

FAMILY CARE OFFICE: 2022 PSEC REPORT

FAMILY CARE OFFICE

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416-978-0951; www.familycare.utoronto.ca

M,W,R, F: 9-5 and T: 9-6

Summer Hours- M, W, R, F: 9-4:30 and T: 9-6

From January 1 to February 14, 2022, services were offered only remotely.

The mandate of the Family Care Office (FCO) is to support students, staff, faculty, and their families with any family care related issue by providing information, guidance, referrals and advocacy. Through all its functions, the office aims to raise awareness of family care issues and of quality-of-life issues central to the achievement of educational equity and employment equity at the University of Toronto.

Services and Programs Provided:

We support students, staff, and faculty with family responsibilities by assisting to remove barriers to their academic and work success through:

1. Casework: concerns centered primarily on issues such as childcare availability (including access, subsidies, and quality), pregnancy and pregnancy/parental leave, relocation issues, family financial planning, balancing work/study with family, counselling and mental health, and elder care and caregiver leaves. (please see Table 2 in the appendix)
2. Workshops, family events, discussion groups and a student peer mentorship program that were offered on-line as necessary.
3. Maintaining a website and a resource library comprised of practical material on topics ranging from pregnancy and infant care to lesbian, gay and trans parenting issues, bereavement and caring for elderly family members. Please note the library was not available from January 1 to February 14, 2022.
4. Maintaining a web-based babysitter listing service and a U of T Parents Exchange Facebook group.
5. Providing on-location drop-in hours during the academic year every Thursday afternoon to students living at Student Family Housing. As of March 2022, on-location drop-in hours were provided.
6. The Office is providing on-location office hours every 4- 6 weeks on the UTM campus and UTSC campus for students, staff and faculty. Appointments were completed by phone after mid-March 2020.
7. Outreach to departments/colleges to raise their level of awareness of students with family responsibilities and to educate on services available to students through the FCO.
8. Advocating on behalf of University families with University departments, student organizations, and government and community agencies.

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9. Providing recommendations to the Director, Family Programs and Services in the Office of the Vice-President Human Resources and Equity, regarding existing university policy, procedures and publications and their impact on individuals with family responsibilities.

Current Staffing:

- 4 FTE staff appointed; 5 students under the Fall/Winter Work Study Program and 2 students under the Summer Work Study Program.
- Provided an academic service-learning opportunity in the Winter 2022 term for a graduate student in LHA1122: Practicum in Adult Education and Community Development at OISE. The student assisted with the coordination of our Women's Wellness Program that is provided to the residents of Student Family Housing. This included assisting with organizing the webinars and evaluating the program.

Significant Changes and Achievements in 2022

We had complete renewal of staffing in 2022. One of our staff members retired and was replaced, one staff member went on a secondment and so was replaced, and one staff member left the Family Care Office and UTEMP was used until the original secondment was to return.

The staff at the Family Care Office have had **288 cases from January 1, 2022, to December 20, 2022**, with students, staff and faculty and provided information on what constitutes crossing the threshold of family status accommodation and balancing studies/work and family life. This has been 15.7% of the inquiries we have received compared to 1.5% in 2019 prior to the pandemic. We have been integral to the students, staff and faculty who have contacted us.

During our conversations with these individuals, we have reviewed all possible options to address their current family caregiving concerns. This has meant discussing childcare options and caregiver leave options that a person may need. We have also determined if some time is required to resolve their current family caregiving challenge and so have recommended to a department that a temporary flexible work schedule may be necessary. This has also meant providing information on Alternative Work Arrangements (AWA) for staff.

While most of the concerns have been from students, staff, and faculty, at times, we have spoken to a department or with Human Resources to provide our rationale for a decision.

Another accomplishment for our office is providing webinars and discussion groups so that we address the employee life cycle from recruitment to retirement. The Family Care Office provided many webinars to help employees at the University at various stages of their life.

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These webinars are available to staff, faculty, students and their partners and provided information to these individuals who may be new parents, parenting, or caring for an aging loved one. Our service assisted those who are working or studying at U of T at all stages of life and provides an equity lens. Through this programming, the Office recognized and supported members of the U of T community at different life stages and with diverse caregiving responsibilities.

Many of our workshops/webinars are available to partners as well and this Fall we changed the description to be more inclusive:

Partners and family members (including chosen family members) who are co-caregivers with U of T students, staff, postdoctoral fellows and faculty are also welcome to attend.

Other areas where we have had an impact, include a presentation on family leaves we did in November to members of QUTE (Queer University of Toronto Employees). The FCO participated in a QUTE Family Planning event. During this session, colleagues learned more about family building in the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community. Our panellist shared their lived experiences with family planning and spoke about U of T benefits that can support planning decisions.

