



Scan Locke:stodsy.com/660375

**Strengthening Economic Supports for Women in Missouri  
State Wide Needs Assessment**  
Community Conversation Report and Policy Recommendations

**Project Team:**  
**Melissa Patterson Hazley, PhD**  
**Hepsi Swarna, MS**  
**Amelia Reighard, LMSW**

# Report Highlights

## Summary

UMKC –IHD conducted a statewide Needs Assessment to study barriers to education and employment as they are protective factors for sexual victimization. We also investigated ways to reduce those barriers. Barriers to employment and education were identified in Phase 1. Policy opportunities that remove or decrease those barriers is the focus of this report (Phase 2).

## Policy & Program Opportunities

### ➤ Childcare Assistance

Reduce the burden of licensing requirements by conducting a complete review of the rules and update policies in meaningful ways.

To increase providers, find ways to fund more types of childcare (e.g workplace childcare, family – led childcare, and short term childcare for attending class or completing homework).

Consider raising the income cut – off to quality for childcare assistance as wages have not increased while cost of goods, services and housing have.

### ➤ Education Assistance and Training Programs

Support the creation a “one stop shop” for potential students to learn about and apply for education funding.

Include more short – term programs in education funding parameters such as specialized certificates including those for traditionally male jobs.

Increase the Pell grant and create forgivable loan programs.

### ➤ Transportation Assistance

Expand types of eligible transportation funding (e.g. car repairs, fuel, rideshare programs, employer provided transportation and auto loan payments).

Prioritize access to public transportation especially in rural communities.

### ➤ Strong Support Systems

Support more programs that provide support systems (e.g. mentorship, career and education coaching).

### ➤ \*Technology

COVID-19 has increased communities need for access to broadband, computers and online learning and working. This should be a policy priority area.

## Methods

### Data

UMKC IHD hosted six virtual Community Conversations across the state involving 92 participants (Table 1). The Community Conversations gathered community-level strategies and policies to address the primary barriers to education and employment the needs assessment identified. The events were attended by professionals in employment services, higher education, victim services organizations, probation and parole, social services, non-profit organizations and other community members.

### Methods

Community conversations were conducted virtually and lasted 45-60 minutes and were audio and video recorded. Each audio file was transcribed and uploaded to qualitative software (Atlas.ti) for analysis. The community conversations were analyzed using a Case Study methodology. We used thematic analysis to identify and analyze patterns (themes) across interviews and grant reports.

**Table 1:Community Conversations Locations**

Region and Location	No of Participants
Central, Columbia	18
Eastern, St. Louis	22
Northeast, Hannibal	12
Northwest, Kansas City	12
Southeast, Charleston	19
Southwest, Springfield	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>

We analyzed the themes by how many times they were mentioned. It was expected that the most important themes would be the most mentioned.

## Childcare Assistance Policy : Employment and Education

Three areas most frequently discussed during Community Conversations for potential policy modification or policy that enables alternative program parameters were **expanding childcare centers hours** to include weekend, evening and part-time care; consider **modification to state childcare subsidies** so that more women qualify and can use the benefit in more ways (ex. family member care); and determine **ways in which licensing requirements can be adjusted** to allow for more child care providers. During the Focus Groups **increasing the availability of affordable childcare centers** and **offering childcare at workplaces and educational institutions** emerged as significant policy areas (Table 2).

**Table 2: Childcare Assistance Policy Recommendations**

Childcare Policy	Frequency (Community Conversations)	Frequency (Focus Groups)
Extended childcare hours (weekend/evening hours/part-time)	15	14
Flexible licensing requirements	3	3
Modification to state childcare subsidies	4	10
Increase the availability of affordable childcare centers	3	20
Offer childcare at workplace/schools	3	11



## Childcare Assistance Policy: Quotes

### Community Voices by Region

*“My wish would be that there would be more daycares available for evening and weekends...if daycares were to be able to offer more assistance for part time daycare, that would be helpful as well.” (Kansas City)*

*“.. I think more, better compensation for childcare centers would definitely help because, you know, it's supply and demand. There's more children that need childcare than there are childcare.” (Springfield)*

