

ASSET Initiative

Asset Building for Head Start Providers

An estimated 43 percent of children under age 6 live in low-income families. Family stability, including financial stability, is critical to a young child's development. Asset building is a new term that refers to an array of services and resources that can help families take steps toward financial stability and provide protection during tough economic times. Because of their close relationships with families, Head Start providers can play an important role in connecting families to asset building services that will help them to achieve financial stability.

The ASSET Initiative is a collaborative effort led by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to bring the benefits of asset building to more low-income individuals and families. ACF's Assets for Independence (AFI) program and others have shown that combining asset building tools to alleviate poverty can yield significant, long-term results for families with young children.

Helping Families to Achieve Financial Stability

For Head Start providers, joining the ASSET Initiative might include:

- Partnering with a local AFI project—or applying to become an AFI grantee—to connect parents with financial education, credit repair assistance, and matched savings accounts called individual development accounts (IDAs).
- Offering financial education classes in the evenings on budgeting, saving, and other fundamentals of money management.
- Incorporating basic budgeting and other financial concepts into curricula for children, and developing exercises related to good financial management for parents and children to do together.
- Working with a local bank or credit union to help families open savings and checking accounts.
- Partnering with a local IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program site to connect parents with free tax preparation assistance. Connecting families to free tax preparation helps families not only to save on tax preparation costs, but also to ensure that they claim tax credits and deductions—especially the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).
- Distributing information to families on Federal and State programs that are available to help them. Online tools like Benefits.gov can help families to determine their eligibility for Federal and State benefits.
- Connecting your staff to the full range of asset building opportunities. Importantly, Head Start staff can use IDAs to save for tuition, as they seek to meet credential requirements.



Assets, Savings, Support, Education and Training
A Partnership to Encourage Asset Development

Successful Programs

These programs and others are highlighting the value of bringing financial education, IDAs, and other asset building strategies to families with young children:

Each April, **Bergen County Community Action Partnership (CAP)** in New Jersey celebrates Children's Banking Month with the 500 children and families in its Head Start program. Representatives from the CAP's own credit union visit the Head Start sites and go to parent meetings to encourage parents to open accounts for their kids. Throughout the year, parents participate in screening for public benefits eligibility, financial education, and free tax preparation. For more information about Bergen County CAP, visit www.bergencap.org.

In Michigan, the **Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency**, an AFI grantee since 2007, participated in a national demonstration of children's savings accounts. Nearly 500 Head Start students opened college savings accounts offered by the Michigan Education Savings Program. Oakland Livingston, a community action agency serving 11 counties, offers financial education, tax assistance, and other asset building services, in addition to IDAs. For more information, please visit www.olhsa.org.

Partners, Resources, and Funders

- Assets for Independence grantees and their partners
- Banks and credit unions
- Child care providers, associations, and referral networks
- Child support offices
- City and county governments, and public housing agencies
- Colleges, community colleges, and other schools providing child care certification and small business training
- Community Action Agencies
- Family strengthening coalitions and collaboratives
- Fatherhood programs
- State and Tribal Head Start administrators
- State Head Start offices, Head Start centers and associations of providers
- Tax assistance campaigns
- United Ways
- Workforce agencies and employment and training providers



Fundamental Asset Building Strategies

The ASSET Initiative features the following six key strategies:

