

## Support Services For Nontraditional Students

There are several issues facing those who wish to work in occupations that are not traditional for their gender. A nontraditional student may be the only person of their gender in the orientation program, class or work crew. Perhaps there is no representation of their gender on the faculty or in management. Additionally, many students may be the first person of their gender, in their family, to pursue training or education. Beyond this, it may be that peers, co-workers or customers view nontraditional career choices as problematic.

For many nontraditional students the responsibilities of school and, in some cases, also parenting, plus employment are quite a challenge. Without some level of support, these students may be forced to stop their coursework or drop out of school. However, with academic, personal, career, and employment-related resources, students are much more likely to complete and succeed in nontraditional training or education programs. Support services can alleviate the anxiety that accompanies being “nontrad” and encourage recruitment, retention and completion.

All students need to be encouraged and supported. Whether the student is male or female, there will be many opportunities to promote student success in nontraditional career areas.

Each of the following categories should be considered for appropriateness for individual students. In order to implement support efforts, it may be necessary to partner with other educational or community agencies and/or individuals from the workforce. For example, a local community nonprofit organization could provide tutoring; a professional organization or a school club could provide mentoring. In all instances, developing creative and focused activities requires a commitment to ensuring the success of nontraditional students.

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## Identifying Support Needs & Self-Sufficiency

Participants and their families may have issues that should be addressed in order for them to succeed. Assessment of the following areas is essential to insure student success.

- Income
- Housing
- Food
- Healthcare
- Childcare
- Transportation

### Income

Livable wages enable men and women to become self-sufficient. Self-sufficiency means that individuals or families are able to meet their basic needs without subsidies of any kind. The monthly costs that are necessary to cover the most basic essentials include: housing, food, transportation, health care, and child care (if needed), plus a bare-bones miscellaneous. Miscellaneous covers all other costs such as telephone, entertainment, subscriptions, gifts, professional dues, savings, family emergencies, etc. You can research the cost of self-sufficiency for your area at [www.insightccd.org](http://www.insightccd.org)

Here is a comparison of wages needed for self-sufficiency, based on number in the family representing five California areas:

#### San Diego

- 1 adult needs \$12.85/hr.
- 1 adult, 1 preschooler needs \$22.34/hr.
- 1 adult, 1 preschooler, 1 school age needs \$28.72/hr.
- 2 (working) adults, 1 preschooler, 1 school age need \$15.84/hr. per adult

#### San Francisco

- 1 adult needs \$10.78/hr.
- 1 adult, 1 preschooler needs \$20.79/hr.
- 1 adult, 1 preschooler, 1 school age needs \$24.64/hr.
- 2 (working) adults, 1 preschooler, 1 school age need \$13.00/hr. per adult

### **Los Angeles-Long Beach**

- a. 1 adult needs \$8.54/hr.
- b. 1 adult, 1 preschooler needs \$15.64/hr.
- c. 1 adult, 1 preschooler, 1 school age needs \$19.35/hr.
- d. 2 (working) adults, 1 preschooler, 1 school age need \$11.35/hr. per adult

### **Sacramento**

- a. 1 adult needs \$7.20/hr.
- b. 1 adult, 1 preschooler needs \$13.42/hr.
- c. 1 adult, 1 preschooler, 1 school age needs \$16.41/hr.
- d. 2 (working) adults, 1 preschooler, 1 school age need \$9.61/hr. per adult

### **Trinity County**

- a. 1 adult needs \$6.31/hr.
- b. 1 adult, 1 preschooler needs \$10.70/hr.
- c. 1 adult, 1 preschooler, 1 school age needs \$13.21/hr.
- d. 2 (working) adults, 1 preschooler, 1 school age need \$8.22/hr. per adult

**Source:** [www.insightcced.org](http://www.insightcced.org) The Self-Sufficiency Standard for California for 2006, Six Strategies for Family Self-Sufficiency Project, sponsored by Wider Opportunities for Women.