*“... something like tax credits for those wanting to make the needed improvements to their homes in order to be licensed in-home day care.” (Charleston)*

*“... additional vouchers, if they could pay for someone that they knew to help with child care...through some type of state funding” (St. Louis)*

*“...child care provider services for some homework time or something like that for folks.” (Columbia)*

*“And it is extremely difficult to get a preschool, it's extremely difficult to get off the ground even...help with starting centers and things like that.” (Hannibal)*

### Focus Groups

*“Change childcare licensure system to incentivize individuals to become childcare providers.” (Hannibal)*

*“State child care assistance without income restrictions/Childcare programs to assist children with special needs.” (Kansas City)*

*“Subsidized quality child care programs not based on income.” (Charleston)*

*“Provide free child care for higher education and high risk k-12 schools (teen moms).” (Springfield)*

*“Employer run daycare/preschool.” (Columbia)*

*“Free child care/assistance in school to study/programming/tutoring older kids evening options.” (St. Louis)*

## Childcare Assistance Policy : Relevant Literature

- Taking care of family is the primary reason women aged 25-54 reported not participating in the labor force (Tüzemen & Tran, 2019).
- Reduced costs and greater availability of child care increases maternal labor force participation and education/vocational training participation (Allen & Miller, 2010).
- Child care subsidies (both public and employer-funded) increase use of families' preferred arrangements leading to employment stability. Subsidies may have greatest impact for kids three and under (Morrissey, 2017; Forry & Hofferth, 2011).
- A multi-prong approach that addresses both supply and demand could better address the barriers to quality childcare faced by parents and decrease child-related disruptions (Morrissey & Warner, 2011).

### References:

- Allen, S. F., & Miller, J. (2010). A community initiative to support family financial well-being. *Community, Work & Family*, 13(1), 89–100.
- Forry, N. D., & Hofferth, S. L. (2011). Maintaining Work: The Influence of Child Care Subsidies on Child Care—Related Work Disruptions. *Journal of Family Issues*, 32(3), 346–368.
- Morrissey, T. W. (2017). Child care and parent labor force participation: A review of the research literature. *Review of Economics of the Household*, 15(1), 1–24.
- Morrissey, T. W., & Warner, M. E. (2011). An exploratory study of the impacts of an employer-supported child care program. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 26(3), 344–354.
- Tuzemen, D., & Tran, T. (2019). The Uneven Recovery in Prime-Age Labor Force Participation. *The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City Economic Review*.

## Transportation Assistance Policy: Employment

Three areas most frequently discussed for potential policy modification or policy that enables alternative program parameters were **flexible transportation funding** (Uber, fuel costs, car repairs, car insurance); **encourage employer initiated transportation programs**; provide fast and affordable **alternatives to public transportation** ; and **assistance with meeting drivers education/licensing requirements**. During the Focus Groups **extending public transit hours and areas** emerged as a significant policy (Table 3).

**Table 3 :Transportation Assistance Policy Recommendations**

Transportation Assistance Policy	Frequency (Community Conversations)	Frequency (Focus groups)
Flexible transportation funding (uber, car repairs, bus pass)	14	9
Assistance with meeting drivers education/licensing requirements	6	NA
Affordable alternatives to public transportation	5	7
Employer initiated transportation programs	2	2
Extend public transit hours and areas	1	8



## Transportation Assistance Policy: Quotes

### Community Voice by Region

*"...extended bus times like we have one that works from two to 10 at KU."* **(Kansas City)**

*"It would be nice to have maybe the State Department, which can partner with the state agency, maybe DMV partner with some of the career centers to provide those driving lessons, because it's not just the driving part, but I doubt many have a problem passing the written test...if there is some kind of program that could, kind of, provide a car for some to somebody for a day or at least provide a car at the DMV so they could take the driving test."* **(Springfield)**

*"I would like to see more funds available to help pay for fuel."* **(Charleston)**

