

Assembly Bill 2881: Public Postsecondary Education Implementation Guidance for Students with Dependent Children

BACKGROUND

Assembly [Bill 2881](#) *requires* the California State University system and each community college district, and *requests* the University of California to provide priority registration and resource information for students with minor dependents, also often referred to as *student parents*, *parenting students* or *pregnant and parenting students*.

Although participation by the University of California (UC) is framed only as a request by the state, the following guidance has been developed by the University of California Office of the President (UCOP) to aid UC campuses with implementing the items in the bill. In some instances, the bill items below are already in place and/or in the process of being implemented. Each campus is responsible for appointing appropriate staff to implement this legislation. Please see appendices for bill text, context and resources. Appendix I provides a description of required statewide programs and Appendix II offers resources for implementation.

PARENTING STUDENT NEEDS AND CIRCUMSTANCES

Nationally, student parents comprise 20 percent of students in higher education. They typically earn higher average GPAs than nonparenting students.¹ Yet, across the nation, these students are nearly twice as likely to drop out after six years with no degree.² In addition, parenting students face higher basic needs costs, take on more debt and are more likely to be members of underrepresented ethnic populations. Seventy percent of student parents in the United States live at or near the poverty line and seventy percent are mothers.^{1,3}

Several UC campuses have shown leadership in supporting student parents by providing priority registration and access to critical resources and services for their unique needs. In 2019, UC released the report [Parenting Students' Experiences and Challenges at UC](#), highlighting the needs of parenting students. The four bill items outlined in AB 2881 reaffirm UC's commitment to supporting student parents as an underserved student population and bolster continued improvement in areas such as data collection, support for persistence and graduation goals and greater access to resource information.

BILL ITEM 1: PRIORITY REGISTRATION FOR PARENTING STUDENTS

For the purposes of this section, the California legislature defines a *student parent* as one who has a minor-aged dependent (a child or children under 18 years of age) who will receive more than half of their support from that parent. Due to equity considerations associated with using financial support as the sole determining factor, UCOP recommends that campuses use an expanded definition of student parent, as outlined by leading researchers and policy scholars. Please see Appendix II for resources and considerations for using a more expansive definition.

¹ [Parents in College by the Numbers](#)

² [Busy With Purpose](#)

³ [Supporting Student Parent Recovery through State Policy — IWPR](#)

Each UC campus is requested by the California legislature to grant priority registration to student parents by July 1, 2023. Each campus is encouraged to use information from any of the following sources to help determine a student parent's eligibility for priority registration:

- (a) Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- (b) California Dream Act Application (CADAA)
- (c) The application to receive a fee waiver⁴
- (d) Any campus form or documentation that identifies student parents (See Appendix II for resources)

Note: UCOP encourages campus representatives to collaborate with campus programs to identify sources of data that verify student parent status. Campuses are further encouraged to provide opportunities at least twice per year for these students to self-identify or to opt out, as parenting status can change (See Appendix II for resources).

Please check with your campus privacy experts or legal teams to determine whether a student's consent is necessary for sharing or linking data with the registrar for priority enrollment purposes. Campuses may also consider updating relevant applications to allow student parents to self-identify and to provide verifying documentation. Alternative documentation will be particularly important for graduate students, who may be less likely than undergraduates to file the FAFSA or CADAA and more likely to have minor dependents.

BILL ITEM 2: RESOURCE INFORMATION AT UC ORIENTATIONS

As part of campus orientations, each UC campus is requested by the California legislature to provide all incoming students with information and eligibility requirements for the programs below, as well as the student parent web page link (see Bill Item 4 and Appendix II for resources). UCOP recommends that campuses enlist the subject matter expertise of their basic needs and student parents/students with dependents programs to complete this task.

- (a) CalFresh
- (b) California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC) (Section 17052 of the Revenue and Taxation Code)
- (c) Young Child Tax Credit (YCTC) (Section 17052.1 of the Revenue and Taxation Code)
- (d) California Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

UCOP ALSO RECOMMENDS THAT CALFRESH EXEMPTIONS FOR STUDENT PARENTS BE EMPHASIZED IN ORIENTATIONS DESIGNED FOR THEM.