## **Housing**

All individuals, regardless of family composition, age, or income require a safe place to live. Below are some state housing assistance resources. Remember to check your white pages and local governmental websites for additional housing resources.

- Public Housing Authorities -- The State of California does not own or operate public housing; public housing is administered directly through local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs). For those jurisdictions that do not have a local PHA, the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) has a Housing Assistance Program (HAP) that administers the Section 8 program in those counties.
- Housing and Urban Development -- HUD's mission is to increase homeownership, support community development, and increase access to affordable housing, free from discrimination.

## Food/Nutrition/Health Care

Individuals also require proper nutrition. The fear of not providing for one's family can be both a motivator for further training or education and a barrier to training and education. Address the fear upfront, make sure that avenues to prosperity are clear and remember that nontraditional careers are frequently a way to avoid economic success. The following links will provide statewide resources for food assistance.

- WIC -- WIC, the Women, Infants, and Children program, is a nutrition program that helps pregnant women, new mothers and young children eat well and stay healthy.
- Food Stamps The Food Stamp Program is a federally funded program that helps low-income people buy the food they need for good health.
- The phone book can be useful in locating additional resources, such as Food Closets, soup kitchens, low-cost bakeries/grocery stores. Additional resources may be found through local church bulletins and governmental websites.
- Healthy Families -- Healthy Families is low cost insurance for children and teens. It provides health, dental and vision coverage to children who do not have insurance and do not qualify for free Medi-Cal.
- State and Local Governmental Medi-Cal/Dental Agencies (Medi-Cal, health clinics etc.)
- 211 is a system that provides 7 days per week, 24 hours per day information on social services and governmental agency resources, often in many languages. For a list of cities and areas the provide 24 hour referrals by simply dialing "211" see: <http://www.211.org/ReferWeb/MainForm.aspx>

## Child Care

Having reliable and affordable childcare is essential to success in training and employment. Additionally, it is crucial to assist individuals in creating a back up plan for when the primary provider is not available or children are sick. The following resources can be useful.

- Identify the local Resource and Referral agency in your county to coordinate child care needs. See the California Childcare Resource and Referral Network: [www.rrnetwork.org/resources-and-links/counties.html](http://www.rrnetwork.org/resources-and-links/counties.html)

- Student Co-Op Babysitting -- This commercial link provides information about setting up a cooperative (co-op) babysitting arrangement for students. See: <http://www.preschooleducation.com/art4.shtml>

## **Transportation**

Many families are unable to afford the cost of an automobile, have little information about public transportation services, and are unclear on the ways to obtain public transportation routes and schedules. Consider the following

- Bus/public transportation -- For information about public transportation throughout California go to [http://www.apta.com/links/state\\_local/ca.cfm](http://www.apta.com/links/state_local/ca.cfm)
- Host a workshop on public transportation to review routes, schedules and programs available to low individuals.

## **Other Support Services**

Many individuals face obstacles such as family dysfunction, domestic abuse, drug or alcohol addiction, mental illness, or simply the difficulty of balancing work/training, self and family responsibilities. For assistance in locating helpful social services or agencies in some cities, you can dial 211. Information is available 7 days per week, 24 hours per day, and often provided in many languages.

- For a list of cities and areas that provide 24 hour referrals by simply dialing "211" see: <http://www.211.org/ReferWeb/MainForm.aspx>

## **The Importance of Family Support**

There are a variety of reasons why family members do not support the nontraditional student. To assist students\clients it is first important to discover what is contributing to the lack of support.

For example, the family may not be supportive because:

- a) they may not have had the advantages of education themselves
- b) may have had an unpleasant experience with the educational system
- c) their culture may not support nontraditional choices.

