

Rights & Resources for Graduate Families Minutes

Carolyn Pratt Van Wyck, GEU 2015 Contract Team Co-Chief Negotiator

In our last bargaining session the administration tried to not pay for dependent care, and lower tuition waiver to three credits, 0% pay increase. Despite this we got good deductibles and out of pocket maximum, sick leave, and pregnancy leave does, 9-9-5 tuition waiver, and pay raises every year. We also significantly lowered the premiums for dependent health care. [See more about our contract here.](#)

We also offer member only benefits like [solidarity grant](#), [local discounts](#) and more.

Ashley Fuente, President of COGS

COGS broadly advocates for 11,500 graduate students

- [Handout for student parents](#)
- [Funding Opportunities](#)
 - Childcare grants \$500 opens next month for spring 2018.
 - Conference grants are also available
 - Grad student organization funding

Working with Kim at Student Parent Resource Center and Title 9 coordinator to get more info on website about protections for pregnant women. For example so they are not getting penalized for doctors appointments

Kim Steed- Page, Coordinator of Student Parent Resource Center

Spartan Village Community Center- service all students undergrads and grads living on and off campus.

- Wants to make sure faculty are aware of the title 9 policy- most faculty are unaware that pregnant students are protected and that the federal law trumps faculty syllabi.
- MSU no longer has women's resource center so this office fields these types of concerns. MSU used to have family resource center for MSU student parents and faculty and staff- unequally split money between two offices (this one and Work Life office)
- 2,000 students at MSU requesting financial aid and have dependent, does not include international students.

- Kim's office wants to hear needs of student parents- handout with contact info and resources.
- Back up MSU Dependent care- new pilot program. Previously had the backup & sick child care program- rolled into one program for well and sick children in work life office. You can register to receive 20 hours of back up in care home, available 24 hours a day 7 days per week. Students pay \$6 per hour (MSU covers 70% of \$23 per hour cost). Short term limited need.
- For this school year only, we secured through Mrs. B's daycare in Mason (8 miles from campus) 5 free days of childcare per child- can be scheduled up to two weeks in advance- Absolutely free for registered MSU Students. Infants through 12 years of age. This is on year to year funding, we would love to see MSU make this an annual part of the budget- Kim is looking for student stories to help advocate for this.
- Pre-finals childcare Saturday December 2, & December 9 9am-4pm, free childcare & lunch provided at People's Church Preschool on Grand River. Need to call to RSVP- \$10 deposit will be returned. For infants through 10 years old (restrictions because of licensing). Student Parent Resource Center will put out flyers to list serve when ready.

Matt Helm, Graduate Student Wellness

- Can be reached at helmmatt@msu.edu
- He completed his full PhD with two children and a third one on the way- understands the challenges of being a student parent.
- He designed this office around helping students in all aspects, built around the 6 dimensions of wellness. For example in mental/emotional aspect there is mindfulness meditation workshops filled 3 hours 50 spots, so he is putting together another one. Trying to be flexible to meet needs of scheduling with parents. Also there are recreation and fitness classes sponsored by his office and Rec & Fitness services- in order to get this he did an assessment of graduate student needs. Also has health and wellness programs for stress management. His vision is you can go through your program and be a parent and still be well- wants to put in supports for this. Also he brings data to leaders on campus about how they can help with this. He also runs a leadership summit/fellows program- put a highly trained fellow to connect students with programs. Applications are open right now, fellows have paid stipends.
- **Brooke Stokdyk- Office of International Students and Scholars**
- Can be reached at stokdyk@msu.edu

- Family Health Insurance Award Program (FHIAP) for international students who have non-US-Citizen dependents in need of health insurance. We also offer assistance with health care system navigation/troubleshooting, visa advising for dependent family members, and one of our community groups even offers a scholarship program for the spouses of MSU international students.

Questions

How would you get information about how many international students have families?

- **Kim-** A lot of international students live on campus so we are close to them, and I know who lives in our buildings. We also work closer with OISS & COGS to attend and participate in activities that international student families might attend. We also have a registered Student Organization. We have interns that help us with outreach. We have met with admissions to get this data. I already know of many more than I did last year. We still have limitations about who we can help due to the requirement to be under 133% above the poverty line. Kim reports back to Student affairs about what students are asking for.

Carolyn, you mentioned sick days for TAs?

- The contract allows for up to 2 months of paid sick leave. See article 18 section 1 of the [contract](#).

I. Medical Leave

- In the event an Employee is unable to meet employment obligations because of illness, injury, pregnancy, or childbirth, the Employee will, when possible, notify the appropriate immediate supervisor (or employing unit designee) as promptly as possible so that arrangements for the absence can be made by the employing unit.
- During a medical leave, the employing unit shall adjust (reduce, waive or reschedule) the Employee's duties as those duties and his/her physical circumstances reasonably dictate. If total absence from duties becomes necessary and the Employee is still enrolled, the employing unit shall maintain the stipend of the appointment provided for a period of two (2) months or to the end of the appointment period, whichever occurs first. Additional unpaid leave may be arranged on an ad hoc basis.

- C. The Employee shall have the right to return to employment, provided there is no medical dispute, within the dates of the current appointment, at such time as he/she is able to resume duties.

- Not specific about whether or not this is for caring for sick children (Faculty members don't know that)- so you can usually work with your faculty member to work this out. If this becomes a problem, talk to the Union. One thing parents in my department do is post online and ask if anyone can cover their sections- just one informal way to go about it.

What about other forms of caretakers (like for parents/siblings)?

- Kim: would like to add/encourage these folks to connect to her office to help connect to local support groups. Important respite piece for emotional/mental health & well being. Not just one more thing to add to your schedule. May also be specific programming/benefits for folks with special needs/ disabilities. Don't let the name be a deterrent, she will still connect you to community/campus resources. Also eligible for MSU Backup Dependent Care. Also, let us know if this is too restrictive!
- Carolyn: Mental illness caretakers- National Alliance on Mental Illness runs course called Family to Family to support on this. They also run a variety of support groups.
- Matt: Employee Assistance Program (Carolyn says it's great and gets people in faster than the counseling services) & Health for You does workshops on dependent care- free to graduate employees. Also counselors. Matt's office can also help direct people to resources.

One challenge is a lack of awareness about what resources are available for them. Is there a common place or starting point you would recommend for folks who have a variety of issues?

- Kim: Student parent resource center. Click on make an appointment link, virtual/phone appointments available as well, flexible schedule, evenings are available.
- Carolyn: Also GEU has available resources like solidarity grant, and we can listen to concerns and forms committees to tackle unresolved issues. In bargaining, administration didn't really take dependent care seriously, and made a comment that graduate students need to make difficult choices like whether or not having a family is more important than going to graduate school, and not putting meat in their spaghetti sauce. A lot of it just requires knowing what

matters to y'all, like affordable housing, and having impacted folks be active one the issue.

- Matt talked about work life intelligence and how this ignited a capacity he had no idea was there- to pushback on faculty etc. For example, "What do I need to do to pass this class (not get an A), asking do I really need to do that?" He can offer discussion about this. If you want the institution to move then you need to push on certain people with data- that's how Chittenden call came to be. He encourages you to do research, administration pays attention to retention/attrition and time to degree.

One big concern is vagueness in contract around childcare/maternity leaves.

Missed Carolyn's explanation- will follow up with her for response, but overall yes it needs to be strengthened. FMLA does not apply if you haven't been here 12 months and worked the required hours