



# Supporting Caregiving Students in Colorado

CDHE Policy Fellows

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# Who are parents/caregivers in Higher Ed?

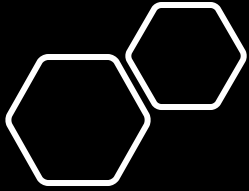
- 3.8 million college students are parenting
- 70% mothers (most single)
- 22% undergraduates are parents
  - majority in community colleges
- More likely to be students of color
- Nearly 2x the student loan debt
- Despite challenges, college student parents tend to achieve higher GPAs

**TABLE 4. Disparities in Basic Needs Insecurities by Student Experience Among Tribal College and University Survey Respondents**

	Number of Students	Food Insecurity (%)	Housing Insecurity (%)	Homelessness (%)
<b>Parenting Student</b>				
Yes	425	66	78	26
No	528	58	62	32
<b>Student has Been in Foster Care</b>				
Yes	94	78	86	41
No	772	60	67	28
<b>Student Served in the Military</b>				
Yes	30	57	73	33
No	850	62	69	30
<b>Student is a Returning Citizen</b>				
Yes	114	70	81	37
No	757	61	67	27

Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey

Notes: "Returning citizen" in this report refers to a student who was convicted of a crime, some of whom were previously incarcerated. The Number of Students column indicates the number of survey respondents to our measure of homelessness. The number of survey respondents for our measures of food insecurity and housing insecurity may vary slightly. For more details on how each measure of basic needs insecurity was constructed, see [web appendices](#).



# Who are most vulnerable and who else is caregiving?

## Single Parents in Higher Education

- Single parents more likely to hold some credit but no degree
  - Single mothers, Black, and Indigenous parents
  - Significant intersectional challenges

## Other Caregivers in Higher Education

- Young adult caregivers make up between 12% -18%
- Women most often provide care
  - Most caring for female relative, most often grandmother
- LGBTQIA+ community become caregivers at a slightly higher rate
- Only a fraction receive compensation
  - many also work part-time

# Mental Health & Caregiving

## **Circumstances Impacting Mental Health**

- College student caregivers are managing multiple, complex responsibilities
  - Coursework/expectations
  - Employment
  - Caregiving
- High basic need insecurities
- Inflexible academic/financial aid policies

## **Mental Health Impacts of Caregiving**

- College student caregivers have increased psychiatric distress, including:
  - Depression
  - Struggle with school/work/life balance
  - Higher levels of substance abuse
  - Feelings of isolation and not belonging

***Covid-19 exacerbated all these issues!***

# Higher Education Programs Supporting Student Caregivers

Successful programs for student caregivers provide:

- Financial support / scholarships
- Care for dependents
- Housing
- Social/Emotional/Institutional Support

Additional support offered by institutions:

- Connection to community resources
- Caregiving guidance

# Recommendations to Support Student Caregivers in Colorado

- **Caregiver-friendly Campuses:**

- Visibility of student parents on campus and in promotional materials
- Lactation rooms, changing tables, diapers, child-friendly spaces (dining facilities, open space).
- Flexible scheduling: Class times, breaks.
- More Family Housing.
- Dependent care on student health insurance.

- **More Accessible and Affordable Childcare:**

- Expand campus day care services – extended hours, more spaces, drop-in services, child friendly spaces to rent (ex: for babysitting co-ops).
- Partnerships with local organizations (Ex: Head Start, Child Care Council, Generation Hope) to help with affordability.

- **Create Office Specifically for Caregiver Student Supports:**

- Train staff on the unique stressors of student caregivers
- Create codified policies and procedures for students to request formal accommodations
- Advocacy groups and support services (similar to disability services)
- Workshops, counsellors, and support groups for caregiver population (Ex: [Ivy Tech](#))
- Website of resources for caregiver parents (Ex: [Hunger Free campus](#) checklist)



# Inclusive Policy Considerations

- Individuals over the age of 65 will double in the next 2 years – There will be more caregivers needed and number of caregivers will increase
- Health Care Access and Affordability – Many student healthcare plans don't allow for dependent care
- LGBTQIA+ community is more likely to become caregivers – policy that takes this into consideration
- Care for children with disabilities, health problems, or behavior problems
- Strengthen Scholarship and Grant programs to support 1st generation and caregiving students
- Intersectionality of student caregiver experiences and barriers



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