COLLEGE GUIDANCE - Montgomery College

Supporting Parenting Students

I. Purpose and Overview

A. Montgomery College is committed to creating a supportive environment for parenting students and fostering a culture of appropriate accommodations.

B. These guidelines do not replace any College policies or procedures which may apply to parenting students, including but not limited to, Policy 21003: Pregnancy and Pregnancy-Related Conditions and Policy 95005: Protection of Minors.

C. These guidelines apply to all parenting students, including students who are non-birth parents, adoptive or foster parents, stepparents and legal guardians, and students who have primary responsibility for the care of a sibling. For the purposes of these guidelines, "children" are defined as minors for whom the student has primary or shared caregiving responsibility.

D. Students requiring supports outside of these guidelines or who are experiencing issues receiving supports should contact the Dean of Student Affairs at any College location.

II. Academic Accommodations

A. Under Title IX protections and in accordance with Policy 21003: Pregnancy and Pregnancy-Related Conditions, students are entitled to protections and appropriate accommodations for the student's own pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions, including but not limited to the following:

1. Breaks during class to express breast milk, breastfeed, or attend to health needs associated with pregnancy or related conditions, including eating, drinking, or using the restroom.

   Lactation pods can be found at the following locations:
   Rockville campus – SC 189A
   Germantown campus – SA 191A
   TP/SS campus – CM 192A and CF 296A

2. Periodic/intermittent absences to attend the student's medical appointments.

3. Access to online courses when available and liberal permission to switch from in-person to online courses after published deadlines, when appropriate.

4. Reasonable changes in schedule or course sequence.

5. Time extensions for coursework and rescheduling of tests/examinations when a student cannot meet a course deadline or is absent due to medical necessity.

6. Changes in physical space or supplies, including allowing a student to keep water nearby.

B. While not explicitly protected, whenever possible, students should not incur academic penalties for caregiving emergencies, such as a child's illness or sudden loss of childcare, when they communicate with the instructor as soon as reasonably possible.

Consequently, common modifications considered best practice accommodations for parenting students may include the following, as applicable under the circumstances:

1. Excusing periodic/intermittent absences.

2. Providing reasonable alternatives and extensions for missing an examination or other academic requirement.

3. Permitting, on a limited and case-by-case basis, a student's child to accompany them to class or office hours when appropriate, consistent with Policy 95005: Protection of Minors and Section V of these guidelines.

III. Supportive Services

A. Family-friendly student spaces are available at the College libraries on all three campuses. Children are also welcome at the ECEC library area as long as they are accompanied by a parent or guardian and not disruptive to the learning environment.

B. Wellness Centers and food pantries at each location provide access to free child-friendly snacks, baby supplies, and other essentials.

C. Student parents may be eligible for government assistance programs. For assistance navigating support services and assistance programs, contact a Dean of Student Affairs or visit this webpage.

IV. Children at College Locations

In accordance with Policy 95005: Protection of Minors:

A. Children are welcome at College locations, including most buildings, such as libraries and student services centers. Children must be accompanied by a parent/guardian except when the minor is a registered student or participant in a College-sponsored program, course, or activity that provides its own supervision, such as the College's Youth Programs and Early Childhood Education lab school.

B. The parent/guardian is responsible for the supervision, safety, security, and well-being of the child and is responsible for any injuries to persons or damage to property caused by the child.

C. Children may accompany their parents/guardians to appointments at the College if necessary, including, but not limited to, advising and financial aid. Children are not allowed to accompany their parents/guardians to placement assessment testing.

V. Children in Instructional Environments

A. It is understood that students have complex lives and the College seeks to equitably support students. Understanding that students will make childcare arrangements for periods when they will be on site to attend class or participate in other academic requirements, the College recognizes that emergency situations, such as loss of childcare or a school closure, may require a student to bring a child to class provided that

the situation does not directly or indirectly interfere with other students' educational experience.

