

3 | Breastfeeding Promotion Program Components



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A comprehensive workplace breastfeeding promotion program includes a private space, time available for mothers to express milk, breastfeeding education and workplace support.

SPACE

PRIVACY DURING MILK EXPRESSION

Of utmost importance to a breastfeeding employee when she returns to work is a location where she can comfortably and safely express milk during the workday. This can be a woman's private office (if it can be locked) or an on-site, designated lactation room(s) with an electrical outlet where breastfeeding employees can use a pump to express milk during the workday. Many employees work in open areas or cubicles that are not private. Simple lactation rooms can be created out of little-used areas within existing building space. Companies with large numbers of female employees can create lactation "suites" by installing partitions or curtains in the lactation room to accommodate multiple users at one time. The nominal cost is usually a one-time expenditure (other than costs involved with standard maintenance), and the return on investment is continuous since many breastfeeding women can make use of the facility over a long period of time.

ALLOCATING SPACE

- The amount of space needed for a lactation room is minimal.
- It does not require a full-sized office.
- The size can be as small as 4' x 5' to accommodate a comfortable chair and a small table or shelf for a breast pump.
- While examining options, involve facilities management staff along with at least one breastfeeding employee experienced in milk expression. This will increase awareness of the importance of allocating space for lactation rooms in future building renovations or additions.

SPACE OPTIONS

- An infrequently-used existing office space or other room.
- An infrequently-used space near an employee lounge or other area where a sink is available.
- A clean, infrequently-used closet or small storage area.
- A small corner of a room to section off with either permanent walls or portable partitions.
- A walled-off corner of a lounge adjacent to the women's restroom.
- Adapting a "small unused space" that is currently not well-utilized.
- A conference room, a vacant office, a storeroom or a dressing room.

ROOM AMENITIES

- An electrical outlet;
- Lock on door;
- Safe, clean environment;
- Chair and shelf or table for breast pump; and
- Access to nearby running water.

Note: The American Institute of Architects provides a “Best Practice in Lactation Room Design” document with recommendations for lactation room setup and amenities. The guidelines are available at www.aia.org.

Breastfeeding employees should never be expected to express milk in a restroom!

Restrooms are unsanitary, usually lack appropriate electrical connections, and do not provide a place to comfortably operate a breast pump.

NUMBER OF ROOMS NEEDED

The number of rooms needed depends on several factors, including the size of the company, the number of female employees of childbearing age, and the number of buildings on campus. For instance, if it will take women a long time to walk to the lactation room, consider setting up multiple sites that are more conveniently located. Companies with large numbers of female employees have created lactation “suites” by installing partitions or curtains in the lactation room to accommodate multiple users at one time.

DECIDING ON BREAST PUMP EQUIPMENT

A quality electric breast pump can help women quickly and efficiently express breast milk. Some women will own their own breast pump. Often, insurance companies will subsidize the cost of a pump. Employers can also choose to contract with a breast pump company or local medical supply business to purchase or rent a breast pump for their employees.

Breast Pump Equipment Options

- Employee could bring her own portable pump. Portable pumps are designed for working mothers to take to and from work.
- Health insurance plan could subsidize the cost of portable pumps.
- Company could provide or subsidize a portable pump.
- Company could purchase or rent a hospital-grade electric pump that more than one employee can use at work.

Hospital-grade electric pump

- Durable and lasts for many years.
- Most efficient system for collecting milk and helping a mother maintain her milk supply.
- Operates with a standard 110V electrical outlet and enables women to pump from both breasts at the same time to reduce the amount of time needed to express milk.
- Sanitary—designed specifically to keep milk from going into the pump.
- Can be safely used by more than one user.
- Companies can purchase or rent a hospital grade pump for each lactation room.
- Cleaning the pump is the responsibility of each user after she completes her pumping session.
- Each breastfeeding employee will also need her own milk collection kit. This kit includes tubing that connects to the pump and containers to store the milk. Employers can choose to either provide or subsidize the cost of a milk collection kit for each employee, or simply ask women to purchase their own.

Portable electric breast pump

- Light enough to transport to and from work and can be used to express milk at work, at home or during travel.
- Often packaged in a discreet business-style carrying case that includes a personal cooler for safely storing the milk collected throughout the day, a milk collection kit, and storage containers for the milk.
- Designed for personal use and cannot be safely shared with other women for sanitary reasons.
- Some employers choose to provide portable pumps as an employee health benefit; others subsidize the cost of the pump.

STORING HUMAN MILK

Because of its unique antibacterial properties, breast milk can be safely stored at room temperature, in a personal cooler, in a refrigerator or in a freezer. Employees should discuss options for storing their milk with their supervisors. Most women are more comfortable keeping their milk in a safer, more private place than a public shared refrigerator. Occasionally, colleagues may not be comfortable with milk being stored in a shared refrigerator. Employers should respect the needs of all employees. Breast milk should always be labeled with the employee's name and the date it was collected. Employees take responsibility for storing their own milk and taking it home at the end of each work period to give to childcare providers.

