

Proposal: 2021 Childcare Assistance Program

Background and goals

Since March 2020, parents working full time at Villanova University have faced the difficult task of caring for their children while also working remotely or on campus. Most schools and childcare programs were shut down from March until August of 2020, and many, including the entire Philadelphia public school system, remain closed. In 2019, the average annual cost for infant care in Pennsylvania was \$11,842 (roughly \$987 per month), whereas care for preschool-aged children averaged \$9,773 (or \$814 per month), according to estimates by the Economic Policy Institute.¹ Because the school day functions as a primary source of childcare for most working parents in the US,² the pandemic has increased demand and reduced supply of care services. The programs that have reopened have increased fees, even as many parents have needed extra paid care to compensate for closed public schools. The financial and health impact of this situation on working parents is dire and has critical equity implications, especially, as has been thoroughly documented, for women employees. While a response to support full-time employees with family obligations at Villanova should consider both short-term and long-term impacts, for now short-term redress remains most pressing. As a community committed to the ideals of *Veritas*, *Unitas*, and *Caritas*, we suggest a measure of support to show our community members that they do not face these challenges alone.

To this end, we propose a program with two goals:

- to provide all full-time Villanova employees who are parents the support to get back on track at work by providing a financial subsidy for childcare;
- to offset the increased care costs that parents have incurred since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which were incurred largely in order to fulfill their work commitments to Villanova University.

Program description

We propose a grant program, that would be open to all full-time permanent faculty and staff, which would allow parents to apply for up to \$3,000 per child to offset childcare expenses incurred and to be incurred in 2021. The 2021 Childcare Assistance Program would provide a financial subsidy for childcare programs (including summer camp), up to \$3000 per child. Children up to age 15 would be eligible for the program. This proposal is intended to supplement the existing childcare assistance options offered by Villanova. Should the University operating income at the end of Fiscal Year 2020/21 be in excess of that originally budgeted, we also propose that this benefit be implemented retroactively to allow parents who were significantly impacted by childcare costs in 2020 to also apply for relief.

¹ <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/PA>.

² Folbre, N. (Ed.). 2012. *For Love or Money: Care Provision in the United States*. Russell Sage Foundation.

APPENDIX A: Summary of comparable programs at peer institutions

Institution	Amount of assistance	Timeline	Reference
University of Pennsylvania	Up to \$2,000	2020-2021 Academic year	https://www.hr.upenn.edu/PennHR/wellness-worklife/family-care/childcare-resources-and-support
Northwestern University	Variable, depending on care needs	Applications due January each year	https://www.northwestern.edu/hr/benefits/work-life/paying-for-childcare/childcare-fee-assistance.html
Columbia University	Up to \$3,000	Summer 2020	https://humanresources.columbia.edu/childcare-2020
Stanford University	Awards based on income, ranging from \$2,000 to \$24,000	Full-year, or prorated grants for FY21	https://cardinalatwork.stanford.edu/benefits-rewards/worklife/financial-assistance/faculty-child-care-assistance-program
Princeton University	Awards based on income and family size, ranging from \$1,000 to \$8000	Fall 2020	https://hr.princeton.edu/thrive/well-being-resources/employee-child-care-assistance-program-eccap
Swarthmore College	Up to \$3,000	2020	https://www.swarthmore.edu/human-resources/child-care-subsidy-grant-program
New York University	Up to \$1,800	2020-2021 Academic year	https://www.nyu.edu/content/dam/nyu/workLife/documents/COVID-19%20Child%20Care%20Grant%20FAQs.pdf