BILL ITEM 3: RESOURCE INFORMATION ON STUDENTS' WEBSITE-BASED STUDENT ACCOUNTS

Each UC campus is requested by the California legislature to include, on students' individual web accounts, a notice about the public services and programs listed below, along with a functioning link to

⁴ At UC, this is the undergraduate application fee waiver form.

each. (See Appendix II for resources). UCOP recommends that campuses enlist the subject matter expertise of basic needs and student parent or students with dependents programs to complete this task. The programs are as follows:

- (a) CalFresh
- (b) Resources as determined by the institution to be most appropriate for county or local housing services, which may also include housing-related legal assistance, when deemed appropriate, for the geographic area where the institution is located.
- (c) Resources, as determined by the institution to be most appropriate for county or local mental health services
- (d) The California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC) (Section 17052 of the Revenue and Taxation Code)
- (e) The Young Child Tax Credit (YCTC) (Section 17052.1 of the Revenue and Taxation Code)
- (f) The California Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

UCOP recommends that CalFresh exemptions for student parents be emphasized in the resource information on identified student parents' web-based accounts.

BILL ITEM 4: STUDENT PARENT WEBPAGE

Each UC campus is requested by the California legislature to do the following:

- (a) By no later than February 1, 2023, host a student parent web page that is clearly visible and easily accessible as a prominent link on the home page of the campus website. If possible, integrate this into a drop-down menu on the campus's main web page.
- (b) Campuses also must **prominently feature** the information described below on both the website of the campus, via the student parent web page, and on the web-based student account associated with their enrollment at the institution.
- (c) The student parent internet web page will present all relevant on- and off-campus services and resources, including, but not necessarily limited to, information on priority registration opportunities, CalFresh, CalEITC, YCTC and WIC. Required information on those resources includes the following in its entirety when applicable (see Appendix II for resources):
 - 1. The description of the service or resource
 - 2. The location where the service or resource is provided
 - 3. The point of contact for the service or resource, including a name, telephone number and email address
 - 4. Details about eligibility restrictions on using the service or resource
- (d) This parenting student link will be provided to students as part of campus orientation and to faculty to encourage them to include the link in their syllabi.
- (e) To ensure that the student parent web page remains useful to its intended audience, the page will be reviewed and updated no later than the first day of every fall and spring

semester or no later than the first day of every fall and spring quarter, and as necessary to reflect any significant changes in the law and policy.

UCOP recommends that campuses enlist the subject-matter expertise of basic needs and student parent or students with dependents programs to complete this task. When feasible, UCOP recommends that the CalFresh exemptions be emphasized in resource links on the student parent web page.

Appendix I: Description of Required Statewide Programs

CALFRESH

CalFresh, the California Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP), provides monthly allotments for program participants' use at grocers and designated vendors to purchase food. It is the single most effective food security program nationwide, decreasing food insecurity for college students and other recipients.^{5,6} Students are automatically disqualified from SNAP unless they meet specific exemptions, even after meeting citizenship and income tests. Student parents are provided unique exemptions, allowing this population to qualify for SNAP even when they do not meet other student exemptions.⁷ Lack of program awareness is a barrier to enrollment, while increased outreach around CalFresh can facilitate enrollment.⁸

CALIFORNIA EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT (CALEITC)

For low-income working adults in California, the CalEITC offers up to a \$3,147 in the form of a reduction in tax liability OR a refund ("cash back") as of 2023. CalEITC may also allow filers to qualify for the Young Child Tax Credit (YCTC).⁹ Refundable tax credits contribute to significant declines in adult and child poverty rates.¹⁰

YOUNG CHILD TAX CREDIT (YCTC)

The YCTC provides a credit of up to \$1,083 per 2023 tax return for California residents with a child under the age of 6 who also qualify for CalEITC.¹¹

THE CALIFORNIA SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC)

WIC provides food, specialized nutritional and breastfeeding support and other resources for low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women, as well as for fathers, guardians and foster parents caring for children under the age of six. Those who receive CalFresh are automatically income-eligible to receive WIC.

