



Memorandum

Office of the Provost

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TO: Senate

FROM: Lydia White, Associate Provost (Policies, Procedures and Equity)

SUBJECT: Creation of a Subcommittee on Family Care (JBSCE)

DATE: November 18, 2013

DOCUMENT #: D13-32

ACTION REQUIRED: INFORMATION APPROVAL

ISSUE: The Post-Graduate Students' Society (PGSS) has a Family Care Caucus which has been closely involved in supporting graduate students caring for dependents. Issues relating to care of dependents are not unique to graduate students and PGSS has asked that the work of their caucus now be undertaken at the University level.

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE: Arrangements for care of dependents can impinge on various aspects of life of members of the University community and may, from time to time, require appropriate policies and/or guidelines. The issue of family care raises issues of equity, since barriers may (inadvertently) be created which put undo pressure on students, faculty and staff members.

The issue of family care is clearly not restricted to graduate students; hence, it is appropriate to consider a broader means of addressing such issues, such as through the Joint Board Senate Committee on Equity (JBSCE). Care of dependents does not fall under the mandate of any one of the existing subcommittees (Persons with Disabilities, First Peoples, Queer Persons, Race and Ethnic Relations, Women). Consequently, the JBSCE proposes that a new subcommittee be added, to be called the Subcommittee on Family Care, with a mandate to advise on policies, guidelines and projects relating to care of dependents.

MOTION OR RESOLUTION FOR APPROVAL: *Be it resolved that Senate approve the creation of a new subcommittee of the Joint Board Senate Committee on Equity, to be known as the Subcommittee on Family Care, with a mandate to make recommendations for policies and projects relating to members of the McGill community caring for dependents, membership to be determined by JBSCE.*

PRIOR CONSULTATION: JBSCE, PGSS, Associate Dean of Students

NEXT STEPS: Board of Governors

APPENDICES: Appendix A: Proposal for a Subcommittee on Family Care

Proposal for a Subcommittee on Families

Submitted by: Laura Risk and Lerona Lewis (co-chairs, PGSS Family Care Caucus)

Supporting families at McGill: an equity issue

Students caring for dependants (children, or an infirm or elderly parent or relative) often face constraints related to time and finances. Such constraints can place these students at a disadvantage compared to other students pursuing university degrees. We see the challenges facing these parents as an equity issue; by working to reduce or remove barriers to success, we give these students a greater chance of succeeding at their studies.

Other members of the McGill community, including faculty and staff, share many of these challenges. The proposed Subcommittee on Families would advocate for all members of the McGill community with dependants and seek to remove the obstacles to success for these diverse stakeholders. Potential areas of interest include: access to childcare; access to information; and, for students, access to financial aid.

PGSS Family Care projects (2011 - 2013)

We have volunteered on the PGSS Family Care Committee/Caucus for the past 3 years. During this time the FCC has undertaken a number of projects on behalf of McGill families:

1. *Guidelines for the Accommodation of Pregnant Students and Students Caring for Dependants*
 - in collaboration with Linda Starkey, Lisa de Mena Travis, and ESAAC
 - completed in April 2013
2. Installation of 26 changing tables on the downtown and Mac campuses
 - in collaboration with Jim Nicell and University Services
 - completed in Spring 2012
3. Children's Library Kits
 - goal: to provide seating and a range of children's books for students who bring their children into the various branch libraries
 - in collaboration with Diane Koen and McGill Libraries
 - PGSS contributed \$1200 for the purchase of children's books, tote bags, and child-sized chairs for 8 libraries
 - this project should be completed by Fall 2013

4. Health & Wellness Brochures

- in collaboration with Amanda Unruh of McGill Health Promotions
- PGSS Family Care wrote the text for three brochures: “Resources for New Parents,” “Experiencing Domestic Violence,” “Being a Caretaker”
- originally, these brochures were to be produced and distributed by Health Promotions. As this was no longer possible after the Winter budget cuts, PGSS has contributed \$500 for the graphic design of the brochures and will most likely also cover the printing costs.
- Distribution plan: copies to all departmental Graduate Studies Directors; on-campus distribution by PGSS Family Care (libraries, Chaplaincy, Health Clinic, etc.)
- this project should be completed by Fall 2013

5. Collaborations with Chaplaincy / McGill Student Parent Network

- At Amanda Unruh’s request, coordinated with Chaplaincy to give Ms. Unruh editing privileges on the Student Services website for student parents (now edited exclusively by Chaplaincy/MSPN). Ms. Unruh plans to update the health-related information on the site and add appropriate content from the Health & Wellness Brochures
- worked with Chaplaincy to move the Multilingual Children’s Library and the MSPN’s Study Saturday supplies to Thomson House in order to meet Chaplaincy’s space needs

Proposed Subcommittee on Families

Mandate

- Work towards policies and projects that support all members of the McGill community caring for dependants, including academic and support staff, graduate students, undergraduates, and post-docs

Composition

- At least one: faculty, staff, graduate student, undergraduate student

Possible projects for 2013-2014

- Daycare: work with McGill, PGSS, SSMU, and the extant McGill daycares to better coordinate daycare services and explore options for more daycare places on or near campus (including part-time and drop-in daycare)
- Family Care Office: work towards the creation of a McGill Family Care Office. The FCO would be an information clearinghouse on family issues for all members of the McGill community and might eventually offer workshops, services, etc.
- Statistics: work with the University to gather accurate statistics regarding numbers and living circumstances of students caring for dependants
- Emergency grants: PGSS and SSAO are currently finalizing a MOA regarding needs-based grants for graduate students, with priority given to those caring for dependents. Perhaps consider a similar project via SSMU for undergraduates?