



Fact Sheet

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Housing Resources and Programs for Single Student Parents at Community and Technical Colleges

Parents with dependent children now make up almost one in four students pursuing higher education in the United States (Miller, Gault, and Thorman 2011). Single parents face particular challenges pursuing higher education, including securing safe and affordable housing. Single mothers often must spend over half of their income on housing expenses, leaving them with less money for educational expenses and vulnerable to housing crises that can easily derail their pursuit of a degree (Bush 2010). An analysis of effective strategies to support single student parents identifies affordable housing as one of the most important factors to ensuring student success (Women Employed 2011). This fact sheet highlights a number of community-based organizations or community college campuses that offer housing and other support to single student parents pursuing postsecondary education. Information for the program descriptions was gathered either from the program's website or follow-up conversations with program staff. Recommendations for community colleges are outlined at the conclusion of this brief.

Community-Based Organizations Offering Housing and Other Support to Single Student Parents

Buckner International, Texas

Buckner International is a non-for-profit organization that, through its Child and Family Services department, provides multi-faceted family transition programs to support single parents working toward self-sufficiency. The programs are specifically designed to meet the needs of single parent students and to address the barriers faced in achieving self-sufficiency and exiting of poverty, including education, housing, child care, and transportation. Programs include Buckner Family Place, located in Amarillo, Conroe, Lufkin and Midland, Texas; Family Pathways, located in Dallas, Texas; and My Father's House, located in Lubbock, Texas.

Buckner provides safe and affordable housing to enable parents to enroll in an educational or vocational-tech program and provides a case worker to identify and help address the unique challenges faced by each family; scholarship assistance is also available. To be eligible single mothers must be in school full-time at a community college and participate in classes and one-on-one mentoring to work toward self-sufficiency.

Buckner has been in existence since 1879 and operates with an endowment in addition to other funding sources. Foster-care programs are funded by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Buckner's operating budget in 2011–2012 is roughly \$32 million, with funding from the endowment, private donors, and grants, as well as state, federal, and local government funding sources.

Buckner also operates transitional housing programs, a significant number of which use Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs funding to provide residents with tenant-based rental assistance. Generally, about two-thirds of funding for these programs comes from client fees while foundation fundraising, the endowment, and a trust pays for the remaining third.

Website: <http://www.buckner.org/>

Crossways Community, Inc., Kensington, MD

Crossways Community, Inc. works to reduce poverty and create social change in Washington, DC. Single mothers in Crossways' Family Leadership Academy (FLA) live in on-campus housing and receive support to succeed in education, the workplace, and the global economy. FLA serves 37 mothers, and women must have a GED or high school diploma and agree to live on-site for a minimum of three years to be eligible for the program. During their time at FLA, participants must attend school and/or work for a minimum of 35 hours per week; many mothers use this time to pursue a degree or certificate at the University of Maryland, University College through a partnership that Crossways maintains with the University. Participants must also complete LifeSkills seminars on the FLA campus at least twice a week. Crossways Montessori Programs, an accredited coeducational program located on the larger Crossways' campus, provides child care to ensure that participants' children have a strong early education experience.

Crossways estimates that it costs approximately \$55,000 per family to cover the cost of all the wraparound services that FLA provides—including educational and childcare expenses—all of which are funded through a combination of private donations and Crossways' fundraising. Earned revenue provides the remainder of the program's operating budget.

Website: <http://www.crossway-community.org/>

The Jeremiah Program, Minneapolis, MN

The Jeremiah Program expands access to higher education for single mothers to ensure a career-track livable wage. The approach incorporates high quality early childhood education, safe and affordable housing, and life skills education into a comprehensive program of accessible, wraparound services. The program provides single parents with a stable, safe community from which they can pursue postsecondary education. The residential apartments and child development centers are located in areas close to area vocational-tech training schools and community colleges in Minneapolis and St. Paul Minnesota. Residential apartments and child development centers based on the Jeremiah Program model are being planned or are under development in other communities around the nation.