## 14 TIPS FOR PARENTS of NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS

1. Debunk the stereotypes. Remind all young people that most men and women will work for pay most of their lives. Every individual needs to be prepared to support him or herself. Nontraditional occupations provide more income for females and often a healthier, more flexible and satisfying lifestyle for males.
2. Actively seek services in your community that are provided by a nontraditional worker. If at all possible consider services from a woman computer technician, a male social worker, a woman carpenter or a male nurse. .
3. Identify family members who have or had skills that relate to nontraditional occupations. Share family history and traits. Many family members have or had inherited aptitudes that adapt to today's challenging and skilled workplace. farming/earth science, housekeeping/management, cooking/processing, sales/communication and so on.
4. Teach young people to watch TV, movies and advertisements/ computer advertisements with a critical eye. Discuss what you've seen together. Look for strong, smart capable men and women who are not limited to traditional roles.
5. Use the media to start a discussion about body image. Consider how girls and women, boys and men are portrayed in the media? Are heavier girls shown as unpopular? Are caring tender males shown as "wimps." Do they go out on dates? Are they used as comic relief? Are young people with "perfect" figures and physiques only shown as sex symbols? Do they seem smart and skilled?
6. Give girls more opportunities to be leaders. Let them, choose the activity, make the rules, or settle a dispute. A girl who has learned to lead is better prepared to take charge of her own education, training and career.
7. Give boys more opportunities to be mediators, artistic, caring and supportive. Let them resolve disagreements, include girls in discussions and appreciate their environment. A boy who can negotiate and consider others will be better able to parent and lead.
8. Give and or encourage young people opportunities to experience science, math and technology. All young people are ready, willing and eager to explore but often they haven't had enough exposure or encouragement. For example, even very young girls can put objects in water to see if they float or sink, attempt simple household fix it activities, understand how machinery works and boys can do household chores, redesign a home office, and care for someone in need or a pet.

9. Help young people get beyond “yuk”. Insist calmly that girls catch an annoying bug, unplug a drain and get their hands dirty putting oil in a car. Boys can help change a diaper, or clean a toilet. This is all part of discovering the world around them.
10. Praise young men and women for their skills and successes, not only for their appearances or popularity. Say “You did a terrific job.” Not “You looked cool or attractive today.”
11. Support your child's exploration of new areas of study and interests. This, after all, is what education is all about!
12. Affirm what you know to be areas of skill and ability he or she has consistently demonstrated. Sometimes students overlook these and need to be reminded.
13. Talk with your son or daughter about the courses and activities he or she is enjoying and how well your student is doing. Students discover new things about themselves throughout the college experience. Your willingness to listen and be a sounding board will keep you in the loop.
14. Don't deter your student if he or she is excited about majoring in something like drafting, consumer science, computer aided design, health care, mathematics, music or art, etc. These can be excellent choices, particularly if they are a good match for a student's interests and skills.

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### **Posters and Other Materials to Motivate and Support Nontraditional Choices**

There is a slogan that reads “You cannot be what you cannot see!” Many students have not seen themselves in promotional posters. The majority of images have depicted a traditional white male worker. Today’s posters need to reflect the diversity of our communities and encourage participation by all. Provide posters and brochures with positive, diverse images and slogans.

## **SPECIAL POPULATIONS**

In addition to needing support because students are pursuing a nontraditional occupational path, many individuals face additional challenges. Single Parents and Displaced Homemakers, Individuals with Disabilities, Limited English Proficient Individuals, Migrant Workers, Foster Children and Refugees have unique challenges and may need additional support.