MILK STORAGE OPTIONS

- The mother can elect to use her own personal cooler.
- The company can provide a small cooler (or provide a portable electric pump which includes a cooler).
- The company can provide a small “college dorm room”-sized refrigerator in or near the lactation room.

Storage Duration of Fresh Human Milk for Use with Healthy Full Term Infants

LOCATION	TEMPERATURE	DURATION	COMMENTS
Countertop, table	Room temperature (up to 77°F or 25°C)	6–8 hours	Containers should be covered and kept as cool as possible; covering the container with a cool towel may keep milk cooler.
Insulated cooler bag	5-39°F or -15-4°C	24 hours	Keep ice packs in contact with milk containers at all times, limit opening cooler bag.
Refrigerator	39°F or 4°C	5 days	Store milk in the back of the main body of the refrigerator.
Freezer compartment of a refrigerator	5°F or -15°C	2 weeks	Store milk toward the back of the freezer, where temperature is most constant. Milk stored for longer durations in the ranges listed is safe, but some of the lipids in the milk undergo degradation resulting in lower quality.
Freezer compartment of refrigerator with separate doors	0°F or -18°C	3–6 months	
Chest or upright deep freezer	-4°F or -20°C	6–12 months	

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Proper handling and storage of human milk: Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine storage duration of fresh human milk for use with healthy full term infants guidelines*. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling_breastmilk.htm. Accessed May 4, 2009.

SCHEDULING ROOM USAGE

If large numbers of breastfeeding employees will use the room, companies may want to consider scheduling room usage. In order to maintain privacy when scheduling, each user can be given a number to use rather than her name. The lactation room should be kept locked between uses to safeguard equipment, supplies and milk that may be stored in a refrigerator. Companies may issue a key or electronic access code to each woman enrolled in the lactation support program. Keys may also be retained by the program coordinator, staff nurse or other designated individual and checked out by mothers as needed.

ROOM SCHEDULING METHODS

- Electronic sign-in (a computerized room schedule) that allows employees to log in their preferred pumping times daily or weekly.
- Schedule sign-in sheet or dry-erase board kept in the room or by the person who has the key to the room.
- E-mail notices sent to employees who are using the room.
- First-come, first-served basis, with an “Occupied” sign outside the door (this is effective if there are only a few women needing the room).

CLEANING THE ROOM

Lactation program policies should stipulate that individual users take responsibility for keeping the room clean. Disinfectant, anti-microbial wipes or spray should be provided so that each user can clean the outside of the pump and the area around the pump when she is finished. Wastebaskets should be emptied daily. If a cleaning crew is not available, consider a schedule that assigns users to conduct routine inspection and cleaning of the room. Employers can provide general maintenance oversight of the room within their administrative services department.

TIME

TIME TO EXPRESS MILK

- The amount of time a woman needs to express milk is usually handled easily during the regular allowable break times.
- Women typically require two or three pumping sessions of about 15 minutes each, excluding any time needed to go to and from the lactation room.
- As the baby begins eating solid foods around 6 months, pumping sessions often become less frequent.
- After the baby reaches 12-15 months, most women have ceased expressing milk altogether.

Sometimes it is more efficient for women to simply feed their infants directly. This can work well if the company provides on-site childcare, if the childcare provider is able to bring the baby to the mother during the work period, or if the company allows the employee to bring her infant to work for the first few months.

If extra time is needed for milk expression or direct infant feeding, flexibility to make up the time before or after the usual work schedule helps make this expenditure of time manageable. Organizations that offer a flexible schedule report that their employees are so appreciative of the program that abuse of the system is rare.

FLEXIBLE BREAKS AND WORK OPTIONS

A GRADUAL TRANSITION BACK TO WORK

Ideally, new mothers need at least 6-12 weeks of maternity leave to recover from childbirth and to establish milk production.¹ When a woman is not able to take this time, employer support can help her transition back to work so she can maintain her milk supply. This gradual easing back into the workplace allows time for her to adjust to her body's changing needs.

BACK TO WORK TRANSITION OPTIONS

- Part-time employment or telecommuting for a few weeks before resuming full-time work.
- Working longer hours four days per week and taking a day off in the middle of the work week to rebuild milk supply by being with the baby.
- Returning to work on a Thursday or Friday to allow the weekend to rebuild milk supply before facing an entire week of separation from the baby.
- Allowing employees with private offices to bring young babies to work one or more days per week. Under these policies, women are encouraged to breastfeed their babies directly in the privacy of their own office.
- Job-sharing can be highly effective for both employees and the employer.

EDUCATION

Because successful breastfeeding is a learned behavior, basic breastfeeding information, made available beginning during pregnancy, helps both male and female employees make informed choices about infant feeding and builds support among family members and colleagues. Employers may offer a variety of educational options.