B. The student must first communicate with the instructor, who has the authority to deny the request if the environment of instruction would be unsafe or there is a compelling pedagogical reason to do so, for example, if the content of the class is such that the child's presence would be inappropriate or necessitate adjustment in content or delivery.

C. If the instructor does not grant permission for the child to be present, the student should not bring the child to, or should remove the child from, the classroom or environment of instruction.

D. Instructors should clearly communicate the circumstances under which students may bring their child to class, their preferred process for the request, the parameters under which they would deny the request or request the child be removed from the instructional environment, and any reasonable requirements associated with the child's ongoing presence. A recommended syllabus statement addressing these expectations is provided in Section VI.J below.

E. The recommended process for students bringing their child to class is:

1. Request: Student makes the request preferably before class by email.

2. Decision: The instructor considers safety, course activities, and impact on peers and notifies the student of their decision and, in the case of denials, the reason.

3. Conditions: Student sits near an exit, brings quiet activities, leaves if disruption occurs, and follows a make-up process.

4. Documentation: A brief note is entered in the course communication system, with no medical details.

F. If the instructor determines that there is a situational or pedagogical reason to deny a student's request to bring their child to class, consider offering alternative assignments for any missed content.

G. Even when permission would otherwise be granted, children are not permitted to attend classes held in natural science laboratories, any classroom with mechanical equipment, machinery, or power tools, on construction sites, in maintenance facilities, in food preparation areas, or in other areas where their presence constitutes a danger to themselves or others.

H. Children who have a contagious illness should not be brought to a learning environment.

VI. Inclusive Classroom Practices

Montgomery College values the diversity and inclusion of all students, including parenting students. While the following best practices are framed around supporting parenting students, they reflect principles that contribute to inclusive classrooms for all students.

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A. Foster a bias-free classroom by intervening on any stigmatizing comments and modeling inclusive language.

B. Examine and confront any personal bias concerning children in the classroom and students who are parenting while pursuing their education, including ensuring that parenting status does not impact participation evaluation or other grades, recommendations, or access to opportunities.

C. Design group work with flexibility, including allowing solo alternatives that fit variable schedules.

D. Provide asynchronous content and post class slides or recorded lectures when appropriate.

E. Respect the need for occasional off-camera moments during online class meetings.

F. Announce due dates as soon as possible to minimize barriers and offer reasonable alternatives and extensions for missing an examination or other academic requirement if related to children's health, including working collaboratively with the student to determine an appropriate timeframe.

G. Ensure confidentiality of parenting students' disclosures and/or requests for accommodations.

H. Encourage students to proactively and confidentially share early in the course that they are a parenting student along with any anticipated challenges that may affect their learning, and to notify their instructors as early as possible if unforeseen circumstances—such as a child's illness—create a need for an excused absence or an extension.

I. Encourage ongoing communication and invite feedback, for example, through anonymous mid-term check-ins, to identify barriers, and adjust when possible.

J. Consider including a syllabus statement with a link to College resources to support parenting students along with Title IX and other legally protected accommodations.

> Montgomery College welcomes and values the full diversity of our students, including those who are parents, caregivers, or pregnant. We recognize that responsibilities such as childcare, school closures, illness, basic needs challenges, or health concerns may at times affect your ability to participate fully in class. At the same time, the College remains committed to maintaining academic rigor and upholding high-quality learning outcomes for all students. If you are comfortable, please let me know your parenting status so I can better support you. On rare occasions, and with prior permission, you may bring a child to class to cover unexpected gaps in childcare (but please do not bring a sick child). If you need help connecting with resources—whether for childcare, pregnancy support, or basic needs—please visit the Student Parent Program webpage or contact a Dean of Student Affairs at any location. We are here to support your success.

K. Announce and provide links to College resources available to support parenting students,

including but not limited to the following:

1. Title IX and Disability Support Services contact information.

2. The location, times, and products/services provided by College food pantries, mobile markets, and food lockers, as well as community resources to support basic needs, including housing and College and community emergency fund assistance programs.

3. Counseling and wellness.

4. Family-friendly supports including preferential parking, changing tables, highchairs, and lactation pods.

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