



## a guide to parental leave + benefits for students at NYU

Graduate school can be a difficult environment to bear or raise a child, with limited formal support for student parents and informal department-based arrangements often discouraging or even penalizing of parenting. Nevertheless, graduate students and other workers at NYU have organized over several generations to make our campuses more accommodating environments for student parents. This booklet presents some of the resources that are already available to graduate student parents, as well as the

recommendations and demands that graduate students are advocating for today.

This booklet is also meant to serve as an introduction to, and invitation to join, ongoing organizing campaigns around issues of concern to student parents, particularly those being crafted by the student workers' union (**GSOC-UAW-Local 2110**). The union has recently made progress in negotiations to address some concerns of student parents, but ongoing organizing will be necessary to realize and to expand upon these victories.



.....  
**Note about inclusive language:** *We've written this guide to help new parents (new to NYU, or to their children), in the broadest terms possible. Because of the way that laws and policies have been written, some parts of this guide apply only to people who have given birth. We recognize that this is not the only path to becoming a parent and starting a family. We hope that adoptive parents and non-birth partners will also find useful information here.*

# Information for all students

## Health insurance

As far as health insurance goes, when you bring a new member into your family, you are entitled one to “special enrollment.” This means that whether you welcome your new child at the start of the year or mid-semester, you will be able to get everyone insured regardless of enrollment deadlines. So, when you have a moment in the lead-up to the birth/adoption of your child, it’s a good idea to crunch some numbers and find out whether or not you want to bring everyone into the NYU student plan (as your dependent/s), the NY State Marketplace (as a group of individuals), or the insurance plan of someone else in your family (with you and your child/children as their dependents).

Assessing the value of NYU’s student plan for dependents is a bit tricky, because there are some peculiarities that you won’t find in other insurance schemes. In terms of pricing, NYU dependent insurance covers all the dependents you have (children and partners/spouses) for one flat fee that’s equal to the full price of your existing plan (or whatever plan you may want to swap into during special enrollment). In this way it costs the same if you have 1 dependent, 2, or 11. However, because your dependents are processed as an addition to your plan, you need to enroll them in the same level of coverage as you select for yourself.

Furthermore, you and dependents do not have equal status under the same NYU plan. Dependents can’t access the NYU Student Health Center where we otherwise get special rates. When deciding on what health plan makes sense for you and your family, keep an eye on what the ‘in network’ coverage and

deductibles of your health plan because that’s the cheapest rate they’ll be able to access.

The good news is that MagnaCare (the PPO network NYU health insurance covers) is accepted by most doctors’ offices and, because of the Affordable Care Act, all plans cover benefits important to many parents such as free breast pumps and pediatric dental check-ups.

One thing to watch out for is that your own NYU health insurance coverage (and therefore your dependents’ enrollment) may be disrupted by parental leave. You cannot sign up for student health insurance while you are on unpaid personal leave from the university. However, if you have already received insurance for the semester (or year), it will not be withdrawn. For this reason, it may make sense for some people to strategically sign up for and pay for annual coverage rather than semester-by-semester rates with NYU insurance. That way you don’t have to worry about a drop between semesters. You may still encounter complications transitioning from one academic year to the next, however. This complication does not apply to paid sick leave.

If access to continuing health insurance coverage could pose a problem for you, be sure to reach out to the Dean’s office and the union early. You may be able to negotiate around this problem by reasonably pointing out that this is a terrible policy, or via a formal grievance if that doesn’t work. There are also ways to pay for a 90 day extension of your existing NYU health insurance policies if you’re graduating.



## Childcare

Selecting childcare providers is a complicated, very personal decision, and depends on many contingent factors. As a result, we can't recommend any one option for everyone, but if you're looking for a place to start exploring your options you may find some useful information in the babysitter's registry on NYUCareerNet<sup>1</sup> or the NYU Students with Children Club.<sup>2</sup>

There's also a few online platforms for *child-care co-ops* that might be of interest<sup>3,4</sup> and guides on how to start your own co-op system.<sup>5</sup>

## Other NYU supports

NYU offers some lactation rooms<sup>6</sup> for nursing parents at Washington Square and will supposedly make further accommodations when requested. Let us know if anyone gives you a hard time.

All NYU student parents have free access to Carebridge<sup>7</sup>, a phone counselling service which can provide information and advice for child health, wellbeing, and financial questions and referrals to other (free and not

Additionally, NYU provides a modest \$200 childcare subsidy for full time graduate students with children under 6. It is available in both the Fall and Spring semesters. Applications are due November 1 and April 1. It isn't much, but it's guaranteed to everyone who fits the criteria.

