

Breastfeeding Support in the Workplace

*A resource for establishing a breastfeeding-friendly
work environment.*



ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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Intention

The intention of this toolkit is to provide resources and guidance for employers to create a breastfeeding-friendly work environment for female employees. Frequently experienced barriers to such an environment are addressed and suggested solutions are provided.

The audience for this toolkit is small businesses not legally subjected to the ACA requirements, but who could benefit all the same. This toolkit is therefore intended to shed light on the many positive aspects of providing such accommodations for their employees.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA)

The ACA requires employers with 50 or more employees to provide reasonable break time and a private, non-bathroom space for expressing milk to breastfeeding female employees for up to one year after the birth of the child.¹

The law also requires non-grandfathered health insurance plans to cover the cost of the following:

- *Pre- and postnatal lactation counseling by a trained provider
- *Breast pump rental or purchase at little or no cost to the individual²

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| INTRODUCTION..... | 4 |
| BENEFITS..... | 5 |
| FIRST STEPS..... | 6 |
| ACCOMMODATIONS & SUPPORT | 7 |
| ROOM OPTIONS | 8 |
| SCHEDULING OPTIONS..... | 10 |
| EMPLOYEE POLICY | 11 |
| ADDITIONAL RESOURCES..... | 12 |
| REFERENCES | 14 |

INTRODUCTION

The American Academy of Pediatrics, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children’s Fund, and the US Surgeon General recommend that infants be breastfed exclusively for the first 6-months of life and breastmilk should remain apart of their diet at least up to one year and for “as long as is mutually desired by mother and baby.”^{3,4,5,6} Increasing the percent of babies breastfed in the US is one of the US Department of Health and Human Service’s Healthy People 2020 objectives. As of 2016, breastfeeding rates in the US looked like this:

| | Breastfeeding at 6 months | Breastfeeding at 1 Year | Exclusively through 3 months | Exclusively through 6 months |
|-------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2016 | 51.8% | 30.7% | 44.4% | 22.3% |
| HP2020 Goal | 60.6% | 34.1% | 46.2% | 25.5% |

Figure 1. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016)

According to the 2010 census, women make up nearly half of the overall workforce in the US, meaning there are 72 million women working or looking for work.⁷ Of those women 31 million have children under the age of 18.⁸ And 61.7% of women with children under the age of 3 are participating in the labor force in some way.⁹ That number continues to grow each year, thus the importance of considering the unique role of mothers as employees.

Employers play a key roll in helping the US to reach the Healthy People 2020 objectives by creating breastfeeding-friendly work environments. The benefits of breastfeeding to mom and infant are well documented and are the foundation for the professional and political support. But you may be asking yourself how these practices can benefit your company or organization.



If you wish to seek the **Mother-friendly Employer** certification, please contact the *South Carolina BreastFeeding Coalition*. For more information, you can find their website and contact information in the Additional Resources portion of this toolkit.

BENEFITS

Fewer Days Missed

Breastfed babies have strengthened immune systems thanks to antibodies passed between mother and baby. That means fewer instances where mom has to take off of work to care for her sick child. Mothers who formula feed call out of work for a day **more than twice as often** as moms who breastfed. Fewer days missed means money saved and uninterrupted productivity.

Lower Health Care Costs

Those healthier babies also means lower health care spending, saving you money on company insurance plans. A 2-year study of a large insurance company discovered a savings of **\$240,000** in health care costs and **\$60,000** in reduced absenteeism for 343 employees who participated in their breastfeeding support program.

Another company found that healthcare costs for employees who did not participate in their program were more than **\$2,000 more** than those who did.

Lower Turnover Rates

Moms often face a difficult decision between returning to and continuing to work and achieving their breastfeeding goals. By providing a breastfeeding support program and accommodations, you are able to increase your retention rate significantly. In 2004, the national average retention rate was 59%, but was as high as **94.2%** for companies that had breastfeeding support programs. Therefore a company is able to save money by avoiding spending on recruitment and training by retaining the qualified new mom in her position.

Higher Productivity and Employee Loyalty

Employees appreciate and work hard for a company that reciprocates this. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, where **80%** of the employees are male, found that a breastfeeding support program meant **83%** of male and female employees felt more positively about the company and **67%** planned to make it their long-term employer

Positive Public Relations

As more and more companies implement policies that support women breastfeeding when they return to work, regardless of changing regulations and the political climate the expectation from employees will remain intact. Therefore, to **remain competitive in the job market and attractive to top-notch employees** it is important to provide these accommodations in a manner that works for your company. Providing this support also helps to bolster a positive image of your company at the local, state, and even national levels.

