

HELP WORKING FAMILIES STAY HEALTHY

Ensure Workplace Accommodations for Nursing Mothers

Co-sponsor the Supporting Working Moms Act (SWMA)!



Among mothers of infants in their first year, 35.5% work full time and 16.1% work part time outside the home. Yet when mother and child are separated for more than a few hours, the woman must express breast milk. **Missing even one needed pumping session can have several undesirable consequences**, including discomfort, leaking, inflammation and infection, decreased supply, and ultimately, breastfeeding cessation. As a result, mothers typically find returning to work a significant barrier to breastfeeding. They often face inflexibility in work hours/locations and a lack of privacy for expressing milk, have no place to store the milk, are unable to find child care facilities at or near the workplace, face fears over job insecurity, and have limited maternity leave. Mothers without a private office may resort to using the restroom, an approach that is unhygienic and associated with premature weaning.

Breastfeeding is a proven primary prevention strategy, building a foundation for life-long health and wellness. *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding*; the Institute of Medicine report, *Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention*; and the *National Prevention Strategy* each call for employers to establish and maintain lactation support programs for their employees. The HHS Office on Women's Health hosts **Supporting Nursing Moms at Work**, a comprehensive online resource providing businesses with cost-effective tips and simple solutions for all industries.

Benefits for Employers

The HHS *Business Case for Breastfeeding* shows an **impressive return on investment (almost 3:1) for employers that provide lactation support**, including lower health care costs, absenteeism, and turnover, and improved morale, job satisfaction, and productivity. It is easier to provide temporary, scheduled breaks for milk expression than to cover the missed work shifts of an employee who is absent because her baby or family members are sick.

Federal Legislation Overview

Section 7 of the Fair Labor Standards Act requires employers to provide reasonable break time and a private, non-bathroom place for most hourly wage-earning (nonexempt) workers to express breast milk at work. Although it was intended to cover all employees, its placement within existing statute means that it does not cover millions of salaried executive, administrative, and professional employees, including teachers. While it provides protection and support for the most vulnerable workers, this **distinction in the law was unintentional, causes confusion, and could be addressed with a simple amendment**.

The Supporting Working Moms Act of 2017, introduced by Senator Jeff Merkley and Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, would close this gap to ensure salaried workers are provided the same workplace breastfeeding accommodations as hourly workers covered by the current law.

All major medical authorities recommend that mothers breastfeed exclusively for six months and continue breastfeeding for at least the first year of a child's life. We know that 80% of mothers intend to breastfeed, and 82.5% actually do breastfeed at birth. Yet only 25% of U.S. infants are still exclusively breastfed at six months of age.

Please co-sponsor the Supporting Working Moms Act to ensure that every breastfeeding family has the support they need to succeed, saving billions for our economy each year.

U.S. Breastfeeding Committee • www.usbreastfeeding.org

Implementation Resources for Nursing Breaks Law

The **HHS Office on Women's Health** has a comprehensive online resource to support employers in learning from those who have successfully implemented the Nursing Breaks law. The **Employer Solutions Resource** is searchable by industry, or solutions to common questions, such as how to accommodate time and space provisions, as well as how to build a culture of support.

Supporting Nursing Moms at Work: Employer Solutions

Women with children are the fastest-growing segment of the work force. Balancing work and family is an important priority for them. Today, over 75 percent of women in the United States begin breastfeeding. When they return to work after their babies are born, time and space to express their milk during the work period help them continue to give their best to their work and their baby.

These family-friendly benefits also bring your business a 3:1 Return on Investment (ROI) through lower health care costs, lower employee absenteeism rates (since babies are healthier), lower turnover rates, and higher employee productivity and loyalty.

Businesses across America have learned how to support nursing mothers at work.

This online resource provides businesses with cost-effective tips and solutions for any industry setting. Search by industry to see how other businesses just like yours have made it work. Or search by solutions to find creative options for time and space that might work for you.

Go to
INDUSTRY

Go to
COMMON SOLUTIONS



"The things that matter most should never be impacted by the things that matter least. Breastfeeding support is something that matters the most in the big scheme of things. It is an investment in our staff, who are priceless. And we're making a difference."

Jon Romeo, Principal

Businesses benefit from supporting breastfeeding employees

"This was actually a very easy process for us. We didn't have any challenges at all. It's become a real win-win for all of us. We have greater retention when people are happy. It's kind of a no-brainer when you think about it." (Eliza Cain, Owner, Red Hen Bakery Café, Middlesex, VT)

"Just like anything else, you've got a learning curve. I wasn't fully trained on this type of thing, obviously, but I got some information from some of our local resources and our corporate offices as well. It's been an education for all of us, but I think that we're at a point now where everyone's comfortable with it. Everyone realizes the benefit of having onsite facilities for this type of activity. It hasn't affected us in a negative way at ALL. I think if the new mothers are happy that's the benefit in itself. Making them feel comfortable about coming to work. Being able to breast pump on site and not miss that opportunity to provide natural milk for their children is good for them, and it's good for their children. Therefore it's good for us." (HR Manager, Shaw Industries, Dalton, GA)