

# Eight Easy Steps for Supporting Your Breastfeeding Employees

*By taking a few simple steps to encourage employees to continue to breastfeed, businesses can save money, increase employee morale and decrease time lost to care for sick children.*

Companies that recognize breastfeeding as a benefit to the workplace can encourage that recognition in all their employees. Some workplace conditions to help the breastfeeding employee include:

**1** A written policy which states the employer's support of a woman's right to breastfeed her child and describes the worksite accommodations and/or benefits available to her. (A) The policy is part of the employer's written policy on parenting and/or maternity benefits. (B) All pregnant employees are informed of this policy as early in their pregnancy as possible. (C) New employees are informed of the existence of this policy or are given a copy as part of new employee orientation. (D) Encourage co-workers and management to have a positive, accepting attitude toward breastfeeding employees.

**2** A 20-30 minute break both in the morning and afternoon for the woman to (A) nurse her child or (B) express her breastmilk. If necessary, the beginning and/or ending times of work can be adjusted to accommodate these breaks. For example, if two, 15-minute breaks are allowed employees, the breastfeeding employee starts work 10 minutes earlier and leaves work 10 minutes later to allow for two, 25 minute breaks.

**3** A private area is available for breastfeeding or expressing milk. The room should be quiet and clean and ideally have enough room for a comfortable chair and a safe electrical outlet. A clean, safe water source and a sink should be available somewhere within the worksite for washing hands and cleaning pumping equipment.

**4** A place for storing breastmilk such as an employee refrigerator or a safe place to keep an ice chest or thermos.

## Conditions that provide additional support

**5** Maternity leave of at least six weeks to three months. At least four weeks is needed to establish the mother's milk supply and for mother and baby to become comfortable with breastfeeding. Mothers with a longer leave are more prepared when they return to work.

**6** Part-time employment, job sharing, flexible work and leave schedules, and/or a gradual return to work. These options support breastfeeding mothers and all employees in general.

**7** Availability of childcare in an on-site or near-site facility.

This option makes it possible for the breastfeeding mother to nurse her baby instead of pumping breastmilk for later use.

**8** Employer-provided breastfeeding education and support before and after the birth. An employee assistance person, an employee with interest and concern about breastfeeding, or a work group could design this.

### *This support system may include*

■ Written educational materials provided by breastpump companies and lactation consultants.

■ On-site prenatal/postpartum classes or support groups. This can be done during a lunch break in a “brown-bag” format.

■ Information about breastfeeding consultation services.



### Helpful Websites

**Healthshare Lactation Services, Inc.:** [www.hsls.com](http://www.hsls.com)

Information for employers about implementing a breastfeeding support program. This service offers on-site corporate lactation program consulting on a do-it-yourself business lactation program.

**Motherwear:**  
[www.motherwear.com](http://www.motherwear.com)

Publishes and distributes free literature on breastfeeding including worksite support for breastfeeding employees.

**Center for Disease Control (CDC):** <http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/support-workplace.htm>

Health and Human Services recommendations for supporting breastfeeding in the workplace.

**In Washington State:**  
The Breastfeeding Coalition of Washington, a program of Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies, 206-281-8032 or [www.hmhbwa.org](http://www.hmhbwa.org).



**Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies  
Coalition of Washington State**

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