

## Strategy 5. Support for Breastfeeding in the Workplace

### Definition

Support for breastfeeding in the workplace can include several types of employee benefits and services.<sup>57,58</sup> Examples include the following:

- Developing corporate policies to support breastfeeding women.
- Providing designated private space for women to breastfeed or express milk.
- Allowing flexible scheduling to support milk expression during work.
- Giving mothers options for returning to work, such as teleworking, part-time work, or extended maternity leave.
- Providing on-site or nearby child care.
- Providing high-quality breast pumps.
- Allowing babies at the workplace.
- Offering professional lactation management services and support.

### Rationale

Mothers are one of the fastest growing segments of the U.S. labor force. In 2012, 57% of all mothers with infants were employed.<sup>59</sup> Working full-time outside the home is related to a shorter duration of breastfeeding.<sup>60,61</sup> Intentions to work full-time are associated with lower rates of breastfeeding initiation and shorter duration.<sup>62</sup>

Low-income women, among whom African American and Hispanic women are overrepresented, are more likely than their higher income counterparts to return to work earlier and to have jobs that make it challenging for them to continue breastfeeding.<sup>60,63</sup>

Conversely, rates of breastfeeding initiation and duration are higher among women who have longer maternity leave,<sup>64</sup> work part-time rather than full-time,<sup>65</sup> or have breastfeeding support programs in the workplace.<sup>63,66</sup>

### Evidence of Effectiveness

A cross-sectional survey was conducted among a sample of women working for a large public-sector employer that had used at least one component of a work site lactation program in the past 3 years.<sup>67</sup> The program offered (1) prenatal classes on breastfeeding and how to maintain breastfeeding after returning to work, (2) telephone support from a nurse during a woman's maternity leave, (3) a return-to-work consultation with a nurse, and (4) access to lactation rooms.

Individual program components associated with exclusive breastfeeding at 6 months were telephone support and return-to-work consultation. In addition, the percentage of women who were exclusively breastfeeding at 6 months increased with each additional service received.



Several studies have indicated that support for lactation at work benefits not only families but employers as well by improving productivity; enhancing the employer's public image; and decreasing absenteeism, health care costs, and employee turnover.<sup>66,68,69</sup>

## Key Considerations

- Educate employers on the benefits of having a lactation policy in the workplace that is in compliance with state and federal laws.
- Consider recognition programs that highlight employers with exemplary programs and allow employers to apply for recognition.
- Some work sites, such as academic institutions and hospitals that also serve people who are not employees, can consider extending onsite breastfeeding support to nonemployees.



- Lactation programs can include policies that allow mothers to bring their infants to work until they reach a certain age.

## Action Steps

1. Provide employers with resources and technical assistance to help them comply with federal and state regulations on breastfeeding support in the workplace.
2. Sponsor a summit of employers, business organizations, and other key decision makers to develop a strategy to implement high-quality breastfeeding support programs in the workplace.
3. Support training on how to implement the steps in The Business Case for Breastfeeding tool kit (see Program Examples for more information).
4. Create links between state agencies that are responsible for implementing existing laws on work-site accommodations.
5. Develop a resource to help employers find creative ways to provide breastfeeding support in the workplace.
6. Enhance lactation support within state agencies.
7. Create recognition programs for businesses to set up high-quality breastfeeding support programs in the workplace.



## Program Examples

### AOL WellBaby Program

The AOL WellBaby Program was launched in 2003 as part of AOL's employee wellness program. The program offers preconception, pregnancy, and lactation support, including providing lactation consultation and rooms where mothers can breastfeed or express milk. The program serves more than 110 families a year and has reported a return on investment that is three to five times what is spent.

### The Business Case for Breastfeeding

The Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) in HRSA developed a program for employers called The Business Case for Breastfeeding. This program addresses barriers and the educational needs of employers and includes tool kits and guidelines for senior managers, human resources managers, and breastfeeding employees. During 2007–2009, the MCHB worked with the Office of Women's Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide training in 30 states on how to use these materials. Those who receive training are then able to train others in their state and community.

The program is being used to help large businesses and organizations set up lactation programs for their employees. Most recently, the focus has been on getting information, education, and resources to employers in nontraditional, nonoffice settings. The U.S. Department of Labor provides technical assistance for this effort.

## Factors to Consider When Setting Up a Workplace Lactation Program

- **Population:** The number of women who need support, the resources available,<sup>68</sup> and the settings in which female employees work.
- **Space:** Lactation accommodations can take many forms, from a converted office or private space to a formal nursing mothers' room. This space cannot be a bathroom.
- **Time:** Employers can use many different strategies to make sure mothers have enough time to breastfeed or express milk. Examples include flexible work schedules and locations, break times for pumping, on-site child care services, and job sharing.
- **Support:** Employers can do a lot to create an atmosphere that supports employees who breastfeed. A supportive atmosphere will be easier to achieve as workplace support programs are promoted to human resources managers, employee health coordinators, insurers, and health care providers.

