

# PARENTING AND POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

## Insights and Recommendations from Georgia's Student Parents



Nearly one in five undergraduate students in the U.S. is also a parent, yet higher education systems often overlook their unique needs. In Georgia, child care shortages, rigid academic structures, and insufficient wraparound supports create substantial barriers to completion. These challenges are not only personal but statewide in impact—child care issues alone result in career and education disruptions that cost Georgia \$2.52 billion in lost economic activity annually.

In 2025, GEEARS conducted focus groups with 31 student parents and interviews with seven higher education professionals from across Georgia. This research provides a comprehensive look at the barriers student parents face, their preferences for support, and recommendations for action at the institutional, state, and federal levels.

### Student Parents Face Unique and Compounding Challenges



**Time Constraints** – Balancing academics, caregiving, and employment often forces trade-offs that hinder degree progress and academic performance.



**Mental Health Strain** – Overlapping demands contribute to stress, burnout, and feelings of inadequacy.



**Negative Campus Interactions** – Policies and cultural norms often overlook parenting students, making them feel invisible.



**Lack of Affordable, Reliable Child Care** – High costs, long waitlists, and limited options often prevent student parents from accessing child care.



I don't feel as a student parent seen or heard at school.

Georgia Student Parent



I can't attend [school] if I don't have child care.

Georgia Student Parent

### What Student Parents Value



**Child Care Assistance** – Student parents emphasized the need for financial and programmatic supports, such as Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program and Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools (CCAMPIS), to help them access reliable care.



**Accessible Child Care** – Beyond financial help, student parents expressed strong preferences for the types of care that fit their lives, including on-campus child care options, nontraditional hour care, and drop-in care.



Knowing he's cared for and thriving gives me the peace of mind to stay committed to my academic and career goals.

Georgia Student Parent



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## What Student Parents Value (Continued)



**Academic Flexibility** – Student parents underscored that online and hybrid options, flexible deadlines, and understanding faculty support academic success and improve retention.



**Wraparound Services** – Families said convenient housing (e.g., on-campus family housing), reliable transportation, and targeted financial aid were critical to meeting their needs.



**Family-Friendly Campuses** – Dedicated facilities (e.g., lactation rooms, play areas), peer support groups, and inclusive events foster belonging, student parents indicated.



**Integrated Resource Access** – Parents reported that centralized information, proactive advising, and cross-departmental coordination would help them navigate supports.

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**If I had access [to on-campus housing], I would feel included.**

**Georgia Student Parent**

## Recommendations

### For State & Federal Policymakers

- **Expand access to high-quality, affordable child care** by increasing funding for key early childhood programs, including CAPS (federally funded through the Child Care and Development Block Grant), CCAMPIS, and Head Start.
- Ensure colleges and universities **collect and report data** on student parents, including key outcomes (e.g., graduation rates).
- **Bolster financial aid** (e.g., Pell Grants) to better support student parents.
- **Align supports by improving coordination between agencies** tasked with supporting higher education (e.g., University System of Georgia) and agencies tasked with supporting young children (e.g., DECAL).
- Implement policies for publicly funded programs (e.g., CAPS) that **minimize disruptions to participating families** (e.g., extending eligibility periods).

### For Higher Education

- **Invest in child care access** via on-campus facilities or nearby provider partnerships.
- **Increase visibility of resources** with centralized, accessible information and targeted outreach.
- **Foster family-friendly campuses** through dedicated facilities, events, and support groups.
- **Offer wraparound supports** such as family housing, transit vouchers, and public benefit navigation.
- **Promote academic flexibility** by instituting varied class times, online/hybrid formats, and flexible requirements.
- **Provide professional development to higher education staff** on student parents' needs, available supports, and inclusive practices.
- **Elevate student parent voices** via advisory boards and regular feedback integration.

Student parents' success **benefits Georgia's economy, communities, and the next generation.** With targeted investments and intentional inclusion, **Georgia can transform higher education into a system that works for student parents**—creating ripple effects of opportunity and stability across the state.

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**If you can really invest in the parents...you're better able to provide for your kids so that they don't have to face the problems you're facing.**

**Georgia Student Parent**

To read the full report, go to  
[bit.ly/GAstudentparent](https://bit.ly/GAstudentparent).



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