

Best Practices for Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Students

Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Students during COVID-19 disruptions

- Allow flexibility for attending synchronous class sessions and record sessions for future viewing
 - Limited childcare options and virtual learning for school children means student parents have ongoing childcare responsibilities that may intersect with class time and make attending and participating in live sessions extremely difficult.
- Provide alternative lactation space for breastfeeding parents if requiring them to be on campus for coursework or research.
 - Disrupted operations across campus has limited student's access to regular amenities like communal lactation rooms. Departments need to accommodate breastfeeding parents by providing alternative/temporary lactation space—an empty office, lounge, or meeting room—within the buildings students are occupying. Departmental requests for breast pumps can be directed to the Family Center, familycenter@upenn.edu. Students and postdocs can request pump kit attachment from the Penn Women's Center, vpul-pwc@pobox.upenn.edu.

General Support for Parenting Students

- Treat parenting students the same as other students. Don't stereotype or make assumptions about a student's commitment or availability because of their parenting status.
- Offer parenting students the same opportunities as other students.
- Vary department event times to accommodate the schedules of parenting students. *For example, early morning and evening events may conflict with daycare/school drop off and pickup time, and regular evening childcare can be more challenging to arrange.*
- Direct students to campus resources like the Family Center (www.familycenter.upenn.edu).
- Consult with the Family Center staff on appropriate ways to support parenting students.

General Accommodations for Pregnant Students

- Excuse absences for pregnancy and childbirth for as long as the student's doctor deems necessary. *A doctor's note for the absences can be required only if similar notes are required of other students with temporary medical conditions.*
- Allow the student to return to school at the same academic, extracurricular, and program status as before the leave began.
- Allow the student the opportunity to make up any missed assignments or exams. *The school may offer the student alternatives to making up the missed work, the student can choose among these alternatives.*
- Provide any special services or reasonable adjustments so that the student can continue to access their educational program. For example, a different desk that can accommodate a pregnancy, periodic breaks from the lab, or allowing a student to video conference into the classroom.
- Direct students to the appropriate leave policies. PhD students should follow the Family Friendly Policies set by the Office of the Provost <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/family-friendly->

policies-phd-students/, all other students should refer directly to their school's Leave of Absence Policy.

- Consult with the Family Center staff on appropriate ways to support pregnant students.

This document was prepared by the Office of the Deputy Provost. Questions and comments can be directed to provost-ed@upenn.edu.