*"I just wonder if there is an option for some sort of incentivizing, you know, gas cards or credits. If there is a way to incentivize and help in some of those ways to remove barriers as far as like, getting repairs done on a vehicle, assisting with insurance, assisting with fuel costs or some sort of like work subsidy, if you're within a certain income level."* **(Columbia)**

*"Employers helping set up car pooling. If there is some way company could help set it up it in terms of who all are interested, some kind of directory or something where a person lives in what area. So it's easier for people to communicate and connect even if they would set some type of rate. So that people know what would be the rate if they wanted to connect with someone in terms of carpooling, rates for certain area is an hour or two from a company."* **(St. Louis)**

### Focus Groups

*"Bus passes, car pool, ride system."* **(Springfield)**

*"Employer paid uber and bus passes or car repair program."* **(St. Louis)**

*"Expand bus hours and areas."* **(Kansas City)**

*"Increased availability of public transit."* **(Charleston)**

*"Affordable 24 hour transportation/agency to aid in transportation barriers and aid in paying taxes, licensing, gas and car payments."* **(Columbia)**

*"Ride sharing/subsidy/help until 1st paycheck."* **(Hannibal)**



## Transportation Assistance Policy : Relevant Literature

- Mobility can have a greater impact on employment status than education or work experience particularly for low-income individuals, women, and immigrants (Lichtenwalter, 2006; Premji, 2017).
- Bus passes are the predominant transportation intervention, yet private vehicles are related to better employment outcomes than even the best public transportation services (Lichtenwalter, 2006).
- Policymakers should focus on improving the affordability and availability of public transit in low-income areas including increasing the number for bus shelters, instituting discount fares, and reviewing the transfer systems that could better support those that work shorter hours or at multiple locations (Premji, 2017).
- Additional focus should be given to the auto insurance systems that increase costs for auto-owners in low-income areas making car ownership more burdensome (Premji, 2017).

### References:

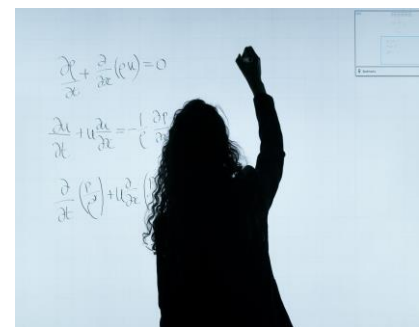
- Lichtenwalter, S., Koeske, G., & Sales, E. (2006). Examining Transportation and Employment Outcomes: Evidence for Moving Beyond The Bus Pass. *Journal of Poverty*, 10(1), 93–115.
- Premji, S. (2017). Precarious Employment and Difficult Daily Commutes. *Relations Industrielles*, 72(1), 77–98.

## Education Assistance Policy: Employment

Participants identified policies that provide education assistance and training for women to start and complete their education. Three areas most frequently discussed for potential policy modification or policy that enables alternative program parameters were making **more certification programs** available; offer **alternative career paths** (such as traditional male jobs) and **career pathways guidance** (such as what types of jobs are open and available at different education levels/career centers); and **provide education programs** for mothers and teen moms. **Easy access to affordable higher education** emerged as an additional policy area during Focus Groups (Table 4).

**Table 4: Education Assistance Policy Recommendations**

Education Assistance Policy	Frequency (Community Conversations)	Frequency (Focus groups)
Certification programs (trade skills training)	10	11
Career pathways guidance	5	1
Education programs for women/mothers/ employees	5	8
Easy access to affordable higher education	NA	5



## Education Assistance Policy: Quotes

### Community Voices by Region

*“What types of jobs are open and available at different education levels in their community?.”*  
**(Kansas City)**

*“I think these girls may feel a little bit lost and without direction...High school counselors might be able to play a role in making some of these connections to post-secondary training and education.”* **(Charleston)**

*“...there's a need to market these kinds of jobs to women so that they know that they can do these kinds of mechanic jobs as well...And I think that a lot of women are not in these fields because no one's ever asked them to be.”* **(Springfield)**

*“...some type of certification program that could get them earning good money with only investing a shorter amount of time. So maybe instead of going four years or two years, you're going for one year.”* **(Columbia)**