In January 2022, we did a session on 'Parenting a Child with a Learning Disability'. This summer a Mamava Pod, (see: <https://www.mamava.com/>) was provided to UTM through our advocacy and through the advocacy of the UTM Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Office.

Programming Highlights for 2022

Parenting a Child with a Learning Disability: Led by a Disability Advisor with Accessibility Services, this discussion dealt with parenting concerns for children with disabilities. This included a discussion of ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorders and one student who joined the discussion was on the Autism Spectrum.

Webinars were provided on topics to deal with common issues around caring for an elderly loved one such as Alzheimer's Disease, understanding the system, and caregiver stress and burnout.

Separation and Divorce

Around the issue of separation and divorce, the following webinars or discussion group was provided:

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- Why do I Keep Spinning My Wheels Since my Divorce
- Will My Child be Negatively Impacted by my Divorce
- Division of Property - Married and Common Law Spouses
- Cohabitation to Divorce
- Introduction to Family Law
- Under the Iceberg of Separation and Divorce Discussion Group

Hidden in Plain "Site" Preventing Online Sexual Exploitation Together

This webinar was offered twice and was led by White Ribbon. The description was as follows: "The risk of online sexual exploitation of youth is rising, especially in the context of the #COVID19 pandemic. White Ribbon is pleased to offer a free webinar to parents on preventing all forms of #onlinesexualexploitation and #sextrafficking"

Family Events

In September 2022, more Family Event activities could happen in person. What was offered included: Webb's First Look at the Universe and a Summer Sky Adventure for Kids, a visit to a local park and we had outdoor games and a music therapist, a P.A. Day event held at the new UTSU Student Commons, and a Varsity Mens' hockey game was coordinated.

Training, Outreach and Information Sessions

- The Family Care Office provided videos and were in person for various outreach sessions in late August and early September 2022. Events included, School of Graduate Studies (SGS), Transitional Year Program (TYP), OISE, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, UTSU (University of Toronto Student Union) and UTM O-Week.
- We attended outreach sessions virtually and in person for the Be Well UTM Fair 2022, and for UTSC Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies 2022.

Performance Indicators

Participation:

- This year the office handled 1948 cases: 398 students (69 undergraduate students and 329 graduate students), 1289 employees (710 staff, 578 faculty members, and 62 postdoctoral fellows), 187 department consultations and 13 'other' that include visiting faculty, other institutions, alumni and members of the community. (please see Table 1 in the appendix)

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- This year 74 webinars, 8 family events, 3 discussion groups, and 1 event were sponsored or co-sponsored by the FCO. Just over 2000 students, staff, faculty and postdoctoral fellows and partners/co-caregivers attended these activities.
- The Child Care Reimbursement for Extra and Co-curricular Activities fund was accessed one (1) time for 2022. Our office space was not used by students, staff and faculty for the Student Parent Lounge and/or for breastfeeding/pumping during the pandemic and when we were in our office space.
- For our Peer Mentorship Program, in 2022 we saw 21 students. This program has been revamped and we still have a peer mentorship coordinator who will see students with family responsibilities one-on-one, we have a Facebook group that connects students, a time when students can join as a group to meet a mentor, and a Study Hub for students with family responsibilities is available. We will make matches with a peer mentor if necessary.
- The 'Types of Inquiries' we received in 2022 reflects the pandemic. In 2019, of the total number of cases, we received 32 inquiries on balancing work, study, and family, flexible work arrangements and academic problems. In 2022, this number of inquiries we received on study, work and family balance increased to 288. Students and employees were having difficulties during the pandemic and once we returned to more office/classroom hours balancing their family responsibilities with their work and/or studies.(please see Table 2 in the appendix)
- We increased our Instagram followers from 264 to 473, and we added a Students with Families Facebook group to encourage students to connect informally. Based on the feedback we are receiving from the Student Advisory, we are not sure if students are reading the blog posts or the e-newsletter in its entirety. We may change how we provide our blog posts in future. (Please see - Table 4: Social Media and Website Inventory of Users from 2016-2022)

Faculty Relocation Service

The Office also coordinates the **Faculty Relocation Service (FRS)**. This highly successful initiative provides deans, chairs and search committees with assistance in meeting their goals in an intensely competitive recruiting environment. The program helps newly appointed faculty and their families to relocate and transition smoothly to life within the University and Toronto communities. The Office met by appointment with **270** prospective and newly appointed faculty and followed up approximately **40** times with these individuals before they received an offer or were hired. Working in conjunction with the office of the Vice Provost, Faculty and Academic Life, the Office also usually assists with a welcome/orientation event for new faculty

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and their families in August, however, we were not invited this year. After March 2020, appointments were done using Zoom, MS Teams and by phone. We provided in person services to more individuals in 2022.

