Examples of Recommended Practices for Increasing Student Parent Success

This is a list of actual practices from two- and four-year colleges and universities across the country.

Included in this document are examples of: **a. direct student parent programming and supports**; **b. institutional supports and policies**; and **c. community connections**.

High Impact Practices:

1) <u>**Collect, track, compare and report**</u> on the demographics and academic progress of student parents, including transfer and returning students.

2) <u>**Give students opportunities to disclose parental status**</u> after or before admission.

3) <u>**Convene a task force**</u> to assess and plan; use the *Family Friendly Campus Toolkit.*

4) <u>**Provide a caring, trained staff person**</u> (with access to resources) responsible for meeting student parent needs.

5) <u>**Make student parents a designated at-risk group;**</u> establish programs and programming similar to those for other at-risk populations.

6) <u>**Offer on-campus child care options**</u> that are affordable, available, and of high quality.

7) <u>**Provide a space and activities**</u> to reduce isolation among student parents.

8) <u>**Enact institutional policies**</u> that address barriers; ensure a clear policy and procedure for requesting (additional) accommodations that comply with Title IX requirements.

9) <u>**Publicize all supports, resources, and policies**</u> pertinent to student parents, including Title IX protections for pregnant and parenting students.

10) <u>**Find or be a high-level student parent champion.**</u>

"Every day is a battle… I wish there were more resources, accommodations, and recognition of student parents on campus."

Student parent

A. Direct Student Parent Programming and Supports

A.1. Overarching

Goals/Philosophy: Clear goals and philosophy behind services and programming for student parents raising dependent children and their families; multi-year strategic plan for student parent success.

Campus engagement: Encouragement and support for parenting students to engage with college life outside the classroom.

Programming self-evaluation: Method to track usage of services and attendance at program events; periodic administration of surveys; review of data every 1-2 years.

A.2. Basic Supports and Services

Publicity for existing services: Adequate publicity of services and other resources for parents through a variety of means on campus and online, including (e)mailings and separate webpages, so that all parents (continuing and new students) know about services, activities, and facilities available (on and off campus) and how to access them; information, including how to access information also provided to staff and faculty.

Staff: Trained, caring staff who are knowledgeable about student parent issues and needs, referral and public assistance eligibility requirement information, etc. provide services for this population (even if no separate office) and are known to students, staff, and faculty.

Center or office: Separate space, staff, and programming specifically for student parents such as those for other at-risk populations; space for private conversations, informal parent hang out area that includes nursing/ feeding/ changing/ play spaces and food; easily available informal social support from staff and peers, and needed referrals, counseling, and other help from professional staff; online spaces and arrangements to meet these needs virtually.

Support for most at-risk student parents: Special services for youngest, single, and other most at-risk student parents (least supported, most isolated and disconnected), and those most lacking in basic needs; "warm hand-off's" to service providers; extensive support, supervision, and tracking provided (wrap-around services).

Off-campus referrals: Case management model to actively help students navigate and negotiate public assistance and other services; personalized referrals and help with applications (and monitoring of outcomes) to off-campus resources, including providers of childcare, housing, health care, free food, mental health services, homeless shelters, domestic violence help, legal aid, etc.

Help navigating on-campus services: Referrals (and warm hand-offs) to other services on campus, including providers of academic support, financial aid, mental health services, child care, housing, campus safety, health, Title IX office, disability services, etc.; play advocacy role when necessary.

A.3. Other Types of Supports

Social supports: Opportunities and spaces on campus and online for student parents to build social capital with each other and to overcome stigma, including: family activities such as free meals at weekly lunches and/or monthly café nights with child care and speakers; celebration of student successes; peer-to-peer support groups (including online); parenting club.

Child care supports: CCAMPIS grant funding to provide quality child care and other supports; referrals for high quality early childhood education and other child care options on- and off-campus; free or low cost short term drop-in child care on campus; child care options during school vacation weeks; sick child options such as vetted on-campus student sitters; subsidized access to sitters; sitter social to meet student sitters; assistance with co-op babysitting arrangements among parents; weekly early evening drop-in child care; free child care at events on campus.

Academic supports: Staff member to help with or arrange accommodations with professors when needed; drop-in tutoring and academic advising available in convenient locations (including online) and at convenient times for parents; child-friendly study spaces in library; laptop and textbook loans; computer access in parenting center.

Financial supports: Staff member to help with obtaining all available institutional subsidies, information about scholarships, emergency grants and other resources; financial management workshops specifically for parents at convenient time and place; birthday closet with free presents for children; holiday program with family gifts donated by staff and faculty.

Mental health and life skills supports: Staff and others to help with identifying and meeting mental health needs, formally and informally, on- and off- campus and online, including sessions at parenting center; couples counseling; support groups; life skills workshops and classes including time management and financial management skills, study skills, etc.

Future employment supports: Mentoring specifically for student parents; priority for parents for high-quality on-campus work study jobs and internships (to help with time poverty) designed to build meaningful work experience; easy access to career advising; leadership development opportunities in convenient places and times.

Other family-friendly and child-related supports: Backpacks with learning and fun activities available when children need to come to class with parent; "family friendly" check box included on event information and family-friendly events tagged to show up in searches; free childcare at campus events and some events open to children; activities specifically for families or just for children of students, such as holiday activities, family movie nights, tutoring for older children while parents in other sponsored activities; activities especially to help children of 1st gen students feel comfortable on a college campus.

