**Child care task force**

**Family-friendly statement and policies**

**[3/8/12]**

Our recommendations make note of “gaps and absences” in current policy and resources in plain text. We have proposed language for new statements and policies in italics.

**Gaps and Absences**: There is presently no University statement in support of family-friendly policies, and no systemwide statement.

**Proposed statement**: *Given its mission to improve individual lives and enhance economic and community development, Western Carolina University recognizes the needs of employees to achieve balance in their work and family lives. To provide a family-friendly workplace, the University recognizes the need to institute family-friendly policies.*

We also recommend seeking systemwide adoption of a pro-family statement.

**Proposed statement**: *As a public, multicampus university dedicated to the service of North Carolina and its people and an institution resolved to contribute to the solution of societal problems and enrich the citizens’ quality of life, the University of North Carolina supports its employees as they balance work and family responsibilities. The University of North Carolina strives to provide, to the greatest degree possible, a family-friendly workplace and family-friendly policies.*

**Gaps and Absences**: There is no central location for staff and faculty to find information about existing family policies, resources and options.

We recommend creating a website where all family-related information could be pulled together in one place. The website would include the family-friendly statement above and then include the following “policies” and “resources.”

*Please visit the links below, and contact [relevant office] for more information or help navigating this site*. [The policy numbers and names would be, as they presently are, links to the full policy.]

*POLICIES*

*Some policies appear in more than one category.*

*Policies regarding leave and overtime:*

*University Policy #31—Leave Policies for Employees Subject to the Personnel Act (SPA)*

*University Policy # 33—Leave for Firefighting Activities*

*University Policy # 34—Leave for EPA Non-Faculty Staff Members*

*University Policy # 35—Professional Development Activities*

*University Policy # 41—Leave During Adverse Weather Conditions*

*University Policy # 43—Voluntary Shared Leave Program*

*University Policy # 60—Overtime Work*

*University Policy # 76—Community Service Leave*

*University Policy # 89—Serious Illness and Disability Leave for Faculty*

*SEE ALSO: Office of State Personnel Policies: Section 5: Leave*

*SEE ALSO: University of North Carolina: Leave Benefits*

*Policies regarding health and safety:*

*University Policy # 41—Leave During Adverse Weather Conditions*

*University Policy # 44—Safe and Healthful Working Conditions*

*University Policy # 53/70—Sexual Harassment and Other Unlawful Harassments*

*University Policy # 71—Children in the Workplace or Unsupervised on Campus*

*University Policy # 83—Accommodation of Faculty, Employees and Applicants with Disabilities*

*University Policy # 89—Serious Illness and Disability Leave for Faculty*

*University Policy # 107: Employee Assistance Program*

**Gaps and Absences in the policies**: Despite its expression of “sympathy,” University Policy 71 is not family-friendly and does not address the needs of twenty-first century employees. It addresses only in part the differing regulations that apply to SPA and EPA employees. The text of the current policy is as follows:

**University Policy #71 Children in the Workplace or Unsupervised on Campus**

“On occasion, young children have been brought to the University campus and have remained for extended periods of time either in a work area under parental supervision or elsewhere on campus without supervision. Most often, these occurrences are in Summer [sic], on snow days during Winter [sic], on holidays, and at other times when public schools and day care facilities are either closed or inaccessible.

“While sympathetic with [sic] the difficulties parents may encounter in arranging supervisory care for their children, the University, for several compelling reasons, cannot accommodate children in campus workplaces or in unsupervised circumstances on campus. These reasons include risk of injury, disruption of classes and other normal University operations, and diversion of employee time and attention from job performance.

“Accordingly, the following University policies are promulgated:

• Children under the age of 14, when on campus, must be accompanied by a responsible older person or be properly enrolled in a supervised University activity.

• Children may not be present in a parent or caretaker’s campus workplace for extended periods of time.

• Supervisors are encouraged to accommodate employees as much as possible in scheduling sick and annual leave to provide or arrange child care.”

**We recommend changing the name of the policy to “Children on Campus” and rewriting it as follows**:

*The University expects parents to arrange for the care of their children. However, there will be times when, for reasons beyond their control, parents of young children (defined here as too young to be left at home alone)[[1]](#footnote-1) may find themselves having to decide how to care for their children while fulfilling their work responsibilities. To address this problem, the University sets forth the following policies and recommendations.*

*\* children under the age of 14 may not be unaccompanied or unsupervised on campus*

*\*parents should avail themselves of the university’s website for information about alternative and emergency childcare*

*\* supervisors of SPA employees are encouraged to accommodate employees as much as possible in scheduling sick and annual leave to provide or arrange child care*

*\* departments and units on campus where parents are employed should develop guidelines that are both clear and flexible to cover such eventualities as a child’s unexpected sickness, cancellation or delay of school/day care because of weather, medical or other appointments that must be kept during normal work hours, or breakdown of the parents’ customary childcare plans. In particular, parents need to know whether a department or unit would tolerate a child being brought to work or if the parent should take sick leave or, if faculty, cancel classes.*

[Note: we made the above recommendation for department or unit-level policies because the number of parents in a given department or unit might materially impact the policies developed.]

**University Policy #41—Leave During Adverse Weather Conditions**

Current policies concerning adverse weather do not allow sufficient flexibility for those employees who are allotted sick leave or vacation time. In order to make up for time lost due to adverse weather, these employees must work weekends or holidays—again, this is not a family-friendly policy. Understanding that this policy is mandated by the state personnel commission and not subject to change by WCU’s administration, we recommend that the University’s representative to the General Administration carry the following proposal on behalf of all of the UNC institutions:

*To amend Policy 41 Item 5 by adding “charged to sick leave” to the options outlined in the event of adverse weather.*

*RESOURCES*

[This would need to be created and maintained and updated at least annually]

*Licensed Day Care Options: (Link to) (http://ncchildrendhhs.state.nc.us/general/home.asp*

*Child Care options in Jackson County*

[Updated list with phone numbers, contact people, and addresses]

*University Child Care Consortium*: *Students and Local Residents Offering Babysitting Services*

*Please be advised that the University cannot vouch for or endorse any of those who have submitted their names as offering babysitting. It is the parents’ responsibility to investigate any individual’s credentials or fitness to care for their children. Names with an asterisk indicate individuals willing to babysit on a last-minute, emergency basis.*

[Updated list of babysitters—students and others—with phone numbers, days/hours of availability, references]

*Options for After School Care*

[updated list of after school programs, contact information]

*Family and Children’s Campus Activities*

[Updated list of family-friendly or children’s activities, exhibits, plays, movies, etc.]

*Local Children’s Activities*

[Updated list of summer camps or other children-only activities in the county]

*Support for Parents*

[link to university Facebook group where parents could discuss issues related to child care, balancing family and work, and related issues]

1. Parents will make the determination of when they deem their children capable of caring for themselves in the home, in accordance with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services statement at <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/contacts/faqs.htm>. It may never be appropriate to leave children with special needs alone in their home. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)