*“We've been really looking at like accelerated training programs for women so that they don't have to spend two and three years trying to get some type of certification.”* **(St. Louis)**

### Focus Groups

*“Open all the streams of education to all genders.”* **(Springfield)**

*“Make higher education affordable.”* **(St. Louis)**

*“Availability of local certification programs.”* **(Kansa City)**

*“More trade schools.”* **(Charleston)**

*“Paid education.”* **(Columbia)**

*“Increased access to education, funding, support, childcare, tutoring needs while obtaining education.”* **(Hannibal)**

## Education Assistance Policy : Relevant Literature

- Need for more pathways for women to enter middle-skill jobs such as advanced manufacturing, IT, transportation, distribution, and logistics. Workforce developers/educators/trainers should develop strategies to recruit and prepare more women for such jobs (Hegewisch et al., 2016).
- Higher education and vocational training should consider pathways that allow for smaller and more affordable credentials such as associate degrees, certificates, licenses, and badges that have value to employers and prepares women for a particular workplace. These “stackable credits” can increase participation among older and low-income students (Georgetown University, 2019).

### References:

- Georgetown University. (2019, March 1). ‘Stackable credits’ gain appeal as path to degrees for adult learners, lower-income students. *THE FEED*. <https://feed.georgetown.edu/access-affordability/stackable-credits-gain-appeal-as-path-to-degrees-for-adult-learners-lower-income-students/>
- Hegewisch, A., Bendick, M., Gault, B., Hartmann, H. (2016). Pathways to equity: Narrowing the wage gap by improving women’s access to good middle-skill jobs. *Institute for Women’s Policy Research*. Retrieved from [http://womenandgoodjobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Middle-skills\\_layout-FINAL.pdf](http://womenandgoodjobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Middle-skills_layout-FINAL.pdf)

## Tuition Assistance Policy: Education

Two areas most frequently discussed for potential policy modification or policy that enables alternative program parameters were making **information on funding and resources easily available and accessible** and **offering tuition assistance/cheaper education**. During Focus Groups the majority of the participants recommended tuition assistance for students such as: Scholarships, tuition reimbursement, student loan forgiveness, subsidized tuition, government funded incentives, low interest loans, affordable education, inexpensive tutoring, grants for low-income students and special grants for women (single moms, teen moms) **(Table 5)**.

**Table 5: Tuition Assistance Policy Recommendations**

Tuition Assistance Policy	Frequency (Community Conversations)	Frequency (Focus Groups)
Information on funding and resources easily available and accessible	9	1
Offering tuition assistance/fixing student loan crisis/cheaper education	7	40



## Tuition Assistance Policy: Quotes

### Community Voices by Region

*“And so they don't know what all is available. A huge investment in counseling to make that scholarship/funding information more broadly available would be a tremendous thing.” (Kansas City)*

*“...would like to see more information provided to kids while in middle school and high school about what assistances are out there for kids who don't have families that can pay for college or vocational training.” (Charleston)*

*“If we can figure out how to offer education cheaper.” (Springfield)*

*“Student loan forgiveness is ideal.” (St. Louis)*

*“Scholarships for single moms for continuing education.” (Central)*

### Focus Groups

*“Real student loan forgiveness programs.” (Kansas City)*

*“State support to lower cost/increase budget for colleges.” (Charleston)*

*“Regulate the cost of higher education and fix the student loan crisis.” (Springfield)*

*“Free undergraduate education.” (St. Louis)*

*“Affordable Education.” (Columbia)*

*“Special grants for women returning to school/ single moms, less restrictions on scholarships .” (Hannibal)*

## Tuition Assistance Policy : Relevant Literature

- States should strategize to increase college affordability through public tuition and student financial aid and in particular consider family income levels (Callan, 2002).
- A study on the introduction of the Pell Grant showed a sizeable effect on college enrollment for adult learners (Seftor & Turner, 2002).
- Increases in tuition rates are correlated with decreases in re-enrollment rates of non-traditional, distance learning students. Colleges and Universities should review pricing models for non-transitional students (Spradley, 2018).
- Those seeking to make college more affordable should consider the student's expenses beyond tuition. Students facing food and housing instability have lower academic performance and greater risk of not completing their degree program (Payne-Sturges, 2017).

