

Legacy for Children™

“Legacy...it’s affected the way I think about my child’s future. Now I have a better outlook, more confident.”

– a Legacy mother



National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities
Division of Human Development and Disability





The *Legacy for Children*[™] Prevention Program

Introduction

Problem:

More than 15 million children in the United States are currently living in poverty and the number is increasing. Children living in poverty are at significantly higher risk for poor health and development.

A Solution:

Parents play a critical role in their children's development and can create a supportive environment no matter what the physical circumstances.

Helping parents understand that, and helping them create a supportive community, is the goal of *Legacy for Children*[™], a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) program to combat the effects of poverty. The *Legacy* study resulted in a number of improvements, including fewer behavioral problems among toddlers, improved maternal-child interaction, and increased IQ at three years of age.

Regular group meetings of mothers, some with and some without children, are at the core of the *Legacy* program. They give mothers an opportunity to develop goals and dreams for their children and to practice ways to realize those dreams with other mothers in similar circumstances. The *Legacy* curriculum has two versions; one is prenatal through age three, and the other is birth through age five.

Meet Angela:

Angela and her sister grew up in the home of their grandparents. Her mom was there, but her father was out of the picture. A mother herself at 16, Angela had four children fathered by three different men by the time she was 25. She was living in her mother's home with her four children, her best friend, and Joe, her husband and the father of her youngest child, Lara.



Raising a Child in Poverty

The story of Angela's family might have been like that of so many other American households who survive in poverty. We know that Angela's challenges and those faced by her children put them at risk for developmental delays and poor health outcomes. But Angela chose a different path for her children and now sees a different future for her children.

Angela and *Legacy*

Angela was one of the 600 mothers enrolled in the first study of *Legacy*. Watching the other children in the *Legacy* program helped Angela understand what to expect of her daughter. Helping other parents practice new parenting skills reinforced her own skills and helped define her career track. "It never would have crossed my mind to want to help others [as a profession] – I never realized what an influence I was to other people." Sharing parenting experiences with the other mothers created a community that supported Angela's desire for the best possible life for her children and persisted beyond the three years of the *Legacy* program.

Angela developed a strong connection to the idea of "parents are the child's first teachers" and consequently changed her interactions with her children, including her discipline decisions. She learned to be an advocate for Lara's academic success. As a result, Lara was enrolled in a magnet school a year ahead of her peers at the age of five.

In general, Angela reported that *Legacy* helped her to think more about her influence on her children.

"*Legacy* opened my eyes to thinking through the long-term effects of what I do, rather than just at that moment."
– Angela, a *Legacy* mother

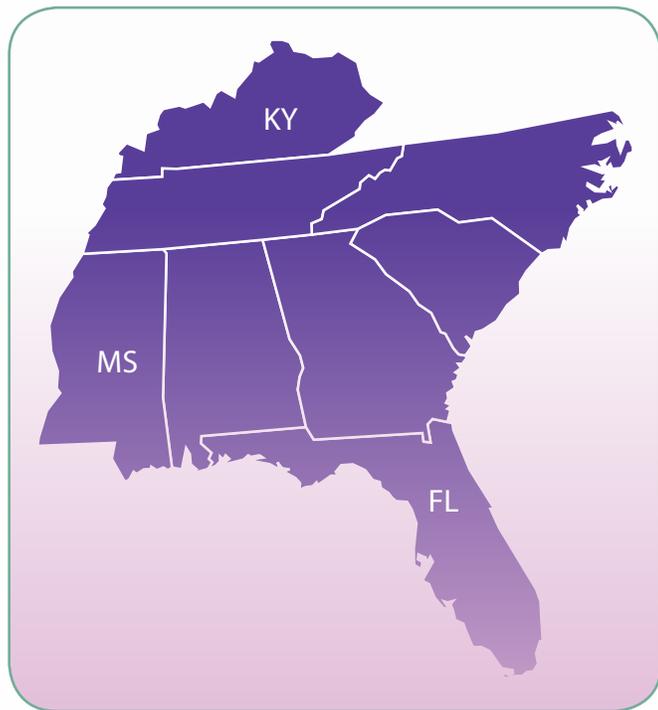
Imagine:

If we could expand our reach to more families living in poverty...



Bringing *Legacy* to Communities

In partnership with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), CDC is now able to support the delivery of the *Legacy* program in five Early Head Start sites in four states (Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, and Mississippi). By doing so, we are learning what it takes for a local community to implement *Legacy*.