⁵ [SNAP Participation Decreases Food Insecurity among California Public University Students: A quasi-experimental Study](#)

⁶ [Chart Book: SNAP Helps Struggling Families Put Food on the Table | Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#)

⁷ [ACL 20-08 Student Handbook \(ca.gov\)](#)

⁸ [Helping College Students Get Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Facilitators of and Barriers to Students Accessing the Federal Nutrition Assistance Program - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

⁹ [CalEITC | FTB.ca.gov](#)

¹⁰ [The EITC and the CTC Give Temporary Income Boost to Low-Income Families — Columbia University Center on Poverty and Social Policy](#)

¹¹ [Young Child Tax Credit | FTB.ca.gov](#)

Appendix II: Resources to Support Implementation

RESOURCES FOR BILL ITEMS 1–4

This [toolkit](#) for AB 2881 implementation provided by the [Pregnant Scholar](#), the nation’s only legal resource center for parenting and pregnant students housed at the Center for Work Life Law at University of California College of the Law, San Francisco includes answers to frequently asked questions, best practices and website and communication tools.

The [Urban Institute](#) provides a specific suggestion for defining student parents, based on accumulated literature and policy reviews. This definition is as follows:

A parenting student is someone who is enrolled in any level of education or training and is concurrently responsible for (or imminently will be responsible for) providing for a child of any age. They may be a biological parent, stepparent, unmarried coparent, adoptive parent, foster parent, guardian, grandparent, extended family member or sibling caregiver.

Consistently defining a student parent/parenting student is essential for consistent data collection, providing targeted resource information, analyzing intersectional disparities, researching equity gaps and better understanding factors that affect persistence, retention and graduation rates.

RESOURCES FOR PARENTING STUDENTS’ PRIORITY REGISTRATION

Existing documentation on campuses will be instrumental in identifying student parents, though this list is not exhaustive. The legislation provides for the use of “other documentation” to identify student parents who are eligible for priority registration.

- a. Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- b. California Dream Act Application (CADAA)
- c. The application to receive a fee waiver¹²
- d. Undergraduate applicant records, beginning Fall 2021, when the applicant responded affirmatively to the statement: I have children
- e. The [Caregiver’s Authorization Affidavit](#) is authorized by Division 11 of the California Family Code to identify a family member authorized to enroll a minor in school and authorize medical care. This form may be used in reverse to support the identification of a parenting student when no other documentation exists.
- f. Documentation from campus student parents/students with dependents programs regarding students who have used or are currently using their services
- g. Documentation from a campus childcare center about students who have recently used or are currently using their services
- h. Any campus form or documentation that names student parents or parenting students

¹² At UC, this is the undergraduate application fee waiver form.

Campuses are encouraged to collaborate with other UC programs to find sources of data that verify student parent/parenting student status. Campuses are further encouraged to provide opportunities at least twice per year for parenting students to self-identify or to opt out, as parenting status can change.

Examples of self-identification opportunities are at course registration, at password resets and during regularly administered demographic and health-related surveys linked with unique student identification numbers.

Please check with your campus privacy experts or legal teams to determine whether a student parent’s consent is needed to share with or link to the registrar for priority enrollment. Campuses may also consider updating relevant applications to allow student parents to self-identify and to provide verifying documentation. Alternative documentation will be particularly important for graduate students, who may be less likely than undergraduates to file the FAFSA and CADAA and more likely to have minor dependents.

RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION ON STATEWIDE PROGRAMS

CALFRESH

Each campus is encouraged to engage with their basic needs centers about CalFresh outreach and resource links to ensure consistent messaging and to enlist staff members who have relevant expertise. The basic needs centers have years of experience with CalFresh outreach. You may also find useful the [CalFresh Student Handbook](#) and [policy guidance from the California Department of Social Services](#).

THE CALIFORNIA SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC)

The following materials are provided by WIC to assist with program outreach and education. Note that these materials might not be customized for the college student population.

1. [WIC communication and outreach materials](#)
2. [Direct email to order free outreach materials](#)
3. [Center for Healthy Communities at Chico State University plans to release a WIC toolkit for higher education programs](#)

CALIFORNIA EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT (CALEITC) AND YOUNG CHILD TAX CREDIT (YCTC)

The following eligibility and outreach materials are sourced directly from the California Franchise Tax Board (FTB). These supply the most accurate information on tax credits.

4. [CalEITC eligibility and credit information | FTB.ca.gov](https://ftb.ca.gov/eligibility)
5. [CalEITC and YCTC outreach materials | FTB.ca.gov](https://ftb.ca.gov/outreach)

VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE (VITA)

VITA is administered by The Internal Revenue Service and offers free basic tax preparation for low- and moderate-income taxpayers. The above link offers a search to find VITA programs that are local to your campus.