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Testimonials/Quotes

I wanted to thank you for the extremely valuable session yesterday. The forms were overwhelming and I had difficulty understanding the best dates/options available to me. I appreciate you walking through the steps with us and addressing all our individual questions.

The Family Care Office sessions are invaluable and I appreciate that they are offered to the UofT Community.

-Staff member who attended the webinar - 'Staff Pregnancy/Parental/Adoption/Primary Caregiver Leave Planning'

I have attended many sessions that you have given on aging, caregiving, the "system", dementia, etc over the past five or so years. Had I not informed myself through your very helpful offerings, I'm not sure what might have happened to me and my mother's care, but I want to thank you.

THANK YOU for offering so many wonderful sessions to our community.... I think the Family Care Office is underrated for all that it offers!

-Faculty member who attended our elder care sessions

Thank you for this useful information.

I would just like to extend my thanks to Kaye for such an informative session. It really was so helpful to me. Kaye, you had also met with me separately in December time, as I had lots of a questions as someone new to Canada. I really appreciate all of your efforts and patience in answering my questions, at our previous meeting, and today!

-Staff member who had an appointment with us and attended the webinar - 'Staff Pregnancy/Parental/Adoption/Primary Caregiver Leave Planning'

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Appendix

TABLE 1: Direct Service - January 1 to December 31, 2022

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| Undergraduates | 69 |
| Graduate students | 329 |
| Post-doctoral fellows | 62 |
| Staff | 710 |
| Faculty* | 578 |
| Departments | 187 |
| Other** | 13 |
| TOTAL | 1948 |

* All inquiries on behalf of an individual prospective or new faculty member are counted as one case per year, regardless of the number of contact hours.

** "Other" includes alumni, researchers, visiting faculty, media, and the general public

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TABLE 2: Types of Inquiries - January 1 to December 31, 2022

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Pregnancy and/or parental leave | 40.7 % |
| Balancing work, study, family; flexible work arrangements; academic problems | 15.7% |
| New Faculty; Relocation | 14.5% |
| Childcare facilities; children's programs; schools; babysitting | 11.7% |
| Caregiver Leaves | 4.9% |
| Other (general information and services etc.) | 3.5% |
| Student pregnancy | 2.0% |
| Relationships; support groups; counselling | 1.7% |
| Financial Aid; Childcare subsidy | 1.5% |
| Housing | 1.7% |
| Medical; health | 0.3% |
| Parenting | 0.1% |
| Legal assistance | 0.0% |
| Elder care | 1.5% |
| Emergency assistance; abuse | 0.1% |
| Library | 0.2% |

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TABLE 3: Kit Stats - January 1 to December 31, 2022

The Office provided advice to staff and departments on maternity, parental, adoption and primary caregiver leaves, particularly on the discretionary aspects of the leaves for faculty members and promoted best practices. The Office provides information kits to employees on the various leaves provided by the University and this year approximately 359 kits were distributed electronically.

| Type of Leave Kit | Number of Kits Distributed |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Pregnancy Leave Kits for Faculty & Librarians | 66 |
| Pregnancy Leave Kits for Staff | 105 |
| Pregnancy Leave Kits for Postdoctoral Fellows | 20 |
| Parental Leave Kits for Faculty & Librarians | 38 |
| Parental Leave Kits for Staff | 63 |
| Parental Leave Kits for Postdoctoral Fellows | 8 |
| Primary Caregiver and Adoptions Leave for Faculty & Librarians | 0 |
| Primary Caregiver and Adoptions Leave for Staff | 1 |

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Table 4: Social Media and Website Inventory of Users from 2016-2022

| Social Media | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|---------------------------------|------|------|--------|--------|--------|------|-------------------------|
| Twitter Followers | 857 | 971 | 1017 | 1078 | 1127 | 1189 | 1238 |
| Facebook Likes | 301 | 321 | 359 | 397 | 421 | 444 | 520 |
| FB Parent Exchange | 501 | 518 | 522 | 562 | 564 | 550 | 607 |
| Blog Users | 6065 | 7210 | 13,139 | 45,900 | 59,231 | N/A | 20,642 |
| e-Newsletter Subscription | 2225 | 2611 | 2852 | 3247 | 4310 | 4742 | 5301 (4222 subscribers) |
| Instagram Followers | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 264 | 473 |
| FB Students with Families Group | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 35 |