Educational programs have been shown to increase the proportion of women who initiate breastfeeding immediately after birth by 23% and the number of women who continue to breastfeed for one to three months by 39%.²

PRENATAL EDUCATION

- Classes for both mothers and fathers can be provided during lunch breaks to educate families about infant feeding options and the breastfeeding support they can expect in their workplace.
- Even in companies with predominantly male employees, classes for both expectant fathers and their pregnant partners are a valued health benefit that can result in higher rates of breastfeeding.
- Brown-bag “lunch and learns” can be taught by a staff nurse, an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) from the community, a local La Leche League Leader, or another health professional from a hospital or doctor’s office. Local breastfeeding coalitions can also provide names of qualified instructors.
- Consider permitting employees to take leave to attend classes available in the community. Classes are often available through local hospitals, private health clinics, La Leche League or local breastfeeding groups.
- Employers may also want to provide pamphlets, books and videos on working and breastfeeding for pregnant employees.
- Employers may want to include a breastfeeding page on their company website with downloadable resources, useful links and Frequently Asked Questions about working and breastfeeding.

Topics for Prenatal Classes

- Reasons to breastfeed.
- Basic breastfeeding techniques.
- Tips for balancing work and breastfeeding.
- Proper procedures for expressing and storing human milk.

POSTPARTUM LACTATION COUNSELING

Research has shown that lactation support by a qualified expert helps women to continue breastfeeding longer. In 2004, the private-sector cost of counseling to promote breastfeeding initiation and continuation averaged \$23 per session; approximately 95% of all paid claims fell within the range of \$0 to \$81 per session.³ Postpartum lactation support services often include one-on-one assistance in the hospital or at home to help mothers get breastfeeding off to a good start.

Some health insurance companies will pay for up to two visits with an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC). Employers can check with their health insurance providers to see if lactation consults or breast pumps are included health benefits. An employer contract with a lactation consultant may also include ongoing access to a lactation consultant to help employees address the challenges of maintaining and building their milk supply as their babies mature and they continue to work.

Employers may also consider privately contracting with an IBCLC or other health professional to provide lactation support. Another option is to give employees contact information for lactation consultants in the community, hospital or private clinic nurses, La Leche League breastfeeding counselors, 24-hour breastfeeding hotlines, and/or support groups that can help women deal with potential issues related to breastfeeding.

BACK TO WORK EDUCATION

An employer contract with an IBCLC or other health professional often includes a personalized “Back to Work Consult” as a company health benefit. This consult can help mothers make the transition back to work, assist them in learning to use a breast pump, and answer their questions. The session includes specific information tailored to the employee’s unique situation, including

- Setting up a milk expression schedule at home and work to fit her needs.
- Identifying places at work to express milk.
- Learning effective techniques for milk expression.
- Storing and handling human milk in ways that fit her specific situation.
- Maintaining and building milk supply.
- Talking with her supervisor about her needs.
- Adjusting to the physical and emotional demands of returning to work.

WORKPLACE SUPPORT

Nearly all breastfeeding employees report that what they value most about their company’s lactation program is company support, including verbal and written support from supervisors, colleagues and other breastfeeding employees. Written worksite policies can help ensure supportive practices.

SUPPORT FROM SUPERVISORS

Employees appreciate the support they receive from supervisors. This support can be enhanced in a variety of ways.

- Incorporate information about the basic needs of breastfeeding employees in established company training programs for managers and supervisors.
- Establish program policies that recognize the needs of breastfeeding employees in the workplace.
- Encourage supervisors to offer breastfeeding employees the flexibility to adjust meeting times around their scheduled pumping sessions as well as provide positive feedback on their choice to breastfeed.
- Disseminate information about the designated room and other components of the lactation support program, including any prenatal classes, support groups, etc.

CO-WORKER SUPPORT

Research shows that most co-workers, particularly both male and female employees who have children of their own, support company health benefit programs that include lactation support. Occasionally, some co-workers might view these services as unfair, particularly if they perceive that they will be required to cover the breastfeeding mother's tasks or shifts. These concerns should be addressed by the manager or supervisor. Supervisors can remind employees that breastfeeding can improve the health of mothers and babies. Supporting co-workers in taking scheduled breaks to provide breast milk for their babies can help reduce the number of unplanned absences due to a sick child. Mothers who worry about co-worker resistance sometimes discontinue breastfeeding earlier than planned or hesitate to request lactation support from their supervisors.

Successful company lactation programs consider the needs of both the breastfeeding employee and her co-workers. Formal and informal guidance from company managers and appropriate consultants can help with any adjustments that might be needed during the program's implementation. Some strategies to gain co-worker support include

- Including co-worker representatives as part of the initial planning phase to identify and address potential concerns.
- Promoting the program as a company health benefit.
- Communicating other ways the company accommodates employee needs (e.g., fitness program breaks).
- Communicating the benefits of the program, including lower absenteeism rates, lower turnover rates, higher productivity, and faster return to the workplace.
- Maintaining ongoing communication with both the breastfeeding employee and her co-workers to ensure that the program is working well.

MOTHER-TO-MOTHER SUPPORT

Women value sharing successful strategies for managing breastfeeding and benefit from advice and support from other breastfeeding employees. Employers can help facilitate mother-to-mother support opportunities by arranging a monthly lunchtime mothers' meeting or facilitating an electronic discussion board on the company's website. Some lactation rooms feature a bulletin board or photo album for women to post photos of their babies and to share stories of their babies' progress.

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