

1-page summary: Impact of Covid-19 on Campus Support Programs

Article Title Lopez, K. M., Geiger, J. M., Okpych, N. J., Gamez, S. I., & Larregui, D. (2022). The impact of COVID-19 on campus-based support programs serving students with foster care experience: Focus groups with administrators and students. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 143, 106696.
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Purpose

To learn from both students and staff in campus support programs (CSPs) about how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the program and students. We wanted to hear about new challenges but also how programs and students adapted to meet those challenges. This knowledge can be useful to other CSPs.

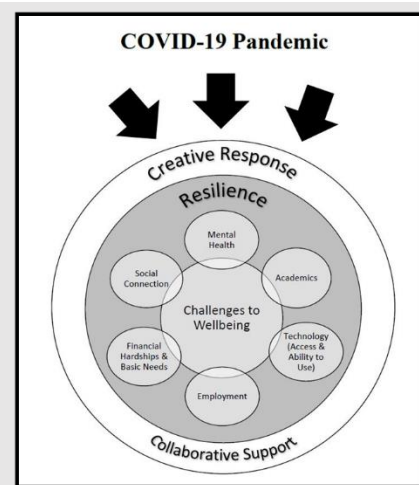
Data & Methods

Sample: We recruited CSPs in California 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities. First, we conducted focus groups via Zoom in Oct/Nov 2020 with CSP staff and administrators from 10 different campuses. Of the participating campuses, we then selected two 2-year campuses and two 4-year campuses to recruit students. Four separate focus groups were conducted in Dec 2020 with students from each campus (15 students total).

Analytic methods: We used a QUAL + qual approach to analyzing the transcripts from the focus groups, which allowed us to analyze and compare data from two distinct but related groups of participants. We started with the transcripts from CSP administrators/staff as the core component and used transcripts from the focus groups with students to enhance and extend our understanding of the impact of the pandemic on CSPs. Each of the four researchers independently coded the transcripts, a preliminary codebook was developed collaboratively, and the themes and subthemes were articulated and refined. In the manuscript, we used direct quotes from participants as illustrative examples of the themes.

Main Findings

- Two overarching themes emerged: challenges participants experienced due to Covid-19 and ways CSP students and staff responded to these challenges.
- The first theme (Challenges) had six subthemes: (1) Dis-connection: Breaks in social connections among students, staff, and faculty; (2) Academic disruptions: Enrollment, classes, and learning; (3) Technology woes: Access, navigation, and being “Zoomed out”; (4) Basic needs: Gaps and financial hardships; (5) Employment challenges: Too much or too little; (6) Toll on mental health: Stressed, depressed, and depleted.
- The second theme (Responses) had two subthemes: (1) Collaborative and creative responses: Reaching within and reaching out; (2) Resilience.



Implications

- This study has relevance to the hundreds of CSPs serving thousands of college students with foster care backgrounds across the U.S., who were also shaken by the disruption caused by the pandemic.
- Mental health and social isolation were pervasive, and a vicious circle seemed to be at play.
- Students talked about how valuable it was for CSP staff to take a proactive approach to reaching out to them, rather than relying on scheduled meetings or waiting for students to come to them with a problem. These contacts were usually brief but communicated care.
- CSP staff recognized that going virtual profoundly disrupted their ability to make connections with students (especially new students), but also recognized that virtual meeting had unanticipated benefits (e.g., more convenient for working and parenting students) that increased the versatility of the CSP.
- Staff also experimented with creative ways to draw students in and maintain a sense of community.
- CSPs had to work creatively and collaboratively to fill gaps in basic needs, and the new partnerships that formed within and outside of the school would likely remain after the pandemic subsided.
- With increasing demands and stress, self-care came to the forefront for CSP staff to prevent burnout (e.g., setting healthy boundaries, leaning on each other for support).