Bringing *Legacy* to Mississippi

Legacy-MS is a great success story of partnership and community buy-in.

Legacy-MS represents a collaboration between two Head Start grantees, Friends of Children Mississippi and Mississippi Action for Progress.

The two grantees share one intervention specialist who travels nearly 200 miles between the two Head Start centers to run groups.

Mothers quickly developed a deep connection to their *Legacy* group, and participation rates have stayed high since the first group session.



Building A Space for Mothers and Children to Connect

A *Legacy* space is similar to any early education space. It should be a safe place for mothers and young children to connect, interact, and explore during parent-child time together. Developmentally appropriate activities are built into the *Legacy* curricula to help guide the intervention specialist as she models supportive parent-child interactions.

The *Legacy* space should also include a set of tables and chairs that allow for the mothers to discuss parenting and child development topics during a time just for them: Building Sense of Community.

“Being a new mom is not easy and I felt that I was all alone with no one to talk to. In the *Legacy* group sessions we discuss the issues. I feel comfortable talking to the other moms and value their help with finding our own solutions. The way the intervention specialist introduces the topics and leads us into the discussions is very relaxing and non-judgmental in letting us come up with the solutions. The atmosphere is very relaxing and supporting to both the moms and the babies, who are allowed to form their own little socializations. The infant room is very attractive and offers lots of activities for the babies. From the first day, I had an easy experience bonding with the other moms. I feel that we are one happy family.”

- a *Legacy* mother

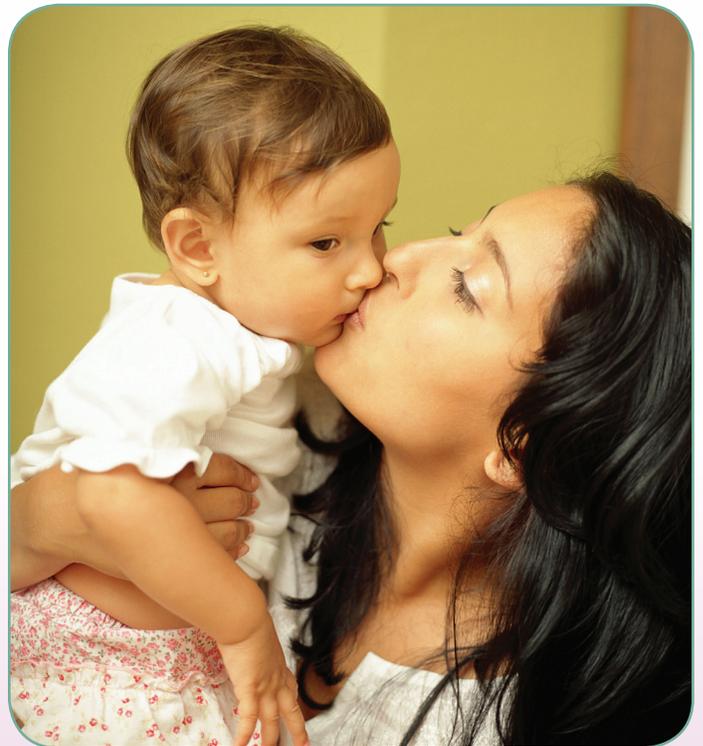


Making the Group Space a *Legacy* Space

Legacy moms quickly begin to take ownership of the *Legacy* space, as their connection to the group grows. This art work was created by mothers and children at a *Legacy* session. Many of the moms said that they had never painted with their toddlers before.

“I didn’t know that she could paint!”
— a *Legacy* mother

The moms participate in decorating the *Legacy* space, hanging their children’s artwork with pride.



Legacy's Impact on a Family

I have to keep the belt beside me because my two year old is out of control and when he sees the belt, he'll behave.

– a *Legacy* mother

“A *Legacy* intervention specialist did a home visit very early on in the project. The mom had an infant and a two year old. As the mom and intervention specialist sat down together, the intervention specialist noticed a belt laying beside the mom on the sofa.

Because there was no move to use the belt, the intervention specialist didn't say anything at that point. Coming to group we would talk about discipline and make some suggestions. The belt is very cultural and we couldn't tell them that that was wrong because that wasn't how we operated in *Legacy*. So we would talk about all the different discipline styles.” - a *Legacy* Program Director

I've learned so much from being in Legacy. I wish I'd known more when my older children were babies. I no longer beat them. I read them stories, I do activities with them and it has made such a difference in their lives.

