

Your Question:

You requested information on student basic needs services at postsecondary institutions.

Our Response:

Postsecondary students face myriad issues, and postsecondary institutions are uniquely positioned to provide innovative solutions of support, including [on-campus child care centers](#), [mental health services](#), [food and housing assistance](#) and more.

A [2019 study](#) conducted by the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice (the Hope Center) surveyed nearly 167,000 students at 171 two-year institutions and 56 four-year institutions. The survey found that:

- 46% faced housing insecurity.
- 17% of students reported experiencing homelessness in the previous year.
- 39% were food insecure.

Additional surveys found that:

- Nearly [1 in 5 undergraduate students](#) were parents potentially balancing school, work and family.
- [Nearly two-thirds](#) of students on college campuses reported worsened mental health since the beginning of the pandemic.

Below is information on state policies and approaches to address the needs of postsecondary students, including child care, mental health, housing, food insecurity, financial wellness and digital technology. Additional state examples are provided on coordinated statewide approaches providing varying services for postsecondary students.

Child Care

A [study by the Hope Center](#) surveyed 23,000 parenting students at two- and four-year institutions about various academic and nonacademic experiences. The study found that 53% were food insecure in the prior 30 days, 68% were housing insecure in the last year, and 17% experienced homelessness in the previous year. Fifty percent of the parenting students surveyed have at least one child between the ages of 0-5, and 78% of those parents indicated they need, currently use or plan to use child care.

Some states have started collecting information and data to understand the student parenting population's size and needs. In 2021, **Illinois** enacted [S.B. 267](#) and [H.B. 2878](#) creating the Student Parent Data Collection Act, which requires each public institution of higher education to determine the parental status of each of its enrolled students.

Mental Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated issues impacting [student mental health](#) and postsecondary support services. A [2021 survey](#) found that 72% of college presidents identified the mental health of students as the most pressing issue. Historically underserved student populations – such as [students of color](#) and [LGBTQI+ students](#) – and

[students with existing mental health conditions](#) are more likely to have insufficient access to adequate mental health services.

Some states have made recent changes to address mental health services at postsecondary institutions. For example, **Nevada** [S.B. 249](#) requires a university, state college or community college to ensure that information related to mental health resources, including a local or national suicide prevention hotline and text option, appears on the back of student identification cards. **Washington** enacted [S.B. 5194](#) to create a [pilot program](#) at select community or technical colleges to increase student access to mental health counseling and services.

Housing

According to the [Hope Center survey](#), 46% of respondents were housing insecure, and 17% of respondents experienced homelessness during the previous year. Lack of housing services is particularly an issue at two-year institution campuses, where only [28% of community colleges](#) provide on-campus housing.

In **Ohio**, the [Cleveland Scholar House](#), a development plan announced in May 2021, will provide housing support for students who are single parents and attend either Cuyahoga Community College or Cleveland State University.

In 2020, **Maine** enacted [H.P. 640](#), which sought to support college completion by youth experiencing homelessness in the state. The bill created a requirement for each institution of higher education in the state to designate a staff member to act as a liaison to assist enrolled youth experiencing homelessness. Institutions with residential campuses must also give youth experiencing homelessness priority in obtaining on-campus housing.

Food Insecurity

A [2019 college survey](#) found that 48% of students at two-year institutions, and 41% of students at four-year institutions faced food insecurity during the prior 30 days. Overall, 45% of postsecondary students that responded to the survey were food insecure in the previous 30 days. A recent [survey](#) also found that food insecurity among postsecondary students fluctuates throughout the school year.

Many states have implemented strategies to support postsecondary institutions to reduce food insecurity, including assisting eligible students to access the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#) (SNAP). In 2021, **Maryland** enacted [H.B. 891](#) and [S.B. 767](#) providing on-campus food pantries to provide easily accessible food for students.

Financial Wellness

A [new report](#) from the Hope Center found that most students experiencing basic needs did not apply or seek emergency aid in the spring of 2020, with one in three not knowing that financial aid was available.

Tennessee enacted [S.B. 229/H.B. 6](#) in 2021, which established a four-year pilot program to award completion grants for Tennessee Promise scholarship students who have an immediate financial need or are experiencing a financial hardship that may prevent them from completing a degree or credential.

Digital Technology

In 2020, Education Commission of the States released a [policy brief on broadband access and digital divides](#). The brief highlights the Illinois application for federal [GEER funds](#) as state policy creating access to devices. According to the

application, “a primary purpose of the allocation the state will make to public [institutes of higher education] will be to support technological capacity” for students of color, students from low-income backgrounds and students from rural areas. The state received \$108 million from the [federal GEER fund](#). It directed nearly half of these funds, or \$49 million, to the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Community College Board. According to the [office of Gov. JB Pritzker](#), this higher education funding was committed to “overcome barriers facing students” and could be used to fund laptops to address the needs of higher education students.

Coordinated Statewide Approaches

Education Commission of the States identified several states that have enacted policies that take varied approaches to address myriad needs of students at postsecondary institutions.

California enacted [A.B. 132](#) in 2021, which requires each campus of the California Community Colleges (CCC) to establish the position of a Basic Needs Coordinator to act as a broker in identifying, supporting and linking students to on- and off-campus housing, food, mental health, and other basic needs services and resources, among other responsibilities. Each campus must also establish a Basic Needs Center, a central location on campus where services, resources and staff are available to students.

Illinois has enacted legislation to address several wraparound supports for postsecondary students. These policies provide varied approaches to serving students through institution-level services. The [Student Parent Data Collection Act](#), discussed above, requires public institutions of higher education to determine the parental status of each enrolled student. To address housing instability, [H.B. 374](#) permits community colleges and housing authorities to develop affordable housing for postsecondary students. Regarding mental health services, [H.B. 2152](#) requires public colleges and universities to raise mental health awareness through student orientation sessions, integrated curricula and information on their websites.

In 2021, **Minnesota** ([H.F. 7](#)) appropriated funds to the state’s office of higher education to allocate grants to eligible institutions with a demonstrable homeless student population. The funds are designed to assist students in meeting immediate needs that may become barriers to completion, including emergency housing, food and transportation.

North Carolina’s [Student Success Center](#), housed at the North Carolina Community College System Office, helps community colleges coordinate supports at individual campuses and across the 58 community colleges in the state. One of the direct services provided by the Student Success Center is a “[social care network](#)” that connects students to community resources that can help with food and housing assistance, cash assistance and other supports on campus and in the community.