Jeremiah is available to parents of at least 18 years of age with a child under the age of five. The program operates with 38 apartments in one facility and 39 apartments in the other. There is also preschool/child care available on site. The project's services are funded through an annual fundraising effort with a dinner auction, endowments, private donations, and corporate donations. Program participants also pay sliding scale fees for housing and child care. Significant unmet demand exists as they get at least one application each day.

The Jeremiah Program offers both educational and job placement supports. *Jeremiah Works!* is a component initiative of the project that assists current residents and former participants seeking employment. The employment team and a network of volunteers build connections with corporate partners to expand employment opportunities for participants and alumnae. Through the *Education Roundtable Series*, the Jeremiah Program also works with area admissions directors and other key staff from area postsecondary institutions to identify strategies to best support the educational needs of single student parents.

Participants also complete Life Skills classes while they are residents. The curriculum includes career development, economic independence, building relationships, physical and emotional health, healthy relationships, and parenting and child development. Residents also work with a life skills coach who works with them on individual goal setting, advocacy, and crisis intervention.

Website: <http://www.jeremiahprogram.org/>

Community College Housing Options for Single Student Parents

Approximately 25 percent of community colleges offer on-campus housing (Epstein, 2007). Relatively little of this housing, however, is designed or designated specifically for single parents. Three examples of community colleges that do offer housing for single parents are listed below.

Central Texas College

Central Texas College has 51 apartments set aside for full-time married or single students with dependent children. These spaces are reserved for student parents from Central Texas College and Texas A&M University Central Texas. The 51 spaces fill easily, leaving students on the waiting list. While there is a playground for children, the College does not currently provide any additional supports or resources.

Website: <http://www.ctcd.edu/>

Southeast Community College

Southeast Community College in Nebraska maintains a family housing complex off campus at its Beatrice campus for Parents of All Ages (POAA) program (Southeast Community College 2012). As part of N-FOCUS, Nebraska's integrated human services information system, Parents of All Ages is a partnership between Southeast Community College and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. Participants receive support in GED preparation and completion, college preparation, life skills, and parenting classes. POAA is co-located on the Southeast Community College Beatrice campus with a variety of other support services designed to help move families toward self-sufficiency. POAA is one of more than twenty family resource centers throughout the state. The services at the Beatrice campus include access to child care subsidies, job training, medical insurance, services for people with disabilities, Head Start/Early Head Start, Foster Grandparent Program, meditation services, job training, employment services, a career center, parent mentoring, Parents as Teachers, youth mentoring, WIC, and credit counseling (Ragan 2002).

Website: <http://www.southeast.edu/>

Texas State Technical College

Texas State Technical College offers family housing for married couples and single parents. The apartments are available only to parents who are enrolled full-time, and are provided on a first come, first served basis; there is no priority given based on marital status. Single parents must have full custody and their children must live on campus full time to be eligible for occupancy (Texas State Technical College 2012; Texas State Technical College 2011)..

Although not officially subsidized, the units rent at rates far below market value and all rents include utilities. In addition, parents in family housing receive priority enrollment at two nearby state-funded child care programs. Texas State currently maintains 19 family housing units at the Waco and Harlingen campuses. There is frequently a short waiting list indicating that some unmet demand still exists.

Website: <http://www.tstc.edu/frontpage/>

Recommendations

Community colleges that offer housing can create special housing options for single student parents. Tailoring existing services for student support, such as advising, to meet the particular needs of student parents can also help facilitate their success.

Community colleges that do not offer housing can develop partnerships with other funders and organizations created to facilitate self-sufficiency. Any initiatives to facilitate safe and affordable housing for student parents will increase the likelihood that they will complete their degree and move toward secure, professional employment.

References

When not otherwise noted, program information was obtained from interviews with program staff and/or from program websites.

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