

# Supporting Single Parents

## Recruitment and Retention Super Strategies

### INTRODUCTION

## Who are Single Parents?

**S**ingle parents are individuals who are unmarried or legally separated from a spouse and have a minor child or children for which the parent has either custody or joint custody or is pregnant.

Recruitment of single parents involves attracting them to Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs using a variety of outreach efforts such as media, communications, community involvement, and persistent follow-through.

### Recruitment efforts should:

- reach individuals who may not be in the school setting but are in need of career and technical training;
- inform single parents about the program, its support services, and its relevance to their needs;
- provide information about financial benefits of livable-wage career and technical training and focus on local employment opportunities; and
- connect with the surrounding community in order to spread information about the program, and to gain more resources and opportunities for single parents.

### Did You Know?

7.51 percent of all households in the United States in 2018, were headed by single mothers with children under the age of 18. The rate in Illinois was 6.97 percent.<sup>3</sup>

## Recruitment Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

**S**ingle parents face unique barriers that may reduce the effectiveness of traditional marketing campaigns for that audience. Recruitment strategies should be designed to overcome these barriers.

- Establish rapport with other stakeholders including community leaders, human service agencies, administrators, educational entities, or non-profit organizations to gain their assistance in recruiting single parents seeking their services.
  - ✓ Supply organizations with informational material related to your programs or services.
  - ✓ Offer to give a presentation about your program to community organizations that may not have expertise in the area but share a stake in the well-being of community members (i.e., churches). Include how the program and services relate to the mission of the organization.
  - ✓ Ask organizations to refer clients they feel would benefit from your programs.
  - ✓ Follow up with single parents who express interest to find out how they heard about the program.
  - ✓ Remember to refer students to partner organizations if they could benefit from services.
  - ✓ Design your recruitment strategies to help overcome local barriers related to demographic factors.
  - ✓ Do not rely solely on digital marketing such as the college website or social media pages. Use alternative vehicles of communication like TV, radio, flyers, etc.
  - ✓ Present information related to education, training, and employment opportunities available within specific communities.
- Design informational materials and messaging that can be spread easily by word of mouth.
- Diversify your recruitment strategy to incorporate multiple locations and formats in order to be effective.
- Conduct ongoing recruitment campaigns for the target audience.
- Designate a single point of contact to walk individuals through the initial enrollment steps and to provide ongoing support.
- Include information about program and support services available through the college in all marketing.
- Develop marketing materials that feature photos and testimonials of single parents. Display materials in strategic locations that have specific relevance to single parents.
  - ✓ Relevant locations include childcare and educational facilities where children of single parents are likely to attend; common gathering places that facilitate community engagement (churches, community centers, popular businesses that serve as gathering places); or service centers that cater to the target population (i.e., Department of Human Services, non-profits, or public health organizations and clinics).

## Retention Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

**T**he key for successful retention of any learner is to create a challenging, non-stigmatizing learning environment that meets the individual learner needs. Single parents face potential barriers to academic success and completion. Some of these barriers may include:

- ✓ the need for full-time or part-time employment leading to increased time necessary for completion; and
- ✓ limited financial resources, limited access to transportation, and scheduling commitments related to head of household responsibilities that impact access to opportunities and materials needed for success.

### Systematic retention programs should:

- Provide orientation and career counseling that includes information regarding Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.
  - ✓ Establish benchmarks and strategies for improving participation of single parents in career and technical education programs.
  - ✓ Increase awareness of programs and develop workplace skills by establishing a resource center, with flexible hours, where learners can go to explore their interests and aptitudes using computerized career information software.
- Reduce time to completion by verifying coursework is relevant to the career pathway.
  - ✓ Be prepared to be flexible by creating program maps that anticipate the needs of part-time students.
- Assess the learner's eligibility for specialized support services.
  - ✓ Provide upfront information about assistance related to childcare services, transportation, high school equivalency certification, and financial resources that would allow greater access to CTE programs.
  - ✓ Connect with community networks to provide families with additional assistance.



## Retention Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

- Issue invitations to seminars on issues that are important to single parents and provide incentives for attendance. Examples include courses on:
  - ✓ budgeting
  - ✓ time management
  - ✓ essential employability skills and interview skills
- Establish support organizations or clubs that encourage interaction with other single parents.
  - ✓ Create new parents' networks, cohort support groups, teen parent support programs, and groups that facilitate relationships with mentors.
  - ✓ Connect with community networks to provide families with additional assistance.
  - ✓ Effectively address the need for role models.
- Coordinate with the financial aid office to make financial aid accessible for part-time learners.
  - ✓ Act as a liaison.
- Adequately represent the community's demographics within the clients served. Individuals will feel more comfortable in your program if they recognize that the individuals served accurately portray the community with which they are familiar.
  - ✓ Actively recruit program staff and advisory committee members who have a deep understanding of the challenges of the population being served.

### Sources:

<sup>1</sup> North Carolina Council for Women. Successful Practices for Displaced Homemaker Programs. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Council for Women, North Carolina Department of Administration, 2011.

<http://www.nccfwdvc.com/documents/publications/successful-practices-for-displaced-homemaker-programs.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act H.R.2353, 115th Cong., (2018) (enacted).

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/2353/text?r=2>.

<sup>3</sup> US Census Bureau. "Percentage of Single Mother Households in the U.S. 2018, by State | Statistic." Statista. Accessed February 2, 2020.

<http://www.statista.com/statistics/242302/percentage-of-single-mother-households-in-the-us-by-state/>.