Several guides and tool kits with information about different types of practices can be used to support breastfeeding women in the workplace. These materials are available online from the United States Breastfeeding Committee, the National Business Group on Health, and the Health Resources and Services Administration.

See the Resources section (page 27) for more information.



In New York, the New York State Department of Health's Obesity Prevention Program and Healthy Heart Program and the New York State Breastfeeding Coalition adapted materials from The Business Case for Breastfeeding to help businesses and public health agencies implement or expand lactation programs in the workplace and support the state's Nursing Mothers in the Workplace Act. Through a partnership with the state's WIC Program, a Web-based *Return to Work Toolkit* is being developed for low-income breastfeeding mothers who are making the transition back to work.

The group also is redesigning its Web site (<http://www.breastfeedingpartners.org>) to include information to help employers develop, implement, and promote lactation programs in the workplace.

### **Infant at Work Program**

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment's Infant at Work Program allows mothers to bring their infants to work until age 6 months. Participating mothers must agree to all policies of the program, sign a consent and waiver form, and identify alternate care givers at the workplace who will care for their infant when they are temporarily unavailable.

### **Tippecanoe County WIC Program**

The Tippecanoe County WIC Program in Indiana allows staff to bring exclusively breastfed infants to work until age 6 months.

### **Breastfeeding Legislation**

In March 2010, President Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act into law. Section 4207 provides nonexempt breastfeeding employees with "reasonable break time" and a private place, other than a bathroom, to express breast milk during the workday up until a child's first birthday. The law does not preempt state laws that provide greater protections to employees.

In 2008, Navajo Nation lawmakers passed a law that requires employers working in or doing contract work for the Navajo Nation to provide ways for mothers to continue to breastfeed. The Navajo Nation Healthy Start Act allows a mother unpaid time during work hours to breastfeed her infant or to use a breast pump. The act is enforced by the Navajo Nation Labor Commission.

Both California (in 2002) and New Jersey (in 2008) passed Family Leave Insurance to allow employees to take leave for several reasons, including to bond with newborn or newly adopted children and to care for sick family members. This insurance provides partial wage replacement for 12 weeks in California and 6 weeks in New Jersey.



## Resources

### **AOL WellBaby Program**

This employee wellness program includes lactation support, such as lactation consultation and rooms for mothers to breastfeed or express milk.  
<http://www.businessgrouphealth.org/pub/f3002033-2354-d714-51d4-f144c4d536e8>

### **Colorado Breastfeeding Coalition**

#### **YouTube Videos**

These videos share the experiences of employees and employers related to lactation support in the workplace.  
<http://cobfc.org>

### **The Business Case for Breastfeeding**

*Health Resources and Services Administration*

Program with several resources, including tool kits and guidelines, to help employers understand the benefits of making accommodations for breastfeeding mothers.  
<http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/government-in-action/business-case-for-breastfeeding>

### **Infant at Work Program**

*Kansas Department of Health and Environment*

Information about this state program that allows mothers to bring their infants to work until age 6 months.  
<http://da.ks.gov/ps/subject/arc/resources/doainfant.pdf>

### **Worksite Wellness Program Toolkit**

*Massachusetts Department of Public Health*

This tool kit includes information and resources to help employers support employees to engage in healthy behaviors. It includes a section on policies, programs, and resources on lactation support.  
<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/mass-in-motion/worksite-wellness-toolkit.pdf>

### **Breastfeeding & Working:**

#### **WorkAndPump.com**

Web site with practical advice and help for mothers who are trying to balance breastfeeding and work.  
<http://www.workandpump.com>





### **Navajo Nation Healthy Start Act**

*Navajo Nation*

Information about lactation protections in the workplace set by the Navajo Nation Healthy Start Act.

<http://www.usbreastfeeding.org/Portals/0/Coalitions/2010-NCSBC/BTT-Handouts/BTT-11-Handout.ppt>

### **Breastfeeding Laws**

*National Conference of State Legislatures*

Inventory of state legislation related to breastfeeding.

<http://www.ncsl.org/issues-research/health/breastfeeding-state-laws.aspx>

### **Texas Mother-Friendly Worksite Program**

*Texas Department of State Health Services*

List of mother-friendly work sites in Texas and information for employees and employers.

<http://www.motherfriendly.com>

### **Investing in Workplace Breastfeeding Programs and Policies: An Employer's Toolkit**

*National Business Group on Health*

This tool kit is designed to help employers make lactation accommodations and understand the benefits to employees and employers.

<http://www.businessgrouphealth.org/pub/f2ffe4f0-2354-d714-5136-79a21e9327ed>