New parent and parenting education supports: Parenting information, workshops, classes, other parenting help; specific support for parents of children with disabilities; expectant parent workshops and information, new parent welcome bags.

Support for transition to college: Student parent orientation sessions; summer/winter transition program for transfer students who are parents; classes and workshops specifically for student parents new to college.

Advocacy: Support for students to advocate for needs as parents; staff/faculty advocacy for student parent needs; awareness-raising events with student parent panels on strengths and challenges, with policymakers invited.

B. Institutional Supports and Policies

B.1. Overarching

Program champion: Program champion with political clout on campus who proactively advocates for student parents.

Status recognition: Recognition of student parents as an "at risk" population with low completion rates and unique barriers and experiences of stigma.

Student inclusion in decision-making: Student parent representation in meetings, committees, decisions etc. that relate to their issues; support and education for student parents to take on advocacy roles on their own behalf.

Broad involvement and collaboration: Broad-based campus-wide task force concerning and including student parents; communication between campus providers of services to student parents, including childcare providers, academic support, student services, financial aid, mental health services, residence life, Title IX office, parent-run organizations, TRIO office, women's center, veterans, commuter, transfer, adult student service providers, etc.

Funding for services, programming, other needs: Funding for student parent services, programming, targeted scholarships, emergency grants, child care, housing, and other needs provided from: institutional sources, student fees, residence life, institutional fundraising events and efforts, alumni donations, grant applications to CCAMPIS, Perkins Act, national or local foundations and businesses. (CCAMPIS funding can pay for a variety of support services in addition to child care.)

B.2. Identification and Data Collection

Identification of individual student parents: Contact information available from FAFSA data or other sources, or useful information sent to individual students with dependent children by Financial Aid or other office; self-identification requested on acceptance forms, applications, or when register for classes, etc.; fee reduction/waiver to incentivize reporting dependents.

Institutional data collection and reporting: Data points on basic information about student parents, including transfer students, collected and provided, such as: enrollment, demographics, persistence and completion rates, time to graduation, ages of children, etc., and annual reports on student parent outcomes.

B.3. Ensuring Equal Access

Administrative responsiveness to student parent needs: Clear point person for requesting needed accommodations; responsive and often proactive administrative offices around the needs of student parents.

Targeted academic policies and goals: Institutional policies that comply with Title IX requirements and deliberately and specifically support student parents, such as: priority registration (like athletes often have), accommodation for sick children in absence policies, flexible course options, ability to obtain full-time privileges when unable to take full load, etc.; information about family friendly policies required on syllabi; institutional goal to ensure student parents are retained and graduate at rates comparable to similar non-parenting students.

Access to services: Advising, mental health, academic and career counseling, and other services occasionally available during times and at locations more easily accessible to student parents; videoconference options.

Available, affordable and accessible on-campus childcare: On campus, available and affordable quality child care (subsidized) for undergraduate student parents, during the day and evening.

Policies about children on campus and in classrooms: Clear policy welcoming children on campus with reasons for any restrictions clearly explained; clear policy about children in classrooms and ways to flexibly accommodate occasional need to bring children to class.

Family-friendly spaces: Spaces on campus where parents feel comfortable bringing their children as well as spaces specifically for parent and family interaction; child-friendly study spaces in library; child care at gym; playgrounds on campus, etc.

Access to lactation, diaper-changing spaces: Adequate and conveniently located lactation and diaper-changing spaces; requirement that all new building or bathroom renovation projects include high quality diaper changing stations and lactation spaces.

Affordable family housing: Affordable family housing available to undergraduate and graduate student parents; housing priority for families with children if family housing available.

Meal plans for children: Free or subsidized meal plans for children on campus.

B.4. Increasing Awareness

Title IX awareness and enforcement: Clear information for all pregnant and parenting students about their rights under Title IX, training for all faculty and staff on the legal protections and requirements of Title IX regarding pregnant and parenting students.

Faculty and staff awareness and training: Efforts to make faculty and staff aware of relevant institutional policies, and the strengths, needs, and barriers faced by student parents, including through public forums with student parents; specific training in student parent issues especially for advising and counseling departments and during training on other topics; "I support student parents" stickers for office doors; information to help staff and faculty refer student parents for services.

Visible presence of student parents: Visible presence of student parents on social and other media including marketing materials; student parent family graduation activities.

C. Community Connections

C.1. Overarching

Off-campus partnerships: Formal or informal relationships and collaborations with organizations outside of the institution, such as: public assistance agencies, healthcare agencies, Head Start and other child care providers, United Way, food assistance organizations, low-income housing providers, etc.

Community activities and resources information: Information about free and inexpensive off-campus, family-friendly events and resources.

Leadership development: Connections to targeted mentorship programs for student parents, as mentees and mentors and other leadership opportunities that fit with tight schedules.

Outreach to other parents: Outreach to young parents (in high schools and elsewhere) to provide mentoring, inspiration, and recruiting for college.

Connection to other student parent programs: Attendance at annual Student Parent Support Symposium (SPSS); participation in IWPR Student Parent Policy Working Group calls; awareness of and participation in current initiatives in the field of student parent/two generation supports, including Ascend at the Aspen Institute.

State and federal agency advocacy: Advocacy activities, led by or involving students, with state and federal representatives concerning student parent issues, programs, financial and other supports, and other legislative changes that would impact student parents; coalition membership to advocate for public policy changes.

This Examples of Recommended Practices document is available as a separate download at the Toolkit website.

Program Evaluation & Research Group (PERG) at
Endicott College

familyfriendlycampustoolkit.endicott.edu