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.nyu-csm.symplicity.com/students/](http://www.nyu-csm.symplicity.com/students/)

<sup>2</sup> [www.nyu.edu/clubs/studentwithchildren/](http://www.nyu.edu/clubs/studentwithchildren/)

<sup>3</sup> [www.babysitterexchange.com/](http://www.babysitterexchange.com/)

<sup>4</sup> [www.sittingaround.com](http://www.sittingaround.com)

<sup>5</sup> [www.frugal-mama.com/2011/11/reader-story-starting-a-babysitting-swap/](http://www.frugal-mama.com/2011/11/reader-story-starting-a-babysitting-swap/)

free) support services. You can contact them at:

**800-437-0911**

**[clientservice@carebridge.com](mailto:clientservice@carebridge.com)**

---

<sup>6</sup> [www.nyu.edu/employees/life-wellness/family-care/parenting/lactation-resources-and-support.html](http://www.nyu.edu/employees/life-wellness/family-care/parenting/lactation-resources-and-support.html)

<sup>7</sup> [www.nyu.edu/students/undergraduates/student-information-and-resources/students-with-children.html](http://www.nyu.edu/students/undergraduates/student-information-and-resources/students-with-children.html)

# For grad students working a union job

## Leave

**For those who are giving birth:** Under our union contract<sup>8</sup>, students who are workers are entitled to paid sick leave of “reasonable duration.” Giving birth counts!

Under NY state disability law, workers should get 6 weeks paid leave for vaginal births and 8 weeks for C-section delivery. While this law was written such that it (outrageously) doesn’t apply to workers who teach (and it only provides for partial pay) GSOC has been able to successfully argue that these time periods should count as “reasonable duration” for grad workers under our contract, resulting in settlements that provide full paid leave to members for the equivalent amounts of time.

However, getting this treatment still requires some effort. NYU doesn’t formally recognize a precedent on these kinds of union cases, which means that you and your union reps may need to file a formal grievance & fight together to ensure that you get your paid leave.

One more thing: if you take more than 14 days of sick leave there is a chance that NYU may fill your position while you’re away and that it may not be open when you return. This is something to work out with your supervisor, as far in advance as possible. If you’re put in a tight place, contact your union rep<sup>9</sup>. We might be able to make a case for you.

## Health insurance with a new family member

Grad students are entitled to the usual 90% of Basic health insurance refund on their own health insurance costs for the semesters in which they work a union job. These students can also access the union's dependent health care fund in these semesters to offset the costs of dependent health insurance. Depending on how many people access the fund, workers can receive up to 75% of dependent health insurance costs refunded back to them.

## What's a union job again?

**Not under contract:** Undergraduates. Graders and tutors. MBA candidates. Graduate Assistants at the School of Medicine. Research Assistants in the ‘pure’ sciences, mathematics, psychology, and engineering.

**Part of the union:** Teaching Assistants. Most Graduate Assistants (a miscellaneous category for administrative, manual, and odd jobs). Graduate Employee Adjuncts up until their 7th year of study. Research Assistants in any other field (including Applied Psychology), so long as NYU is their employer.

**For those who aren't giving birth:** The same ‘reasonable duration’ clause that guarantees sick leave for workers also applies when a worker’s child or spouse is ill. This could provide grounds for non-birth parents to claim some paid leave as well.

<sup>8</sup>[www.makingabetternyu.org/gsocuaw/read-it/](http://www.makingabetternyu.org/gsocuaw/read-it/)

<sup>9</sup>[www.makingabetternyu.org/gsocuaw/our-people/](http://www.makingabetternyu.org/gsocuaw/our-people/)

The application for the fund opens only after the semester in question is over (typically early January and late August), so it is a pretty deferred refund. The spring and summer semesters are bundled together for the purposes of NYU health insurance calculations (so save your receipts!). Watch the union’s social media accounts and mailing list for application deadline reminders.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> [@gsocuaw on twitter](https://twitter.com/gsocuaw); [facebook.com/gsocuaw2110/](https://facebook.com/gsocuaw2110/)

## Childcare

GSOC workers are also entitled to a share of the union's childcare fund.<sup>11</sup> This is calculated on an annual basis (according to calendar year) and the amount varies based on the number of kids that apply. Any child under 6 is eligible. In 2015 we paid out about \$2,140 per child. This fund will grow throughout the length of our contract, so we expect that rate to stay relatively the same even as more

people apply. All you have to do to be eligible is to have worked at some point during the year in a union job.