*Comments from other educators:*

*Our hospital likes to hire from within so if we can get a student to volunteer or get a summer job delivering trays and getting to know the hospital, the hospital will pay a percentage of the training. They can get all kinds of specialized types of training that lead to good paying jobs.*

*The local youth agency provides a hands-on math science encouragement program after school and also arranges for field trips using youth buses and community contacts.*

*We just took a group on a field trip to a business supply company and after we came back the students listed all the jobs they saw women doing. The list was four pages.*

*We've been targeting our high school students with nontraditional speakers who address the need for self-sufficiency. These speakers are from minority populations and the students really benefit from seeing someone they can identify with doing something they never thought of doing.*

### **Single Parents and Displaced Homemakers**

Definition : A single parent is an individual who is

- Unmarried and is pregnant or
- Has full or partial custody for at least one child who is a minor

Definition : A displaced homemaker is an adult who:

- Has worked as an adult primarily without remuneration to care for home and family, and for that reason has diminished marketable skills; and
- Has been dependent on public assistance or on the income of a relative but is no longer supported by that income;
- Is unemployed or underemployed and is experiencing difficulty in obtaining any employment or suitable employment as appropriate; or
- Is a criminal offender

*This population could benefit from short-term training programs, and child care and, often, transportation assistance. Other assistance might include*

*employability skills, business/work clothing, job seeking and interviewing skills, parenting skills and job retention support.*

*Comments from other educators:*

*We introduced a three-hour a week fitness program for our adult students. We walked all around the campus each lunch hour and showed them how to do simple exercises.*

## **Individuals with Disabilities**

Differently-abled Individuals need to select occupations that are consistent with their abilities. Often, they benefit from adapted equipment and tools, and appropriate modifications to the classroom and curricula. Transportation assistance may also benefit this population. The California Department of Rehabilitation offers a variety of services to persons with disabilities. Insert link to website here. Also refer to the Transitions document from CDE that helps students with disabilities and parents plan transition to college and employment.

## **Limited English Proficient (LEP) Individuals**

*This group is now referred to as English Language Learners (ELL)*

Definition: a LEP (or ELL) individual is defined by federal law as a person who

- Was not born in the United States, or whose native language is a language other than English, and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; or
- Is a Native American or an Alaska Native or who is a native resident of the outlying areas and comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on such individual's level of English language proficiency; or
- Is migratory and whose native language is other than English and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and whose difficulties may deny such individual the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English, or to participate fully in our society.

This population might benefit from additional tutoring, ESL courses, classroom aides career/college planning, and assistance with citizenship rights and responsibilities.

*Comments from other educators:*

*Although we were graduating students with a GED they could not pass the Licensed Practical Nurse entrance test. So we found a preparatory class that gets them ready for the test.*

## Migrant Workers

*Students must have initiative; they should not be mere imitators. They must learn to think and act for themselves--and be free." -- CESAR CHAVEZ:*

Definition:

- Migratory workers, or
- The children of migratory workers who move for the purposes of obtaining seasonal or temporary work in agriculture or fishing

California agriculture depends on the migrant farm worker. Migrant workers provide seasonal services in agriculture, fishing, or related industries, including food processing. Because the work is seasonal, they follow the growing season and move from place to place throughout the year. Many of these families have an average income below the national poverty line. Migrant Education is dedicated to helping these children overcome the disadvantages they face, and to become successful, productive citizens.

Being a migrant complicates the basic steps in education because of frequent moves, poverty, gaps in previous schooling, and language barriers. Migrant students also confront societal and institutional barriers, due to ethnic differences and community isolation. Moving from place to place makes it difficult to attend school regularly, learn at grade level, accrue credits, and meet all graduation requirements. It is also difficult to participate in sports or other socializing activities and gain nonagricultural work experience. Mobility makes it harder to receive the adult support that most young people need to prepare for post secondary training and also makes it more difficult to meet the residency requirements of some colleges.

*This population might benefit from career/college planning, assistance in obtaining financial aid and work study programs, opportunities for making up credit, tutoring, test-taking and study-skills development.*

Migrant Education supports programs designed to strengthen the school, community, and family experiences of migrant children and their families. The programs are developed by the California Migrant Education Regional Offices in collaboration with the school districts to help migrant children overcome education interruption, health related problems, and other factors that inhibit the ability of such children to be successful in school.