10 (HRSA, 2010)

FIRST STEPS

Now that you understand the benefits you can reap from providing your current and potential female employees with these accommodations and support, it is important to assess the best next steps to take.

To do this, look at the following:

- * **How many of your female employees are between the ages 16-44?**
- * **Do you have female visitors (such as collaborative business partners) in your office regularly? Approximately how many?**
- * **Do you have any female employees currently pregnant? On maternity leave?**
 - * **Have they requested accommodations?**
 - * **If not, be proactive and reach out to them about their plans for when they return to work. Are they planning to breastfeed?**

Once you have a clear picture of your organizations needs you can begin to determine the best possible option for providing these accommodations and support. It may be a temporary solution because you have only one or two women to accommodate at the moment or in your employment. It may be a temporary solution while you prepare a permanent one if you have several women leaving or returning from maternity leave in the near future. In the next few pages you'll find some examples of possible designated or dedicated spaces.

Moms are grateful for the support and accommodations their employer is able to provide, so you can expect them to take responsibility for keeping the spaces and equipment you provide clean and for storing, labeling, and taking their milk home at the end of each day. **The point of providing accommodations within your company or organization's means, is to benefit both you and your employees as much as possible.** So consider what you can provide and reassess each year to see if additional resources can be allocated.

*TIP: Women typically need **three breaks at least 10-15 minute** long per 8 hour shift to properly express milk. Meal times, other provided break times, and/or overtime can be used to accommodate these additional breaks. Keep in mind employee satisfaction, loyalty, and recruitment. If a woman must miss a meal in order to pump, this may not feel like support or an additional accommodation.*



ACCOMMODATIONS & SUPPORT

Cleaning

Cleanliness is important when it comes to breastfeeding. Breastmilk is a baby's food, you wouldn't want to eat your lunch in a bathroom or a dirty room. This is why the space provided cannot and should not be a bathroom.

It is up to your organization whether cleaning staff is responsible for this space or if you have the resources to provide disinfecting products. Some organizations instruct users to bring their own disinfecting products to keep the room clean, while others provide these items. Moms are conscious of the importance of cleanliness when it comes to their baby's food and will want to keep the space as clean as possible.

Education

You can find additional resources at the end of this toolkit where you can direct your employees for education on breastfeeding and breast pumps. It would also be useful to provide some hardcopy education to your employees when they discuss their maternity leave with your HR department. Many advocates for breastfeeding organizations have free or low cost education materials they would be happy to share with your company or organization. Share these resources with your employees, you'd be surprised at how many male employees might be interested in this information for their children and spouses.

Pumps

Some companies have chosen to purchase pumps keep them in the designated space. Then provide or ask moms to bring their own attachments. Other companies have asked moms to bring their own portable pumps with them for use. This is another decision that must be made by your organization.

The return on investment in purchasing pumps, lies in recruitment and employee loyalty. This becomes a selling point for your company or organization.

Did you know many insurance plans cover the cost of breast pumps?

- 1) Consult your own company's employee insurance plan to determine if this is included in the coverage you provide.
- 2) Instruct your employees to consult their insurance providers (they may be on a spouse's plan) for this benefit.

Storage

Breastmilk should be stored in a refrigerator or personal cooler.

If you have the resources you can provide a small refrigerator in or near the lactation room for moms to store their milk during the day. You can ask moms to bring their own personal coolers for storage, many portable pumps come with one.

A public refrigerator is not the best place for storing breast milk for the comfort of both moms and other employees.

ROOM OPTIONS

Providing these accommodations is often daunting for smaller companies and organizations. But there are many different ways to provide the support your breastfeeding employees need without spending an immense amount of resources. All options should have at least: **an electrical outlet, lock from the inside, a comfortable chair, a small table, a light, and is located near a source of running water.**

Private Offices

One of the easiest ways to do this is to include a statement in your employee policy that allows female employees with private offices to use this space for pumping. You can provide them with a sign or allow them to create their own that can be placed on their office door to indicate that they are pumping and should not be disturbed.

Keep in mind if a woman has an office with interior glass windows or walls that do not have blinds or shades, this does not provide the privacy a woman should be provided to pump.

It may be most cost effective to install shades over creating a space for one or a few woman.



