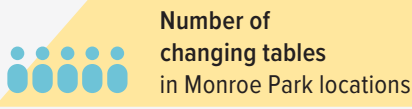




Photo by  
Vaila DeYoung



# CHANGING TABLES SPARSE AT VCU

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**M**ANY BATHROOMS ON VCU'S CAMPUS do not have diaper-changing tables. For parents like Michael Von Bank, changing a child's diaper on a bathroom floor is all too familiar.

Von Bank, lead organizer of Richmond Dads, said not that long ago, all four of his kids were in diapers. Richmond Dads is an organization of nearly 100 single, working and stay-at-home dads who meet and hold events like Dad Night Out. During the day, he is the director of business performance at Virginia Premier Healthcare. But at night, he's in "full dad mode."

"Picture walking into that bathroom, we'll say at the stadium in the middle of a football game, and look down at the floor. Look where your feet are," Von Bank said. "That's where my daughter's butt needs to be in order for me to change her."

VCU Facilities and Management did not have an available list of Monroe Park buildings with changing tables, but were able to confirm at least seven locations on Monroe Park campus.

At least one diaper-changing station is in each of the following buildings:

- Barnes and Noble, 1111 W. Broad St.
- Snead Hall, 301 W. Main St.
- Siegel Center, 1200 W. Broad St.
- Sports Backers Stadium, 100 Avenue of Champions
- Cabell Library, 901 Park Ave.
- Institute for Contemporary Art, 601 W. Broad St.
- Cary St. Gym, 101 S. Linden St.
- West Grace Street Student Housing — North, 830 W. Grace St.

A list of 48 buildings with gender-inclusive restrooms is available online, but the list does not specify which locations have changing stations. Some gender-inclusive restrooms have changing tables — such as the two in the basement of Cabell Library — but most do not.

Cabell Library and the Cary Street Gym have family restrooms, which are designated for multiple people and include changing tables. Snead Hall at 301 W. Main St. has the most changing tables with five in the building.

In an email, VCU Facilities and Management included several MCV changing tables in its count, including the North Deck with five changing tables. Wood Memorial Building and Lyons Dental Building each have four changing tables.

Some VCU students don't think changing tables are necessary on campus, including education major Rachael Snyder.

"Whenever I was in a spot without a changing table I would just lay out their changing mat on the floor and get it done," Snyder said in an email. "Changing tables aren't often clean anyway and typically are placed far away from a trash can with no other space near them to put wipes and a diaper on."

Snyder, who is starting graduate school next semester, says her children are no longer infants, but her professors have been accommodating of her situation as a mother.

Of the buildings on campus with diaper-changing tables, the Institute for Contemporary Art has one on the building's lower level. Barnes & Noble, near the Siegel Center on Broad Street, is one of the only locations with a changing table in both the men's and women's restrooms.

Some local governments have mandated access to changing stations. New York City passed a law in 2018 ensuring that all parents — regardless of gender — have access to changing stations.

"Too often, fathers and gender non-conforming parents are excluded from the resources aimed at supporting families," New York City first lady Chirlane McCray said in a statement. "That has to change."

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Michael Von Bank, Richmond Dads lead organizer

Junior psychology major Alexia Brown said she had noticed people on campus with babies and strollers, and often wondered where they would change them.

"The bathrooms are not conducive for babies, changing, even so much as

bringing a stroller in," Brown said. "The handicapped bathrooms are a little larger, but once you get the stroller in there's still no place to change."

Brown, who is a member of Retro Rams and returned to school after her youngest child went to college, said the bathroom counters don't serve as a suitable option either.

"You might have a little space at one end of a counter," Brown said, "but that's also going to be right next to the hand dryers or paper towel dispensers."

Von Bank said that some of his issues with changing station availability arise at the Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU. He says in some areas, there is a changing table in the nursing room, family restroom and women's restroom, but not the men's.

"If my kid has an accident and I've got to run to go get it cleaned up, there's somebody in the family's restroom, I can't go into the nursery room. That's not fair," Von Bank said. "I'm not going in the women's restroom. I have to change on the floor of a hospital bathroom."

He said that many dads — who often expect a lack of changing tables — band together. Once at a park, he and other dads took turns using a beach towel another father keeps on hand for instances when changing tables aren't available.

"Behind closed doors, dads are helping make decisions, they're rearing the children, they're changing diapers, they're picking out clothes, they're taking kids to appointments, picking up for soccer games," Von Bank said, "and they're incredibly involved."

*Map of Changing Tables  
in Monroe Park Campus*

Infographic by Andrew Caress  
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