*Comments from other educators:*

*We have a separate computer lab for student use so they can practice. It gives them a chance to catch up since most don't have access to computers at home.*

## Foster Children

Children in foster care are three to six times more likely than children not in care to have emotional, behavioral and developmental problems including conduct disorders, depression, difficulties in school, and impaired social relationships. Some conservative estimates are that about 30% of the children in care have marked or severe emotional problems. The educational needs of children in care can be substantial. Various studies have indicated that children and young people in foster care tend to have limited education and job skills; perform more poorly educationally than children who are not in foster care, lag behind in their education by at least one year, and have lower educational attainment than the general population. What is the source of these statistics?

*This population might benefit from awareness and sensitivity to nontraditional families, teachers that been trained to handle disruptive students effectively and respectfully, career/college planning, assistance in obtaining financial aide and work study programs.*

*Comments from other educators:*

*I think mentoring is one of the most valuable things. Each year I try to connect my students with somebody. I recruit from everywhere: my sister and cousin, women's professional service organizations, even my church!"*

## Refugees

Refugees encounter many of the same obstacles as Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals. However, they are usually in this country not by choice, but because they are seeking political asylum. Refugees are generally not able to plan their migration in advance; consequently they end up ill-prepared to face the incredibly difficult situations ahead of them. Additionally, many refugees have experienced pain and suffering in their past and they may benefit from additional support such as mental health and, sometimes, drug and alcohol counseling. Some refugees arrive with little or no transferable skills and others possess credentials that are not accepted in the United States.

This population might benefit from additional tutoring, English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, classroom aides career/college planning, and assistance with citizenship rights and responsibilities.

*Comments from other educators: Our career tech science program offers high school science credit and the classes are full!*

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## Support to Address Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment of students can be a real and serious problem in education. It can affect any student, regardless of sex, race, or age. Sexual harassment can threaten a student's physical or emotional well being, influence how well a student does in school, and make it difficult for a student to achieve his or her career goals. Moreover, sexual harassment is illegal--Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual harassment.

The U.S Department of Education Sexual Harassment definition:

*Sexual Harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when made by a member of the school staff to a student or to another staff member or when made by a student to another student, where:*

- *Submission to such conduct is made whether explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or education; or*
- *Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for employment or education decisions affecting such individual; or*
- *Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's educational or work performance, or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive employment or education environment.*

Sexual harassment is a form of sexual discrimination. It may be:

- Physical, such as unwelcome touching or interference with movement, leering, gestures
- Verbal, such as epithets, derogatory comments or slurs
- Visual, such as the display of derogatory sexual cartoons, drawings or posters
- Treating females differently than males (or vice-versa)
- Subtle, sexual advances, even flattering in some instances, that make some individuals feel awkward about rejecting the advances

For additional information, see: United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: [http://www.eeoc.gov/types/sexual\\_harassment.html](http://www.eeoc.gov/types/sexual_harassment.html)

## **Other Sources of Support**

A little bit of encouragement goes a long way! The strategies listed below may improve retention and success for your students.

- Give certificates of progress and completion
- Create a “buddy” system
- Offer students opportunities for cooperative learning
- Host a Family Open House and recognition events
- Invite students to be peer advisors
- Provide career counseling
- Develop an advisor program
- Provide language support
- Coordinate internships, work experience and/or job shadowing
- Schedule classes at an appropriate and manageable time of day that works with local transport schedules
- Find financial support to purchase tools and books
- Assemble a lending library
- Create a clothes closet
- Appeal for used laptop computers that can be loaned to students
- Provide onsite child care or facilitate cooperative child care opportunities
- Create or locate a parenting support group
- Provide bus/rail passes or organize shared rides
- Find a volunteer to organize a mentoring program for your students
- Connect to an automobile “fix it” program
- Present workshops on a number of topics such as: Parenting, Dress for Success, Study Skills, Budgeting and Money Management