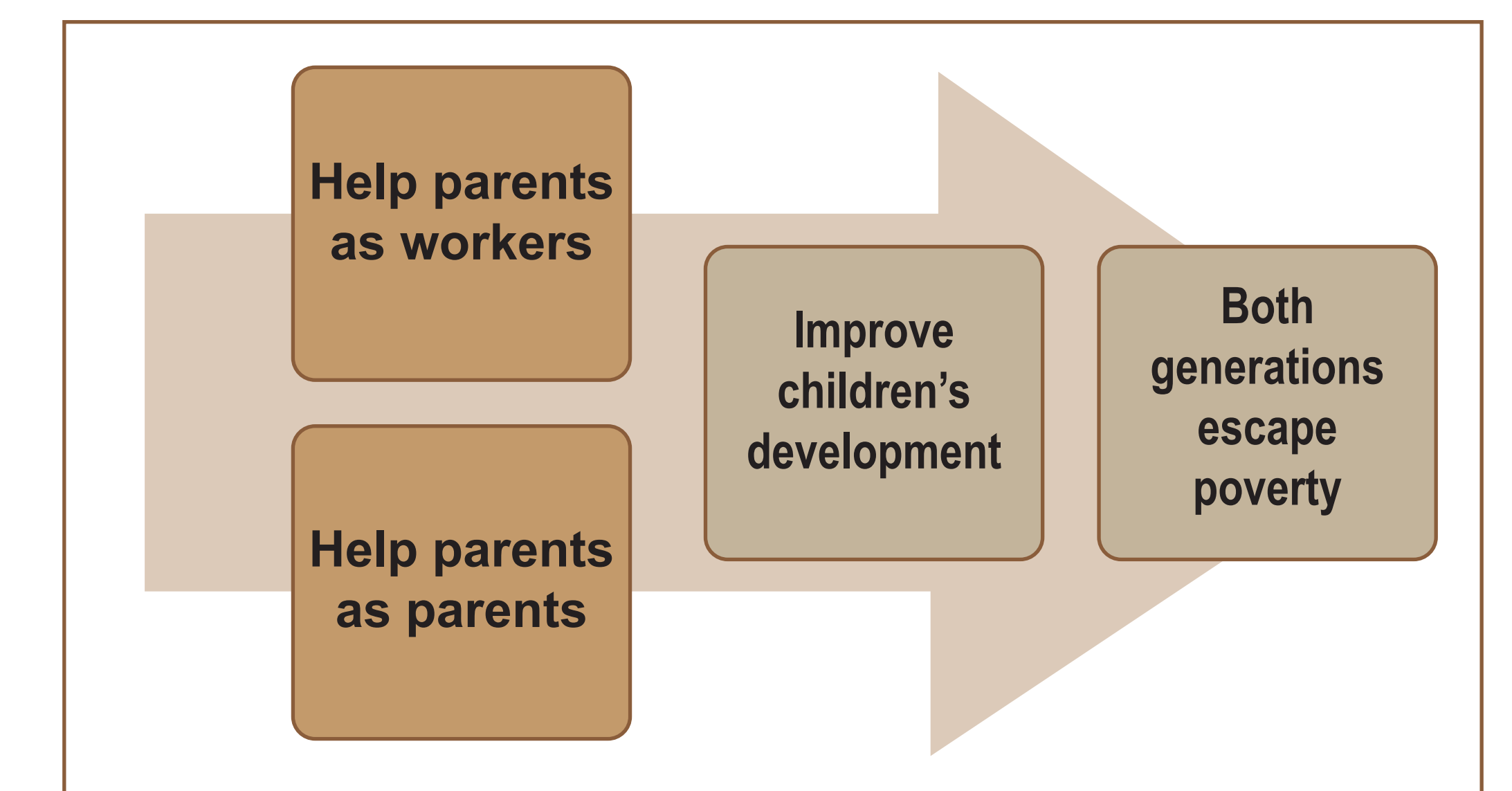
Challenges

Traditional social services, health, and education programs tend to focus on mothers and children, not fathers. Staff serving children and mothers may not be asking questions/obtaining information to help them reach out to fathers, particularly non-residential fathers. Staff serving men in programs other than fatherhood may not be asking if they are dads. Fatherhood program staff may not be thinking about engaging moms or children in the work they are doing.

How has the Whole Family concept been applied in program settings?

The concept has mostly been applied to services for mothers and their children and has yet to be tested by responsible fatherhood programs.

An eight-week Head Start program in Oregon (Parents and Children Making Connections) provides weekly two-hour, small-group classes for parents while, at the same time, their children participate in small-group training activities. The parent training is designed to reduce family stress, while the child training is designed to improve attention and self-regulation, including emotional regulation



Source: "CLASP (2014) Thriving Children, Successful Parents: A Two-Generation Approach to Policy"

An NRFC Review of the Literature

A critical feature of any whole family approach is the coordination of parallel programs for children and their parents. Services should be provided for children, for their mothers, and for their fathers.

Early childhood programs could partner with fatherhood programs to develop parallel programs for children and their fathers. Whole family approaches that link services for fathers with services for their children and other family members could increase program impacts and strengthen outcomes for children and their families.