

5 | Getting Started



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Tips for Employers

- Start small with a simple pilot program.
- Actively solicit input from employees to determine their needs.
- Gain buy-in from company stakeholders.
- Get help from available community resources.

Lactation support programs for employees can be tailored to fit company needs—as simple or as elaborate as desired. Companies typically report that developing a program is easier than they had anticipated. Program models are as varied as the companies themselves, but a few basic guidelines apply to most start-up situations

BEGIN A PILOT PROJECT

Most companies with successful lactation support programs recommend starting small with a pilot project that may grow as the needs of employees become more apparent. Most employers report that providing a basic space for milk expression takes little time and effort and reaps significant benefits in employee satisfaction and retention. Employers can later add other components such as education resources, flexible break options, lactation support and additional lactation rooms or amenities.

ASSESS THE NEED FOR A PROGRAM

Assessing the business environment can help build justification and support for a lactation support program and assist in the strategic planning process. Employers should ask the following questions:

- How many women in their child-bearing years work for the company?
- How many employees are likely to use a support program?
- Which department should be responsible for program oversight?
- How should space be allocated for a lactation room?
- What resources are available to equip the lactation room?
- What program policies need to be developed?
- What kind of recordkeeping will the program require?
- What are the best ways to promote the program to potential participants, their colleagues and supervisors, and the general community?

GAIN BUY-IN

Managers and supervisors have a powerful role as partners with human resources professionals in creating a supportive environment in the workplace. A breastfeeding-friendly work environment may be cost-effective. The initial costs may be modest while helping companies achieve business goals and support the goals of individual units.

DETERMINE THE ADMINISTRATIVE HOME FOR THE PROGRAM

Most companies establish the administrative home for a lactation support program within the human resource division, integrating it comfortably with other human resources services and offerings such as:

- **Employee health benefits platform**
Offers broad appeal and an opportunity to market the program as an important and valued employee benefit.
- **Employee wellness or health programs**
Builds on shared goals of improving the health and well-being of employees.
- **Employee Assistance Programs**
Provide support and short-term problem-resolution services to employees and families.
- **Family and work-life programs**
Increase the opportunity for maximum exposure and promotion through family-centered programs already in place.

CONSIDER CONVENING A TASK FORCE

Employers may consider convening a task force of company stakeholders to identify issues pertinent to the business and recommend program policies that will address the needs of breastfeeding employees. Below is a list of potential company stakeholders and how they can contribute to a workplace breastfeeding program.

POTENTIAL COMPANY STAKEHOLDERS	HOW THEY CONTRIBUTE
Human Resource Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands employee needs and motivators. • Knows how to integrate a new program within existing company programs and policies. • Experienced at quantifying the return on investment (ROI) for programs. • Assists in evaluating the program's potential as part of existing employee satisfaction surveys.
Wellness Coordinator or Occupational Health Nurse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled in addressing health needs of employees. • Provides creative ideas and support for integrating the program into existing employee health services.
Facilities Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides solutions for adapting or converting building space for use as lactation rooms. • Provides expertise in planning future building projects which include space for lactation rooms. • Knowledgeable about security, accessibility, housekeeping considerations, and equipment maintenance issues.
Current and Previous Breastfeeding Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the needs and issues of breastfeeding women in their particular work site situation. • Represent employees from different staff levels and positions, providing the most useful guidance in creating a program that meets diverse needs.
Representative Staff from a variety of departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide feedback on potential concerns that might arise from co-workers when the lactation support program is implemented.
Pregnant Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide feedback on typical concerns about returning to work and sustaining lactation as well as advice on the types of messages that provide reassurance about the support they can expect from the company.
Finance Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides guidance on current and future funding resources and assists in resource allocation strategies.
Public Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists in promoting the program with potential users, colleagues and supervisors. • Promotes the program within the community as a valuable employee benefit.
Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide insight on merging business needs with employee concerns.

IDENTIFY COMMUNITY RESOURCES

A variety of community experts can also be brought onto the task force to assist with designing a program that will address the needs of both the company and its employees.

These community resources can also provide direct services to breastfeeding employees.

Health Professionals

Many companies find that health professionals at hospitals as well as obstetric and pediatric care programs are valuable resources. A hospital community outreach program may also provide useful information.

Lactation Consultants

An International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) is a credentialed health professional who can provide direct breastfeeding education and clinical counseling for mothers who have breastfeeding questions and concerns. Some lactation consultants can also assist businesses in establishing appropriate accommodations for lactating employees.

Breastfeeding Coalitions

Many states and local areas have breastfeeding coalitions that address the needs of breastfeeding women. Lactation experts and educators, peer counselors, medical professionals and other community leaders are usually active members. Coalitions can often assist companies in implementing a lactation program.

The national Maternal and Child Health Bureau project *The Business Case for Breastfeeding* provides training and technical assistance to support businesses in establishing lactation programs. Breastfeeding coalitions in the following states have been selected to participate:

- Alabama
- Alaska
- Arizona
- California
- Connecticut
- District of Columbia
- Georgia
- Hawaii
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Kansas
- Louisiana
- Michigan
- New York
- Oregon
- Pennsylvania
- Rhode Island
- South Carolina
- Texas
- Utah
- Vermont
- West Virginia

La Leche League International

This mother-to-mother organization offers breastfeeding support groups and knowledgeable volunteers who provide one-on-one assistance to new mothers by telephone or in person. In some communities, a local leader with expertise in helping working mothers is available to teach classes or assist work sites.

Insurance Carriers

Check with the company's primary insurance carrier to explore policies and benefits for breastfeeding employees. Insurance companies may cover breastfeeding resources and services such as consultations with a lactation consultant, breast pumps, home nurse visits during the early postpartum period, and breastfeeding supplies.

Other Community Organizations

Groups such as the March of Dimes, Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition, and Healthy Start initiatives may have community outreach specialists who can assist in establishing a program or providing resources and services to employees. The local Chamber of Commerce may also have access to information about other companies in the community that offer lactation support programs and services.

PROMOTE THE PROGRAM

Once the program is in place, it should be widely promoted with potential users (both breastfeeding employees and male employees whose partners are pregnant), as well as with colleagues, supervisors and managers. Promotion builds both interest and needed support for the program. Some companies find that integrating a breastfeeding support program with existing work-life programs works well since breastfeeding support can then be promoted as part of a broad group of other programs. Promoting the program in the wider community also helps build a positive image for the company.

Ways to Promote the Program

- Employee wellness or health fairs.
- Staff meetings.
- Open house for the lactation room (serve refreshments and invite the media).
- Articles in internal print or web-based newsletters.
- Outreach tables set up in prominent areas, with lactation consultants from the program on hand to answer questions and distribute materials to employees.
- Promotional packets for pregnant employees and partners of employees.
- Word of mouth.
- “Lunch and Learn” sessions.
- Baby shower for expectant employees and partners.
- Posters and bulletin board displays.
- Employee health benefits mailings.
- Company-wide mailing or e-mail.
- Paycheck stuffers promoting the program.

IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM

Actual implementation of the program can be completed by the task force, current or previous breastfeeding employees within the organization, or other interested individuals. Some companies contract with a corporate lactation program to develop and operate a program; others may bring in a community lactation consultant as a program advisor. Most companies find that once it is in place, the program is easy to maintain.