

yHEP recommendations for improvement of working conditions regarding family life



The young high-energy physicists association (yHEP) gathers junior scientists in the fields of particle, astroparticle, and hadronic and nuclear physics. For many young scientists, the time to start a career in science coincides with the time to start a family, leading to a variety of challenges.

Based on discussions among our members, we hereby give an overview over the most challenging aspects of reconciliation of young family life and building a career in high-energy physics. Furthermore, we provide policy recommendations as well as practical tips.

The challenges for young parents in our field, or those of us who live far apart from their long-term partners, were extensively discussed.

An issue that came up a few times is that **daycare** options are often not meeting important criteria. Among these criteria are sufficiently **long opening hours**, admission of children from a **young age** on, and **proximity** to at least one of the parents' worksites. This issue becomes even harder to resolve during **conferences**, where it is not common practice to provide affordable child care services, or at least allocate sufficient capacities in close-by facilities.

While our field is—based on anecdotal evidence at this point—generally more open to **home office and flexible working hours** than others, constraints regarding presence at the worksite (e.g. lab work, teaching, supervising, administration, meeting colleagues) can become problematic. Additionally, while the possibilities of **parental leave** and **sick child leave** are very much appreciated, it happens that duties require attention during these times, e.g. if certain tasks can not be done by anyone else, preventing the leave times from fulfilling their purpose as exemptions.

Additionally, there often is a lack of **clear long-term career perspectives** in our field, especially for staff below leadership and professorship job levels, making family planning harder or even preventing young scientists to stay in academia at all.

Acknowledging that our recommendations are already fulfilled at various sites, we strongly support several measures to improve the situation.

1. Daycare
 - a. should be provided with sufficiently extensive opening hours close to all institutions employing young scientists.
 - b. needs to be available from an as early child age on as possible.
 - c. has to be provided during all conferences. The DPG spring meetings should be leading in this regard and certainly always offer daycare options. Also, costs should be covered like other travel expenses.
2. Working hours should be made as flexible for parents as possible. If necessary, hiring of research assistants to help in this regard should be facilitated.
3. Similarly, to ensure that parents can be fully exempt from any duties when on parental leave, hiring of research assistants should be facilitated.
4. Lactation rooms for breastfeeding or pumping at work and at conferences should be made available.

Besides these recommendations, there are a few points that came up in the discussion that could immediately help people concerned.

For women, one of these would be the scholarships of the **Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard-Stiftung** (<http://www.cnv-stiftung.de/index.php?id=2>), which is a foundation trying to improve the situation of young mothers in science by awarding grants to pay for additional child care and domestic aid.

Applications are due on November 30!

Further financial aid is provided with the **Forschungsstipendium des Deutschen Akademischen Austausch Dienstes (DAAD)**, which is especially used to fund research stays abroad directly after doctorate graduation. There is additional funding for scholars taking their children/families with them.

In order to contact interested members of yHEP regarding the topic, please write to the dedicated yHEP mailing list yhep-working-conditions@desy.de.

A panel discussion at the 2020 DPG Spring Meeting in Bonn regarding the situation of young scientists in our field is being planned. Participation from all sides is much appreciated.

The yHEP association represents scientists with non-permanent contracts in the fields of astroparticle physics, hadron and nuclei, as well as elementary particle physics. yHEP aims to understand and improve the situation of young scientists, to strengthen their involvement in decisions about the future of the field, and to provide a network of PhD students, post-docs, junior group leaders, junior professors and other non-permanent staff in these fields.