Sectioned Off Portion of a Room

If creating a permanent space is unrealistic for your organization or company, due to limited space or few female employees or limited resources, etc., sectioning off a portion of conference room with permanent or temporary walls is an option.

Women typically need three breaks at least 10-15-minutes long every 8-hour shift to express milk, simply allow women to schedule time in the conference room between meetings so they may lock the door and use the room privately, especially if only temporary walls have been used.



Single User Room

A single user room could be a converted, rarely used storage area or supply closet or an empty office.

The room only needs to have space for a chair and small table, this can be as small as 4' x 5'. Involve your maintenance department, administrative staff, and at least one employee who is experienced or knowledgeable about breastfeeding and milk expression.

This could also be a designated women's changing room, by simply adding a sign to indicate its new purpose.



Multi-User Room

If you have a large number of female employees who could potentially need this space and the means to convert and furnish a larger room, consider one room with cubicle partitions or curtains as a great option.

Each station should have access to an electrical outlet. Consult your maintenance staff about the use of surge protectors and extension wires to avoid complicated electrical work if additional electrical connections are needed.



SCHEDULING OPTIONS

Moms typically need **three** breaks *at least 10 to 15-minute per 8-hour shift* in order to properly express their milk. When you consider the benefits mentioned earlier in this toolkit this is a reasonable accommodation employers can make for new moms.

Sometimes employers find themselves with several women breastfeeding at the same time but are only able to spare enough space for one mom to pump at a time. As mentioned earlier, if a woman has a private office, a reasonable accommodation is to have a policy in place that designates this as an option for pumping. However, if you are able to designate a specific room for your breastfeeding employees to use, even if it can only accommodate one woman at a time, there are some simple solutions to this concern.

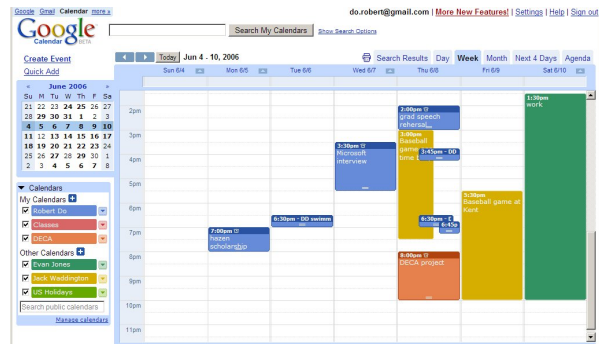
Dry Erase Board

A dry erase board can be used to sign up for 15 minute slots on the exterior of the door. This option is particularly useful for work environments where not everyone uses or has access to a computer.



Shared Calendar

A shared calendar that is managed by the HR department for privacy allows employees to easily access the calendar from their own desk.



The best way to determine the most appropriate scheduling method is to ask the individuals who will be using it. This includes moms who are currently breastfeeding and employees about to depart for maternity leave. Send those who will be using the space a survey to determine the method their most comfortable with. Some women may prefer the private calendar over a dry erase board on display, others may not be concerned at all.

Both of these methods also serve to build community and group support by putting the women in contact with one another while they are experiencing similar life events. This has been shown to improve employee satisfaction.

EMPLOYEE POLICY

Having a formal policy establishes procedure and ensures that all aspects of your intended support and accommodations for breastfeeding moms are carried out as planned. A breastfeeding support policy is usually housed and owned by the Human Resources Department. The following is an example of a comprehensive policy from the University of South Carolina.

SECTION: Human Resources SUBJECT: Lactation Support Policy
Policy for: All Campuses Procedure for: All Campuses

Issued by: Division of Human Resources

THE LANGUAGE USED IN THIS DOCUMENT IS NOT INTENDED TO CREATE AN EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT BETWEEN THE FACULTY, STAFF, OR ADMINISTRATIVE EMPLOYEE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA. THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT CREATE ANY CONTRACTUAL RIGHTS OR ENTITLEMENTS. THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REVISE THE CONTENTS OF THIS POLICY, IN WHOLE OR IN PART. NO PROMISES OR ASSURANCES, WHETHER WRITTEN OR ORAL, WHICH ARE CONTRARY TO OR INCONSISTENT WITH THE TERMS OF THIS PARAGRAPH CREATE ANY CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT. THE UNIVERSITY'S DIVISION OF HUMAN RESOURCES HAS THE AUTHORITY TO INTERPRET THE UNIVERSITY'S HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES.

