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Community College Student-Parents: Experience, Persistence, and Outcomes



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 Community Partner: Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance
 Faculty Advisor: Jack Dougherty

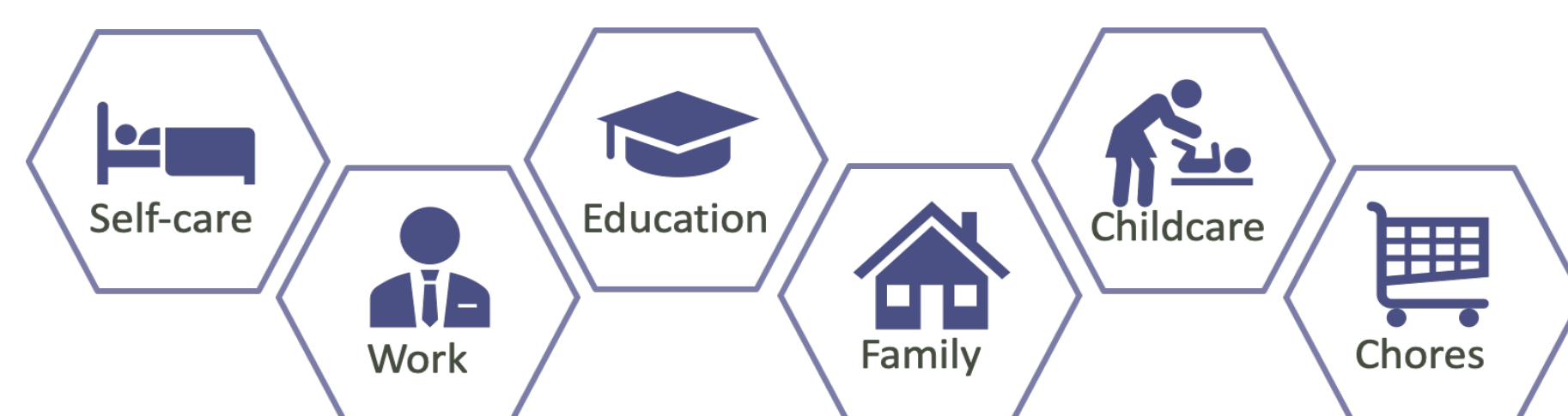


Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance

The Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance (CECA) works to improve early care and education access across the state of Connecticut for children aged birth to eight. The CECA builds comprehensive action plans and advocates on behalf of early childhood legislation.

Problem

- The Connecticut economy is changing and will require more high-skill workers to prevent a credential gap in the future.
- Student-parents make up 22% of undergraduates, and over half have at least one preschool aged child or younger.
- Childcare is one of the largest household expenses and is a major constraint for parents who engage in post-secondary education.
- Limited research exists on their academic success compared to their non-parent peers.



Research Questions

- How do state policies vary on granting access to CCDF funding?
- How do the experiences of student-parents and non-parents differ in their community college attendance, persistence, and outcomes?

