

Prototype Campus Initiatives for Student-Parent Success



CREATE CAMPUS-BASED FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS



PROTOTYPE

This prototype proposes a one-stop shop on campus for student-parents seeking resources for themselves and their children, because these resources often exist in silos and are difficult to find. The space would offer private areas for pumping and nursing, stocked diaper-changing areas, and a fridge and running water. Additionally, specifically trained staff would be present to provide information about on- and off-campus resources, especially those that are pertinent to student-parents.



EARLY IMPLEMENTATION

Early implementation steps would include establishing cross-functional groups to explore and define resource center roles and responsibilities. Group members would both take inventory of existing family resource centers and consider measurable outcomes through a literature review. Models like Endicott College serve as a strong framework through its [Family Friendly Campus Toolkit](#). In addition to existing frameworks, groups would need to review state mandates impacting the creation of resource centers and establish financial feasibility and return on investment.



CONSIDERATIONS

Institutional stakeholders should consider the potential risks associated with student-parent resource centers. Offices of risk management need to ensure that policy reflects the presence of families on campus. Liability must be clearly stated, particularly around safety, facilities, licensing, and state regulations. Campus police need to have a defined role and be provided guidelines as to what they can and should do in these spaces.

These one-stop resource centers are not without barriers. Institutions may want to consider leveraging partnerships (MOUs) for funding the centers and their resources. Establishing the centers requires physical space, which may be difficult to find on some campuses. It also requires buy-in—from administration, faculty, and staff—to make the case for student-parent needs in an already crowded arena of other needs in higher education. Data will likely be requested to determine need, which requires time and resources to collect and analyze information.

The barriers, however, are manageable. Institutions can start with toolkits, surveys and focus groups, and smaller-scale resources for student-parents. This could be a drawer with supplies in the campus food pantry or support groups through student life or counseling centers. “Kid Krates” filled with coloring sheets could be available for departments to borrow as needed.



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MOBILIZE A NATIONAL STUDENT-PARENT COALITION



PROTOTYPE

This prototype would promote greater coordination, resource sharing, and mobilization of student-parent resource groups. Similar to the Student Veterans of America (SVA) model, the National Student-Parent Coalition (NSPC) would have a national conference and campus chapters. NSPC would also expand a community of practice and collaborate with other professional and academic organizations to drive positive change for student-parents.



EARLY IMPLEMENTATION

Early implementation steps would include taking inventory of similar organizations that already exist, analyzing the landscape of current student-parent initiatives, and finding potential backers. Additionally, institutional stakeholders could reach out to relevant groups to build relationships and leverage upcoming events to plant the seeds for a coalition (e.g., Grantmakers for Education Conference, ACE Salon Dinner, and HOPE 2025). This could include state coalitions, chambers of commerce, and other student organizations with strong models of advocacy.



CONSIDERATIONS

Mobilizing an NSPC in the current era of federal restructuring poses some risk. Stakeholders should consider the impact of these federal changes, particularly with respect to the sustainability of programs like the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Community Development Block Grant Program. There is also some risk of not being able to generate compelling interest from stakeholders. Focus should be on developing backup plans and leveraging relationships with key intermediaries such as EdTrust, Generation Hope, and New America. Those involved could use the uncertainty about current changes in federal agencies as the driving factor in developing the NSPC.

A national coalition would still potentially face its own set of barriers. While the scope would be national, the work for the coalition would be localized and needs to be run as such. Additionally, institutions may need to see data and potential return on investment to buy into the concept. Institutional stakeholders may want to leverage learning management systems to push out information and create an on-campus community.

The barriers are controllable through leveraging New America's already existing *initiative* with 250 members. This group can provide a basis for a national coalition, addressing the initial rallying of support and finding advocates for this topic. Institutions could potentially offer training so that more people are equipped to support student-parents. Additionally—by connecting with advocacy groups working on childcare access and workforce development—institutions can learn about existing best practices and research to help support these students.

SCHEDULING FOR STUDENT-PARENT SUCCESS



PROTOTYPE

This prototype would offer more flexible school schedules and modalities that better align with student-parents' needs. Annual scheduling will help student-parents plan daycare and jobs around their courses without having to change semester by semester, and a mixture of modalities will allow more students to take more credits and improve attendance.



EARLY IMPLEMENTATION

Early implementation steps would include building a community of practice of colleges that have adjusted schedules as well as colleges that seek to implement them. This could also include securing mobilizing support from national and faculty organizations to promote the concept. Institutions should identify programs that can be completed fully online or in the evening and create block scheduling for common majors of parenting students. They should also examine already existing programs, such as orientations and advising tailored to student-parents (see [NOVA](#)).



CONSIDERATIONS

In creating a system conducive to student-parents, institutions would also need to develop methods of evaluation and track impact to share with leadership and other institutions. Institutions need to consider the most effective ways to collect student-parent input—whether it be through surveys or through other means.

Institutions would need to consider broad logistical details to successfully implement a system of scheduling that supports student-parents. This could begin by considering the timing and modalities (e.g., hybrid, in person, online) of the courses themselves, aligning the course schedules with K–12 timing, or creating predictable time blocks of courses. The [ADVANCE](#) program partnership between Northern Virginia Community College and George Mason University—while not directly tailored to student-parents—provides a strong model for defined course pathways with personalized advising and resources. Equitable and inclusive scheduling of clinical rotations should be considered for pre-health majors.

Scheduling for student-parent success is part of a larger notion of accessibility for these students. Beyond courses, institutions should consider making resource offices available online and encourage online students to utilize campus resources. One way to ensure student-parents are aware of resources and are progressing in their classes is through mandatory academic advising. Services like ChildWatch or family and friend networks could be particularly helpful for K–12 breaks.

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For additional information about helping student-parents on campus, contact the American Council on Education (ACE) at research@acenet.edu.

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