You can (and should) also apply for the NYU \$200 childcare subsidy fund.

---

<sup>11</sup> [www.makingabetternyu.org/gsocuaw/2015/12/09/apply-to-the-childcare-fund/](http://www.makingabetternyu.org/gsocuaw/2015/12/09/apply-to-the-childcare-fund/)

# For non-working students, or for students working outside the graduate union contract

## Leave

NYU does not have any formal policies for student parental leave. Administrative staff get paid leave, but NYU refuses to extend these provisions to students (graduate or undergraduate). We think that's pretty outrageous.

However, with effort new and expecting parents can use generic policies to get some formal recognition and leave. Almost all NYU students can request up to 8 months of voluntary (unpaid) leave<sup>12</sup> for life events. However this leave does not usually change existing time-to-degree requirements and will likely cut off stipend payments and financial aid during that period of time. Matriculation fees by default will still be assessed during this period (but you can and should write to the Dean's office to see if you can be exempt from this requirement, given the circumstances).

Much of the details of voluntary leave are worked out between you, your advisor, and your Dean. Sympathetic people can help move this along in a way that works for you to a degree, but you will likely encounter limits in management's ability to do the right thing in the context of NYU's aforementioned inadequate policies.

If this is the case, we recommend filing a student grievance<sup>13</sup>. All students can do this, as long as they can prove that the university has violated one of its own policies. Fortunately, NYU does have policies in effect that prohibit

## Be Persistent

**If someone says you're not entitled to a benefit, don't believe them. Double check. Ask another office, another individual in the same office, or the union. There's a lot of misinformation out there due to the university's lack of policies on these issues so you should not accept "no" as an answer the first time you ask.**

discrimination<sup>14</sup> on the basis of gender, disability, and marital status, and you could likely make an argument that a lack of full accommodations for new parents violates these policies. You can feel free to reach out to the union for advice and support on how to file a student grievance. Although we can't do it for you in these instances, we do have some experience with the system and we will be happy to help however we can.

---

<sup>12</sup> [www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/student-leave-policy.html](http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/student-leave-policy.html)

<sup>13</sup> [www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/student-grievance-procedure.html](http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/student-grievance-procedure.html)

<sup>14</sup> [www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/non-discrimination-and-anti-harassment-policy-and-complaint-proc.html](http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/non-discrimination-and-anti-harassment-policy-and-complaint-proc.html)



## What NYU needs to change

NYU's current policies fall short of both standards set at peer institutions and our sense of decency. GSOC and its allies are fighting for the following policies to be made official and consistently implemented at NYU:

- » ***Paid parental leave.*** All graduate students at NYU who become parents during their studies should be granted paid parental leave. This leave should be available to all parents, regardless of their working status.
- » ***Parental protection.*** Graduate students taking parental leave must be protected from academic penalties, hiring discrimination, and the loss of health insurance or funding. The duration of the parental leave should not be counted in the time-to-degree, and as such must not affect university scholarships or stipends.

### Conclusion

No one should be denied the capacity to raise a child in a supportive and secure environment. However, for graduate students at a university that doesn't respect their rights to parent, confronting that decision can mean facing uncertainty, confusion, and fear.

GSOC members are mobilizing to win a decent parental leave policy at NYU. We want our university to be a welcoming place to have a child, but we cannot make this a

- » ***Institutionalized policies on academic work.*** Formal academic policies must be established to address how parental leave will be implemented in the event of a mid-semester birth/adoption and how coursework and grades will be accommodated to enable parental leave.
- » ***Better childcare supports for non-working parents.*** NYU's current childcare support for non-working parents is small and ineffectual. NYU must match standards set at peer institutions by increasing its payments exponentially and providing childcare centers on its campuses that are open and accessible to students
- » ***Deferral for parents.*** Admitted graduate students must be able to defer their enrollment in an academic program at NYU to allow for parental leave.

reality without your involvement. Join the campaign, and help us build the foundation for confident parents and carefree children at NYU.

To get involved in the campaign for a fair and just parental leave policy at NYU, or for services and support with your individual needs, write us at [gsoc@2110uaw.org](mailto:gsoc@2110uaw.org).

---

*We aim to keep this guide continuously updated, but we may have missed something. If you can think of any other useful information that we should include in future editions, please contact us at [gsoc@2110uaw.org](mailto:gsoc@2110uaw.org).*