Methods and Data Sources

Data Sources

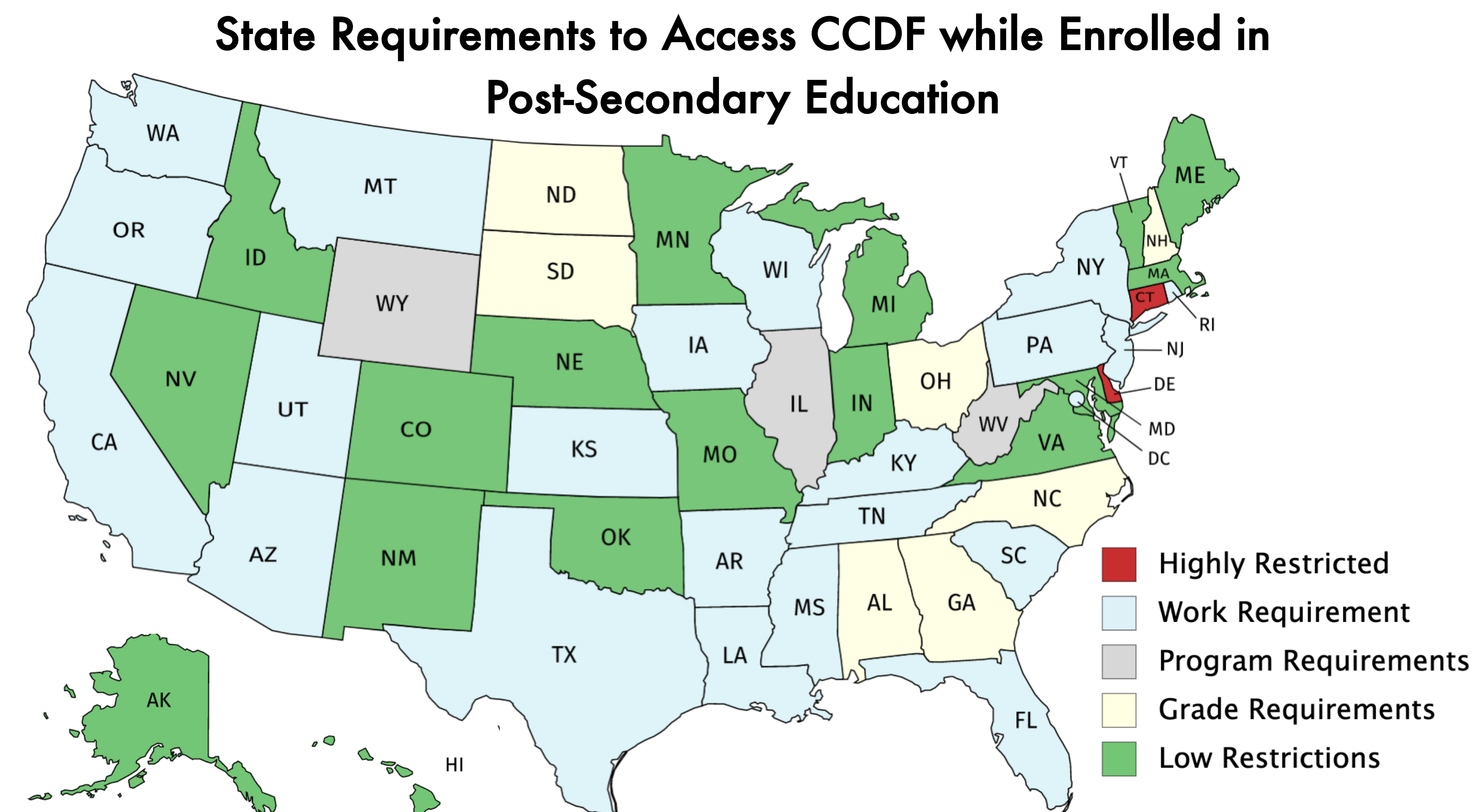
Quantitative:

Descriptive analysis of 2012-17 Beginning Postsecondary study from the National Center for Education Statistics DataLab PowerStats

Qualitative:

Thematic coding of 2 interviews with current Capital Community College student-parents with young children

1) CT and DE Highly Restrict Childcare Subsidy Access for Low-Income Postsecondary Students



Source: The CCDF Policies Database Book of Tables: Cross-State Variations (as of 2017); analyzed by author

- The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is a federal block grant program utilized by states to provide childcare subsidies for low income parents of young children
- Though there are federal guidelines that stipulate family eligibility, states use additional work hour requirements, program restrictions, GPA minimums, and time limits to further restrict parent access
- CT and DE have the tightest restrictions on accessing CCDF when enrolled in postsecondary education. CT specifically limits access to teenage and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) parents.
- Most states, excluding CT, allow parents to access CCDF while enrolled in adult education, GED, ESL, and job training programs

2) Parents & Non-Parents have Similar HS GPAs, but Differ on Confidence

Despite similar academic achievement in high school, student-parents report lower levels of academic confidence prior to enrollment in community college

	Student-Parents	Non-Parents
High School GPA (%)		
0.5-1.9	9.2	9.2
2.0-2.9	38.4	40.6
3.0-4.0	52.4	50.2
Prior Academic Confidence (%)		
Disagree *	12.4	5.9
Neutral	14.6	9.8
Agree *	73.0	84.2