### References:

- Callan, P. M. (2002). Coping with Recession: Public Policy, Economic Downturns and Higher Education.
- Payne-Sturges, D. C., Tjaden, A., Caldeira, K. M., Vincent, K. B., & Arria, A. M. (2018). Student Hunger on Campus: Food Insecurity Among College Students and Implications for Academic Institutions. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 32(2), 349–354.
- Seftor, N. S., & Turner, S. E. (2002). Back to school: Federal student aid policy and adult college enrollment. *Journal of Human Resources*, 336-352.
- Spradley, K. (2018). *Higher Education Pricing: Effects of Tuition Pricing on Nontraditional Student Persistence Moderated by Demographics* (SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 3241757). Social Science Research Network.

## Building Strong Support Systems Policy: Education

Two areas were most frequently discussed for potential policy modification or policy that enables alternative program parameters were **increase access to mentorship and support programs**; and provide support of **collaborative childcare models** (similar to co-working models). An additional policy of **statewide incentives for students** was discussed during Focus Groups (Table 6).

**Table 6: Building Strong Support Systems Policy Recommendations**

Building Strong Support Systems Policy	Frequency (Community Conversations)	Frequency (Focus Groups)
Mentorship/Community support programs	7	13
Collaborative child care	4	2
Programs for the whole family	3	4
Statewide incentives for students (housing, basic needs, health care, mental health services)	NA	5





## Building Strong Support Systems Policy : Quotes

### Community Voice by Region

*“More mentorship programs for that to speak to the young lives.” (Kansas City)*

*“I think if it can involve their family getting a benefit out of it and they see that, that potentially could be what draws women in to be more willing to attend groups to go into it, because that way it supported them.” (Charleston)*

*“Another idea that we’ve heard that kind of goes back to child care was that there could be a community kind of collaborative child care situation where maybe child care duties are being shared among members of the community as one is going to school.” (Charleston)*

*“...provide some of that same tutoring service and maybe some support of some sort, some mentoring for young women trying to go forward.” (Columbia)*

### Focus Groups

*“Connecting with similar peers in same situation.” (Kansas City)*

*“Outreach for low-income students about college.” (Charleston)*

*“Increase availability of counselling to help stress/anxiety.” (Springfield)*

*“Community offering collaborative child care, transportation, housing etc.” (St. Louis)*

*“Better rehab programs/need for mental health services.” (Hannibal)*

*“Statewide rental assistance for income brackets/basic needs stipend for students sub.” (Columbia)*

*“Access to health care /financial support by young mothers.” (Columbia)*

## Strong Support Systems Policy : Relevant Literature

- Access to an informal network of peers, faculty, and volunteer professionals from the community are correlated with matriculation, professional identity in undergraduate women in STEM majors (Hernandez et al., 2017).
- Psychosocial mentoring, which addresses things like competence, identity, and effectiveness on the job, leads to increased job involvement and decreased turnover (Craig et al., 2012).

### References:

- Craig, C. A., Allen, M. W., Reid, M. F., Riemenschneider, C. K., & Armstrong, D. J. (2013). The Impact of Career Mentoring and Psychosocial Mentoring on Affective Organizational Commitment, Job Involvement, and Turnover Intention. *Administration & Society*, 45(8), 949–973.
- Hernandez, P. R., Bloodhart, B., Barnes, R. T., Adams, A. S., Clinton, S. M., Pollack, I., Godfrey, E., Burt, M., & Fischer, E. V. (2017). Promoting professional identity, motivation, and persistence: Benefits of an informal mentoring program for female undergraduate students. *PLOS ONE*, 12(11), e0187531.

## Technology Access Policy: Education (Relevant policy post- COVID-19)

One significant policy that emerged post COVID-19 for Education was **improved access to technology**. Under this three areas most frequently discussed for providing resources for online education were: **internet access, offer online education programs** and **computer access**.

