

SUPPORTING BREASTFEEDING MOMS WHO RETURN TO PAID WORK



2008 Health Care
Professional Seminar



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WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR NURSING MOTHERS ACT

Colorado is the 16th state to pass legislation regarding breastfeeding support in the workplace. Effective August, 2008, Colorado employers are required to make the following accommodations for breastfeeding employees:

- Provide reasonable time (unpaid or paid break and/or meal time) for mothers to express milk at work
- Make reasonable efforts to provide suitable, private space for this purpose
- Not discriminate against women for expressing milk in the workplace

The full text of the law can be found at www.coloradobreastfeedingtaskforce.org

3 KEYS FOR SUPPORTING WORKING MOTHERS

Research shows that the majority of breastfeeding women wean their infants within their first month back at paid work. To turn this around, here are some ways we can support and encourage working mothers.

1. **Tap into the power of Sisterhood** – Insist that breastfeeding, working moms connect with each other through LLL groups, informal groups (neighborhood, employer, place of worship), online networking groups (iVillage, CafeMom, Meetup), etc.
2. **Educate moms on workplace lactation** – Make sure moms are aware of the Workplace Accommodations for Nursing Mothers Act. Help moms mentally prepare for returning to work. Discuss the time, space and support they will need to pump (or nurse their babies) at work, and strategize on the specifics for their work environment. Provide a checklist of [pump at work essentials](#) (see milkmemos.com resources). Consider recommending the book *The Milk Memos: How Real Moms Learned to Mix Business with Babies – and How You Can, Too* (by Cate Colburn-Smith and Andrea Serrette) (available at local libraries).
3. **Help moms ask their employers for lactation accommodation** – Role-play the conversation (script it, even) to help moms prepare to ask for the time, space and support they need to pump breastmilk (or nurse their babies) at work. Suggest the following outline:
 - a. Intentions (I intend to do a great job at work and continue providing human milk for my baby...)
 - b. Employer benefits (Supporting breastfeeding in the workplace is good for business...) (see below)
 - c. Health benefits (This is very important for me because...) (keep this brief!) (see below)
 - d. Accommodations proposal (I've thought about how to make this work, and here's what I propose in terms of when and where I'll pump, who can back me up, how we can adjust my schedule, etc.)
 - e. More information (Here's information on the [Workplace Accommodations for Nursing Mothers Act](#), resources for employers from [Colo. Dept. of Labor](#), [Colo. Breastfeeding Coalition](#), etc.) (reference the [Employer Toolkit](#) on the Dept. of Labor and Breastfeeding Coalition websites)

Help moms get past the awkwardness of discussing breastmilk with their supervisors and co-workers. Reassure them that they'll most likely get what they ask for, it's all worth it, and totally doable.

LACTATION PROGRAM BENEFITS TO EMPLOYERS

Research proves that workplace lactation programs/support:

- Reduce short term and long term health costs (because mothers and babies are healthier)
- Reduce absenteeism (because breastfed babies are sick far less often)
- Improve productivity
- Improve employee job satisfaction and morale
- Improve loyalty and retention (lower turnover)
- Enhance company image in the eyes of customers, potential employees, and the community at large

For every dollar invested in basic lactation programs, employers see a \$2 return on investment (U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services)

FAST HEALTH FACTS

Babies who are NOT breastfed are: 100% more likely to have middle ear infections, 250% more likely to suffer lower respiratory diseases, 35% more likely to develop asthma, and 65% more likely to develop Type 2 Diabetes.*

Mothers who do NOT breastfeed are: 40% more likely to develop breast cancer, 25% more likely to develop ovarian cancer, and 5-15% more likely to suffer from Type 2 Diabetes.*

For every 1,000 babies NOT breastfed, there are: 2,033 excess doctor's office visits, 212 excess days of hospitalization, and 609 excess prescriptions.**

Mothers who feed their infants formula have more than twice the number of one-day absences to care for sick children than mother who breastfeed.***

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and myriad other health organizations recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a baby's life, and continued breastfeeding for at least one year.

*"Breastfeeding and Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes in Developed Countries" (April 2007) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

**Ball & Wright, 1999. Healthcare costs of formula feeding in the first year of life

***Cohen, 1995. Comparison of maternal absenteeism and infant illness rates ...

WORKPLACE LACTATION ACCOMMODATION ESSENTIALS

Time: In an 8-9 hour work day, most women need 2-3 pumping sessions lasting about 15 minutes each. Over time, as their babies grow, women typically need fewer pumping sessions. This can be paid break/meal time, or unpaid break time. If necessary, the beginning and/or ending time of work can be adjusted to accommodate these breaks.

Space: This should be a clean, private area (not a toilet stall or public restroom) that is reasonably nearby the mother's work location. If you cannot dedicate a small, private room, be creative! Mothers have used: spare/borrowed office, manager's office, conference room, supplies room, server/IT room, inventory room, dressing room, cubicle area with privacy screen, curtain or cloak, employee break room (temporarily!)

Support: Mothers depend upon manager and coworker support and flexibility in accommodating pumping breaks. A written lactation policy will solidify support, standardize implementation, and minimize confusion and debate. Sample lactation policies are available at coloradobreastfeeding.org.