* p < 0.05; Source PBS 2012/17 Survey Data

3) More Student-Parents Leave Without a Degree than Non-Parents

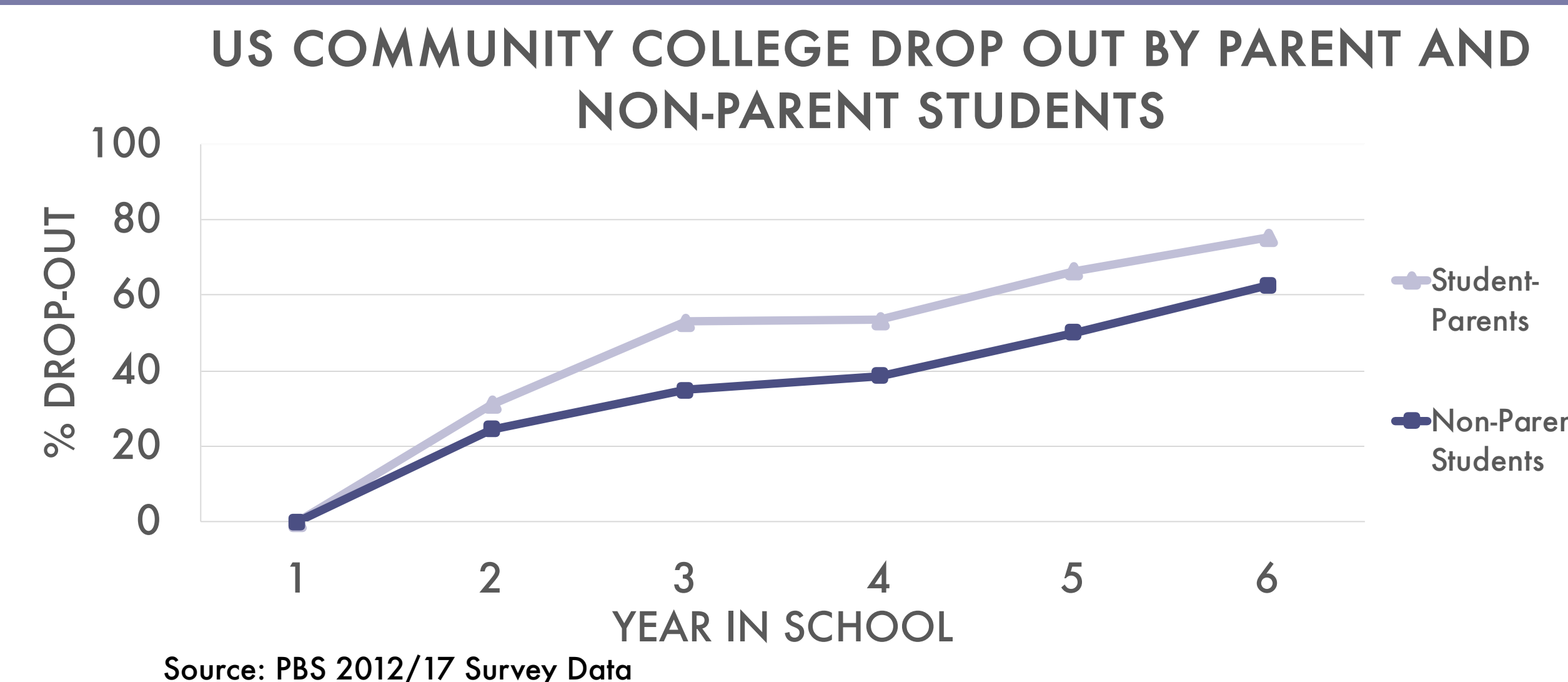
Student-parents are less likely to attain their expected degree and leave their institution without a degree, compared to non-parents.

	Student-Parents	Non-Parents
Credential/Enroll Status (%)		
Attained *	30.0	42.3
No degree, still enrolled	9.4	15.1
No degree, not enrolled *	60.6	42.6

* p < 0.05; Source: PBS 2012/17 Survey Data

4) Student-Parents More Likely to Drop Out Compared to Non-Parent Students

Starting in the second year of enrollment, student-parents are significantly more likely to drop out than their non-parent peers. For parents, 31% drop out by their second year, 53% by their fourth year. In contrast, 24% of non-parents drop in their second, and 38% in their fourth.



Source: PBS 2012/17 Survey Data

"'Is this right? Am I being selfish?' Like my kids, like I should be with my kids. I should be spending time with them... Could I have done this better... but... You're gonna have some guilt about something somewhere along the lines"

- Capital Community College student with middle school son and preschool aged twins
 Source: CCC Student Interview (Fall 2019)

Legislative Suggestions

- Increase access to CCDF funding for parents engaged in post-secondary education like community college as well as other educational opportunities such as high school/GED, English as a Second Language classes, and job training programs
- Increase grants for on-site childcare facilities at educational institutions, which is a known factor to help increase student-parent success

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References available upon request.