

FAMILY CARE OFFICE: 2021 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 September 22, 2021 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 September 22, 2021.
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, however, as of mid-March, we were no longer available on site, but are providing remote access. Posters have been put up to explain how to reach the Family Care Office and we have provided phone or virtual appointments since July 2020.
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.
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.

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8. Advocating on behalf of University families with University departments, student organizations, and government and community agencies.
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 1 student under the Summer Work Study Program.
- Provided an academic service-learning opportunity in the Winter 2021 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 2021

One of the Family Care Office's major accomplishments is in support of the University's successful transition to a post-pandemic workplace (Strategic Objective #1 for Human Resources and Equity)

The Manager and the Director have met with over 260 students, staff and faculty and provided information on what constitutes crossing the threshold of family status accommodation. This has been 12.3% of the inquiries we have received compared to 5.2% last year, and 1.5% in 2019.

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 staff and faculty, at times, we have spoken to a department or with Human Resources to provide our rationale for a decision.

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Our office has been integral for the staff and faculty who have contacted us. We have assisted these individuals as they have navigated remote with in-person working during the University's transition to a more in-person workplace.

Another accomplishment for our office is providing webinars and discussion groups so that we address Strategic Objective #5 for Human Resources and Equity of identifying opportunities to enhance the employee life cycle from recruitment to retirement. The Family Care Office provided many webinars to help employees at the University at different stages of their life. These webinars are available to staff, faculty, students are their partners and provided information to these individuals who may be partners, 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.

Programming Highlights for 2021

The following two workshops were done using the EFAP as facilitators:

COVID-19 Grief & Loss

Grief is a natural response to loss. During the current global pandemic many people are experiencing a comprehensive spectrum of loss: the loss of loved ones, going to the office, social connections, a sense of normalcy, physical and financial security etc. This session will help participants understand grief and loss and equip them with strategies to respond to and cope with the particular losses brought about by the pandemic.

COVID-19: Communication in Family Life

The challenges and uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic can be overwhelming: social isolation, worry over family and friends, concern for our own well-being, and changes to work and home routines. These added levels of stress are likely to put a strain on family relationships. This session describes some fundamental aspects of communication that apply to interactions within families.

Talking with Parents and Caregivers about Sexual and Gender Diversity in Children, Youth and Families – (An Introduction and Part Two)

This interactive webinar had two parts: an introductory workshop hosted in Fall 2020 and a "Part II" occurred in the Spring 2021. It had a brief overview of language relating to gender and sexuality diversity and a summary of self-determination and affirmation in connection with

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gender expansive parenting and caring. It also explored common questions asked by some parents and carers of young people as it relates to gender and sexuality diversity.

Consent for Families

Consent for Families was a dynamic, engaging virtual workshop +Q+A with Sexuality Educator, Dr. Nadine Thornhill. Nadine took participants through the concepts introduced in the [Teaching About Consent](#), webinar series to help participants discover real-world ways of creating consent culture in your home.

This workshop was a collaboration between the Sexual Violence Prevention and Support Centre and the Family Care Office.

Family Support Series

A set of 3 webinars was offered to parents. The parent could attend all or one of sessions. The titles were:

Family Support Series: Because “Calm Down” Never Seems to Work: An Introduction to Emotion Coaching

Family Support Series: The Good Enough Parent

Family Support Series: Self-Care for Caregivers

Toilet Learning – Time to Potty!

This workshop discussed strategies to set children up for success on this new endeavor in life. The course focused on signs of cognitive and behavioural readiness, and when and how to start.

Mental Health for New Parents

This workshop explored issues that new parents face and how they can find resources and support during pre- and post-pregnancy.

Parenting BIPOC Children in Today’s Climate – Panel Discussion

With the recent unfortunate events in the media, many BIPOC children and their parents were feeling overwhelmed, and parents were given some guidance on how to have these difficult discussions with their children. Facilitators included the Director of First Nations House – Indigenous Student Service, the Director, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion at the Faculty of Information, and a Muslim Campus Chaplain at U of T

The Truth about Teens

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A presentation that focused on adolescent development, parenting strategies, and the job description for the job of teenager. It explained why the teen years can be such a challenging time for both parents and teens alike — and how parents can respond to that challenge in a way that strengthens, not weakens, their connection to their teen. It also discussed the important role that parents can play in supporting adolescent mental health throughout the teen years and beyond—and what that means in practical terms.

Elder Care workshops on Safety at Home, Long Term Planning, and Family Caregiving

Webinars were provided on the above topics to deal with common issues around caring for an elderly loved one.

Communication for Partners: Managing Conflict and Staying Connected

In this webinar, the facilitator presented a brief overview of key principles from the research of Dr. John Gottman that helped couples survive and thrive in the pandemic and beyond.

How to Cope with Burnout

Participants discovered more about what burnout is from a family perspective and how to identify when you have it, learned the key strategies to deal with burnout when it's happening, and the practices to put in place to prevent it from happening in the future.

For the 2020-21 year, we partnered with Nana Gulic, an Education Doctorate student at OISE's Social Justice Education Department. She is a Child and Youth Worker with 16 years of experience in working with youth in Canada and internationally. She provided and was the inspiration for some of our family events on-line. This was done to support the well-being of the children of individuals with family responsibilities.