– the same *Legacy* mother, three years later

Imagine:

If we could sustain the impact that we have had on the *Legacy* families...



Investment support and what it takes to bring *Legacy* to a community

A small investment goes a long way in implementing *Legacy*.

Recently funded *Legacy* sites were supported by approximately \$100,000 in annual funds (assuming implementation of three groups by one intervention specialist and attrition over time).

This investment covered:

- Staffing (~65,000)
 - One CDC-trained and certified intervention specialist
 - Supervisory staff time for the intervention specialist
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- Space, Materials, supplies, and incentive for three groups each of approximately 10 mother-child dyads (~\$32,000)
- Funds for travel to the CDC training (~\$3,000)

This investment equated to approximately \$4,000 per family for a year's worth of group sessions.

Additionally, in-kind support was provided by CDC:

- Copies of the curricula (at no cost to the sites)
- Pre-service and on-going *Legacy* training
- Technical assistance throughout program delivery



Legacy intervention specialist training session

“The program has given me the boost and confidence I need to be the best mom I can be. I have gained so much self esteem. I have learned to love myself and strive for success so I can be such a great parent to my child.”— a *Legacy* mother

**For more information please contact Centers
for Disease Control and Prevention**

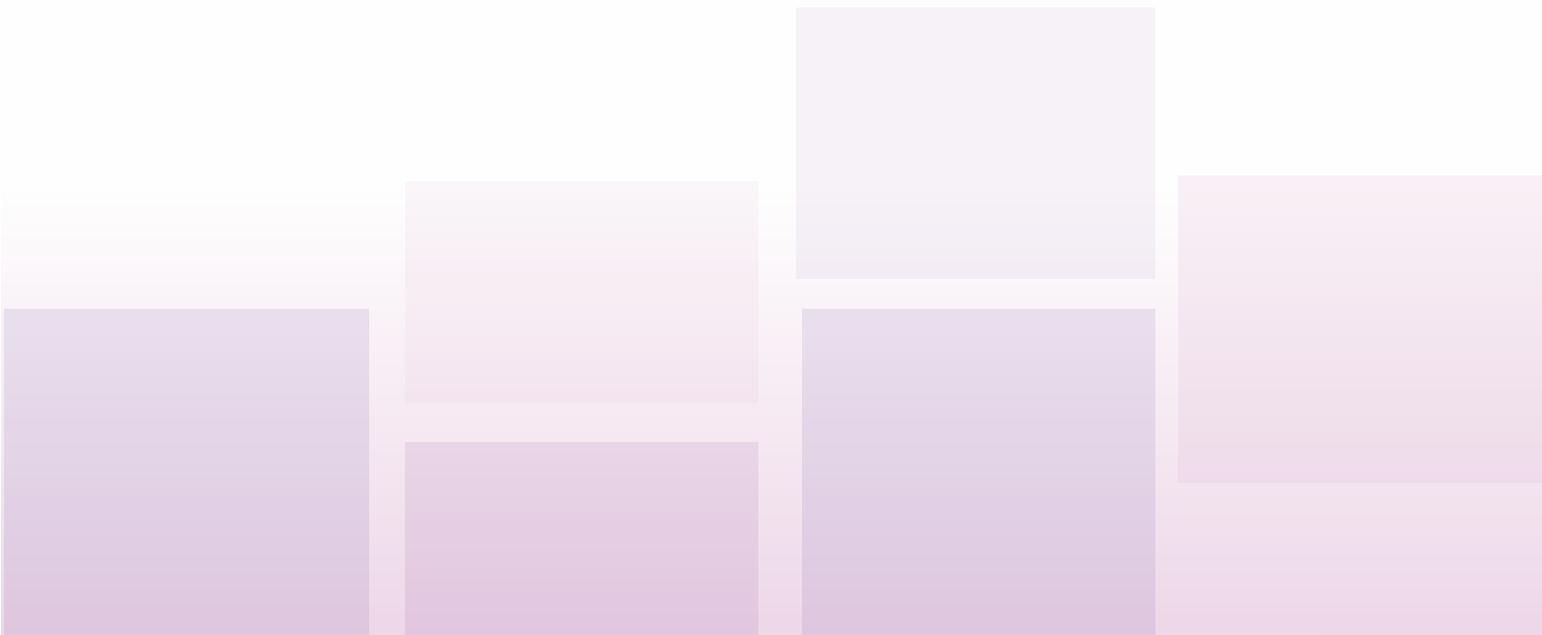
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