

IOWA FACT SHEET

INTERGENERATIONAL SHARED SITES

DEFINITION

Intergenerational shared sites are programs where older adults and young people receive services at the same site and both generations interact during regularly scheduled intergenerational activities, as well as through informal encounters. Generations United uses the term “Intergenerational Shared Site”; others refer to these types of programs as intergenerational day care or inter-/multi-generational centers.

OVERVIEW

The use of space by multiple generations not only makes common sense but can be an important solution in helping communities and organizations stretch scarce resources. By constructing innovative facilities that allow for the sharing of resources, intergenerational shared site programs can meet the needs of and improve outcomes for children, youth, and older adults. The current fiscal constraints faced by communities across the nation are forcing many to make tough decisions on the construction and rehabilitation of facilities and the delivery of critical services. Intergenerational shared sites also act as a mechanism to optimize limited resources while helping to address the social implications of an increasingly age-segregated society where children often spend their days in school and/or childcare centers, while many elders socialize in age-isolated facilities.

BENEFITS OF INTERGENERATIONAL SHARED SITES

- Enhances quality of life for all participants
- Provides needed services to the community
- Increases cost savings & opportunities to share resources
- Enhances employee benefits for programs with on-site care
- Attracts additional funding & positive public relations
- Improves attitudes about different age groups

BENEFITS FOR YOUTH/CHILDREN

Young people gain an enhanced perception of the elderly. They benefit from interpersonal relationships with persons from a different age group, who can provide guidance, wisdom and support and have the opportunity to share their unique skills and talents as well. Preschool children involved in intergenerational programs had higher personal/social developmental scores (by 11 months) than preschool children involved in non-intergenerational programs.

BENEFITS FOR OLDER ADULTS

Studies show that sharing activities with younger people promotes positive health gains for older adults such as burning more calories due to exercise, sustaining fewer falls, and a reduction in reliance on canes. Adults with dementia or other cognitive impairments experience more positive affect during interactions with children than they do during non-intergenerational activities and these changes last even after the activity ends.

INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Intergenerational shared sites vary in structure, but are generally composed of two components; one that serves the needs of older adults and a second that serves children/youth. In addition, many facilities have designated “shared spaces” that provide additional opportunities for spontaneous intergenerational interaction. *The following chart lists common program models and components:*



DISTINGUISHED IOWA SHARED SITES

BOULEVARD CHILDREN'S CENTER AND THE LIFE CENTER DES MOINES , IA

- The Boulevard Children's Center is a full time child care organization that provides services for children ages six weeks to five years.
- The Iowa Jewish Senior Life Center provides services to older Americans in need of nursing, Alzheimer's and memory care, and rehabilitation.
- The two organizations together offer intergenerational activities that include spring planting, holiday parades, music, and reading.
- For additional information, visit <http://www.bvdchildrenscenter.com/>

BETHANY MANOR STORY CITY, IA

- At Bethany Life Communities seniors are provided a variety of living options from retirement housing to a certified nursing facility.
- At Bethany Manor, Bethany Life Communities' Medicaid/Medicare facility, an on-site Head Start program provides residents and children with the time and space for one-on-one contact.
- The daily experience that the Manor strives to provide for its residents is one that incorporates activities, pets, plants, and children. These elements help form a strong and vibrant community.
- For additional information, visit <http://www.bethanylife.org/index.php>



©2009 Generations United

Generations United is the only national membership organization focused solely on improving the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs, and policies. GU represents more than 100 national, state, and local organizations representing more than 70 million Americans. GU serves as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. GU provides a forum for those working with children, youth, and older adults to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation.

This fact sheet was made possible by a grant from MetLife Foundation. The photographs featured in this fact sheet are from Generations United's Intergenerational Photo Contest sponsored by MetLife Foundation.