Sessions for the child and an adult family member that were offered included:

Halloween 'Character Treats'

Mindfulness for Children & Families

Family Trivia

Find Your Inner Hero

The Family Care Office offers a workshop series titled the **Life Management Series** to empower students to balance academic priorities and self-care, with caring for others. These workshops are Co-Curricular Record approved, and those students who complete four workshops over two academic years, will receive Co-Curricular Record recognition. Workshops that were held in 2021 include:

Graduate Supervision Challenges and Best Practices

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Self Advocacy for Students – Navigating the University

Studying at Home with Children

Facing (Yet Another) Change: Preparing for your return back to campus

Training, Outreach and Information Sessions

- The Family Care Office provided videos for various outreach sessions in late August and early September 2021 including events with Student Life Residence Life Training and Student Life Mature and Transfer Student Orientation, School of Graduate Studies (SGS), Transitional Year Program (TYP), OISE, and UTM O-Week.
- We attended outreach sessions virtually for the Be Well UTM Fair 2021, and for UTSC Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

Performance Indicators

Participation:

- This year the office handled 2108 cases: 402 students (64 undergraduate students and 338 graduate students), 1451 employees (826 staff, 570 faculty members, and 55 postdoctoral fellows), 228 department consultations and 27 ‘other’ that include visiting faculty, other institutions, alumni and members of the community. (please see Table 1 in the appendix)
- This year 75 webinars, 6 family events, 1 on-line workshop module, 3 discussion groups, and 4 events were sponsored or co-sponsored by the FCO. Just over 2200 students, staff, faculty and postdoctoral fellows attended these activities.
- The Child Care Reimbursement for Extra and Co-curricular Activities fund was accessed zero times for 2021. Our office space was not used by students, staff and faculty for the Student Parent Lounge and/or for breastfeeding/pumping during the pandemic
- The ‘Types of Inquiries’ we received in 2021 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. This increased in 2020 to 99 cases on these same issues. In 2021, this number of inquiries we received on study, work and family balance increased to 265. Students and employees were having difficulties during the pandemic balancing their family responsibilities with their work and/or studies.(please see Table 2 in the appendix)

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- There has been a steady increase in our e-newsletter subscriptions. (please see Table 4 in the appendix) This year was first year we added Instagram and we currently have 264 followers.

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 **240** prospective and newly appointed faculty and followed up **65** 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 and their families in August, however, due to the pandemic this did not happen this year. After March 2020, appointments were done using Zoom, MS Teams and by phone. We provided in person services to just 2 individuals during the Fall 2021.

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Testimonials/Quotes

But I wanted to say thanks to the FCO for your workshops. I cannot relay how useful the elder care workshop I attended was; the information presented was immediately useful and provided me with a path and plan of action to best care for my mother. Appreciated.

Staff member who attended the webinar – ‘Elder Care: Exploring Senior Housing Options’

Thank you so much.

Your office is doing a fabulous job of bring in speakers who provide information on improving our lives and those around us and basically helping us to life that is fulfilling and rewarding. Thanks again and keep up the good work.

Faculty member who attended the webinar – ‘Elder Care – Family Caregiving: A Plan For Action’

Thank you very much, Katharine! And please thank Kaye for hosting the session today. It was incredibly helpful!

Staff member who attended the webinar – ‘Staff Pregnancy/Parental/Adoption/Primary Caregiver Leave Planning’

"...last week my son and I attended the FCO's April Break Mars and Perseverance webinar [Spring Break Fun at U of T: Astronomy for Kids held on Tuesday, April 13 • 7:00 – 8:00 pm]. We found the session so EDUtaining. My son who is 11 loved it. It was one of the highlights of the week for him. He loved the content shared and especially loved the quiz at the end. I was impressed with the presentation delivery, the information that was presented and the engagement of the audience. It was informative and entertaining for a variety of ages - which is often hard to do online.

Overall, I thought the webinar was really well done and appreciated the opportunity to attend. I hope that the FCO will hold another one - my son would love that!

Thank you to the FCO for organizing the online session."

PhD student who attended our family event Spring Break Fun at U of T – Astronomy for Kids

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Appendix

TABLE 1: Direct Service - January 1 to December 31, 2021

Undergraduates	64
Graduate students	338
Post-doctoral fellows	55
Staff	826
Faculty*	570
Departments	228
Other**	27
TOTAL	2108

* 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, 2021

Pregnancy and/or parental leave	46.4%
New faculty; relocation	12.3%
Balancing work, study, family; flexible work arrangements; academic problems	12.3%
Child care facilities; children's programs; schools; babysitting	11.6%
Caregiver Leaves	4.6%
Other (general information and services etc.)	2.5%
Relationships; support groups; counselling	1.9%
Student pregnancy	2.0%
Financial aid; child care subsidy	1.5%
Housing	1.5%
Medical; health	1.1%
Parenting	0.5%
Legal assistance	0.3%
Elder care	0.3%
Emergency assistance; abuse	0.2%
Library	0.0%

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TABLE 3: Kit Stats - January 1 to December 31, 2021

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	43
Pregnancy Leave Kits for Staff	199
Pregnancy Leave Kits for Postdoctoral Fellows	8
Parental Leave Kits for Faculty & Librarians	37
Parental Leave Kits for Staff	60
Parental Leave Kits for Postdoctoral Fellows	12
Primary Caregiver and Adoption Leave for Faculty & Librarians (may have given out these kits under Parental Leave for Faculty)	0
Primary Caregiver & Adoption Leave for Staff (may have given out these kits under Parental Leave for staff)	0

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Table 4: Social Media and Website Inventory of Users from 2015-2021

Social Media	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Twitter Followers	713	857	971	1017	1078	1127	1189
Facebook Likes	257	301	321	359	397	421	444
FB Parent Exchange	453	501	518	522	562	564	550
Blog Users	5361	6065	7210	13,139	45,900	59,231	N/A
E-Newsletter Subscription	1814	2225	2611	2852	3247	4310	4742
Instagram Followers	0	0	0	0	0	0	264