I. Policy

The University of South Carolina recognizes the importance of supporting faculty, staff and students who choose to breastfeed. The following policy is in accordance with the workplace breastfeeding support provision in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Section 4207 found at <http://docs.house.gov/energycommerce/ppacacon.pdf>), which states that: “employers shall provide reasonable, unpaid break time and a private, non-bathroom place for an employee to express breast milk for her nursing child for one year after the child’s birth,” and current South Carolina state law (SC Act 269 of 2006), which states that a woman may breastfeed her child in any place open to the public.

The University, which promotes a family-friendly work and study environment, acknowledges the significant health benefits of breastfeeding for mothers and their infants. Therefore, the University of South Carolina acknowledges that 1) the University shall provide sanitary and private space, other than a toilet stall or locker room, to be used as a lactation room by employees or students who are breastfeeding and/or expressing milk, and 2) supervisors, chairs and managers are requested to work with employees and students who are breastfeeding to schedule reasonable and adjustable break times each day for this activity.

A. Accommodations

Colleges and departments should make a reasonable effort to find and provide space for a lactation room (i.e. nursing mothers’ lounge). This room can be used for breastfeeding and/or the expression of milk.

1. A nursing mothers’ lounge is a space that is a room above and beyond a bathroom stall or locker room. It is a comfortable private room that can be locked from the inside. When a designated lactation room is not available in the building, temporary “in-use” signage can be provided to the mother for vacant rooms that meet the requirements (e.g. a conference room that is infrequently used).

2. A nursing mothers' lounge should contain the following basic items:

- a supportive chair
- a table
- easily accessible electrical outlet
- a door that can be locked from the inside for mothers' privacy

B. Location

Access to lactation rooms is set-up to meet specific departmental needs. On the Columbia campus, a list of current nursing mothers' lounges is located at <http://sc.edu/healthycarolina/lsp.html>. Keys to these lactation rooms are available through the building managers or by contacting Healthy Carolina. Departments on the Columbia campus are encouraged to contact Healthy Carolina to add lactation rooms to this list as such rooms are identified. Other campuses also are encouraged to provide an easily accessible means of identifying and accessing facilities suitable for use as lactation rooms.

C. Flexible Break Times

Breastfeeding mothers must request and arrange with their supervisor appropriate and reasonable break times for breastfeeding or expressing breast milk for up to one (1) year after the child's birth. Supervisors should attempt to provide reasonable break time to accommodate their needs.

1. Employees must be allowed to take reasonable breaks during the work day to express milk.
2. Employees may request to adjust their work schedules for the purposes of lactation.
3. Supervisors and employees shall work together to establish mutually convenient times for milk expression. Employees should discuss the frequency and duration of the breaks with their supervisors.
4. Supervisors are requested to work to ensure that there are no negative consequences to nursing mothers who need lactation break times.
5. Employees should contact the next level of supervisor or Human Resources if their immediate supervisors do not allow reasonable breaks or if their unit does not make arrangements for appropriate and/or adequate space for lactation breaks.

II. Procedure

A. The breastfeeding mother is responsible for contacting her supervisor to request space and time to express milk. Healthy Carolina has resources on its website that provide guidance for this conversation at <http://sc.edu/healthycarolina/lsp.html>.

B. Supervisors who receive a lactation accommodation request are asked to review available space in their department/unit and make efforts to provide appropriate nearby space and break time.

C. Columbia campus departments that establish lactation rooms should notify Healthy Carolina, which helps direct mothers to the most appropriate lactation room.

D. On the Columbia campus, mothers may obtain keys to the lactation rooms through the Healthy Carolina office or through the appropriate building representative listed on the website. (Refer to # IB.)

E. After using a lactation room, mothers who are expressing milk shall be responsible for keeping the room clean.

F. If an employee has comments, concerns, or questions regarding the USC Breastfeeding and Lactation Support Program Policy, please contact Human Resources or Healthy Carolina.

<http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/hr160.pdf>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

South Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition

<http://scbreastfeedingcoalition.org>
scbreastfeedingcoalition@gmail.com

South Carolina Birth Outcomes Initiative

<https://www.scdhhs.gov/organizations/boi>

The University of South Carolina-Lactation Support Initiative

<https://www.sa.sc.edu/healthcarolina/initiatives/lactation/>

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program

<http://www.scdhec.gov/Health/WIC/>

La Leche League

<http://www.lllalliance.org/southcarolina/>

Medela

<http://medelabreastfeedingus.com/>



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