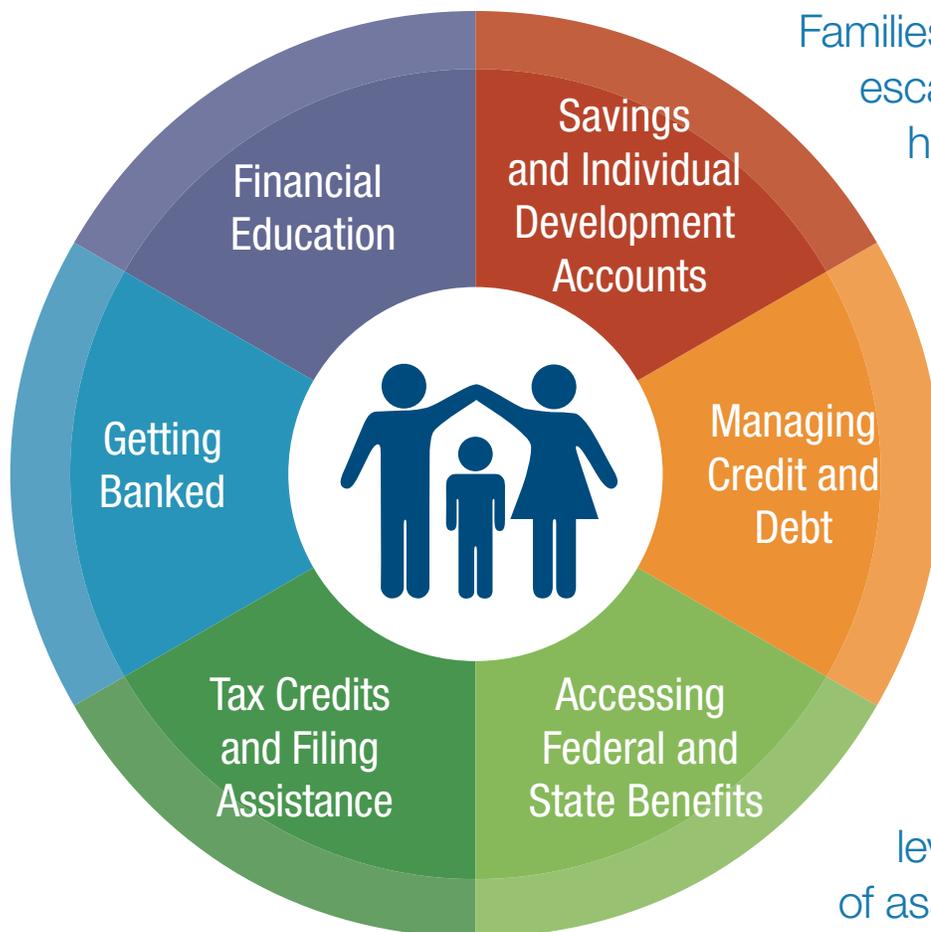
- Financial Education
- Savings and Individual Development Accounts
- Getting Banked
- Managing Credit and Debt
- Tax Credits and Filing Assistance
- Accessing Federal and State Benefits

Contact the AFI Resource Center to talk with an asset building specialist about strategies for bringing asset building to the families you serve.

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Six Fundamental Asset Building Strategies



Families stand a better chance of escaping poverty if they know how to use their financial resources effectively and grow their assets over time.

The ASSET Initiative brings together Administration for Children and Families offices and their partner agencies and organizations at the State and community levels to extend the benefits of asset building services to more individuals and families across the nation.

The ASSET Initiative features six key strategies your organization can use to bring asset building services to individuals and families.

1 Financial Education

Give families information and skills to make sound decisions about savings, debt, budgeting, and more.

2 Savings and Individual Development Accounts

Encourage savings, especially using Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) that match every deposit.

3 Getting Banked

Connect families to mainstream financial products, helping them to secure their savings and to avoid fees for cashing checks and paying bills.

4 Managing Credit and Debt

Help families face challenges related to debt and credit, and use credit wisely.

5 Tax Credits and Tax Filing Assistance

Ensure that eligible families benefit from available tax credits, especially the Earned Income Tax Credit.

6 Accessing Federal and State Benefits

Refer families to the full range of Federal and State programs that are available to help them.

To learn more about how these strategies are being implemented, visit www.IDAresources.org and click on the Asset Initiative icon. Contact the Administration for Children and Families Assets for Independence (AFI) Resource Center for information on bringing asset building to the families you serve.