**Table 7: Technology Access Policy Recommendations**

Technology Access Policy	Frequency (Community Conversations)	Frequency (Focus groups)
Offer online education programs	9	8
Broadband/Internet access	7	4
Computer access	2	2



## Technology Access Policy : Quotes

### Community Voice by Region

*“...if we could get low cost but well functioning devices into women's hands and the community were willing to facilitate those open networks, this could be a decent bridge.” (Charleston)*

*“...you know, internet and computer access, you know, maybe that would be a starting point. (Springfield)*

*“... access to broadband.” (Hannibal)*

*“...we can do online classes, which is really helpful in some cases.” (Columbia)*

### Focus Groups

*“Control of education cost and cost of technology needed for online classes.” (Hannibal)*

*“Broadband everywhere.” (Hannibal)*

*“Increased access and affordability of phone and internet.” (Columbia)*

*“Online courses or certifications that require shorter learning period.” (Kansas City)*

*“Online courses.” (Charleston)*

*“Continue to increase the availability of online courses.” (Springfield)*

## Technology Access Policy : Relevant Literature

- Access to reliable broadband impacts enrollment and retention in distance learning; when colleges and universities moved to online courses in response to the coronavirus pandemic, it is estimated that five million American adults were unable to access coursework due to a lack of broadband (Kelley & Columbus, 2020).
- Policies should include strategies to overcome digital exclusion (lack of broadband and equipment) and accessibility of online learning (i.e. information and computer literacy) particularly for low-income and rural communities (Klasik et al., 2018; Khalid & Pedersen, 2016).

### References:

- Kelly, A. P., & Columbus, R. (2020). *College in the time of coronavirus: Challenges facing American higher education*. American Enterprise Institute; JSTOR.
- Khalid, Md. S., & Pedersen, M. J. L. (2016). Digital Exclusion in Higher Education Contexts: A Systematic Literature Review. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 228, 614–621.
- Klasik, D., Blagg, K., & Pekor, Z. (2018). Out of the Education Desert: How Limited Local College Options are Associated with Inequity in Postsecondary Opportunities. *Social Sciences*, 7(9), 165.

## Recommendations

Our findings indicate that multiple policy modifications should be considered as it relates to increasing education and employment opportunities for women. Policy changes can enable more creative programming and eliminate barriers to existing state and community programs. We have developed five policy recommendations.

### Policy & Program Opportunities

#### ➤ Childcare Assistance

- Reduce the burden of licensing requirements by conducting a complete review of the rules and update policies in meaningful ways.
- To increase providers, find ways to fund more types of childcare (e.g workplace childcare, family – led childcare, and short term childcare for attending class or completing homework).
- Consider raising the income cut – off to qualify for childcare assistance as wages have not increased while cost of goods, services and housing have.

#### ➤ Education Assistance and Training Programs

- Support the creation a “one stop shop” for potential students to learn about and apply for education funding.
- Include more short – term programs in education funding parameters such as specialized certificates including those for traditionally male jobs.
- Increase the Pell grant allocation and create forgivable loan programs.

## Recommendations (cont.)

### Policy & Program Opportunities

#### ➤ Transportation Assistance

- Expand types of eligible transportation funding (e.g. car repairs, fuel, rideshare programs, employer provided transportation and auto loan payments).
- Prioritize access to public transportation especially in rural communities.

#### ➤ Strong Support Systems

- Support more programs that provide support systems (e.g. mentorship, career and education coaching).

#### ➤ \*Technology

- COVID-19 has increased communities need for access to broadband, computers and online learning and working. This should be a policy priority area.

## Limitations and Next Steps

### Limitations

Due to COVID-19 we needed to have all community conversations on ZOOM. This may have impacted the level of engagement with participants. Some may not have been used to participating in that medium or had connection issues. Our team did experience a limited amount of data loss due to connectivity and ZOOM application glitches.

### Next Steps:

We will create a tool kit that community members can access to learn about policy recommendations that can be implemented within organizations or government entities.

\*End of report.