



MISSISSIPPI WINS

Workplaces Improving
Nursing Support

LACTATION ACCOMMODATIONS: GENERAL SOLUTIONS

Workplaces of all types have found solutions for supporting lactating employees. These solutions need not be expensive or complicated. Best of all, lactation support is a valuable addition to your employee benefits package and worksite wellness program. Breastfeeding employees who are supported by their employers are healthier, more productive, and loyal.

It Works for Business

Providing lactation accommodations in the workplace can bring about a **3 to 1 Return on Investment¹** due to:

- ▶ **Lower absenteeism rates** from unplanned sick days since breastfed babies are healthier.²
- ▶ **Higher retention rates** after staff leave to give birth. A 9-company study found that the return to work rate among employers who provide lactation support is 94% compared to the national average of 59%.³
- ▶ **Lower healthcare costs** and insurance claims when infants are breastfed.⁴
- ▶ **Higher productivity** and loyalty among workers.⁵

It's Required by Law

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)⁶ requires employers to provide lactating employees with:

- ▶ "Reasonable break time" to express milk as often as the employee has need.
- ▶ Private space that is **not a bathroom** that is "shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public" that employees can use to express milk.

The FLSA provisions cover both exempt and nonexempt workers in most industries. Businesses everywhere have found that providing basic support is not difficult or expensive, and simple, doable solutions abound.

Space Solutions

Lactation space can include both dedicated lactation rooms or flexible spaces. Space can be small (minimum of 4' x 5') as long as it accommodates a chair and flat surface for a breast pump and enables the employee to move around. Options include:

Flexible Space

- Private office of employee, colleague, or manager
- Conference room
- Private area within an employee break room
- Partition or screen with signage and well-communicated policy
- Cubicle space if it can be secured and is tall enough (7' or more) to prevent intrusion

Employees Who Travel

- Identify spaces in community locations (e.g., public spaces, libraries, federal buildings).
- Provide information about TSA guidelines for transporting human milk at <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring/items/breast-milk>.





Designated Lactation Space

- Converted closet or storage area (if well-ventilated).
- Seldom-used small office area.
- A “funny little space” that can be retrofitted as a lactation area.
- Constructing walls or tall cubicle partitions to create a lactation area.
- Lactation “pod(s)” placed in convenient areas.
- For workplaces with multiple locations, consider establishing lactation space in key areas.



Amenities

The U.S. Department of Labor states that lactation areas must be functional for milk expression⁷ and include, at a minimum, a chair, a flat surface (other than the floor) on which to place the breast pump, and access to electricity.⁸

Storing Expressed Milk

Human milk is food. This means it can be stored in a general company refrigerator. However, most employees prefer to keep their expressed milk in a small refrigerator in the lactation room or in their own personal cooler or insulated bag.



Time and Coverage

The FLSA requires employers to provide reasonable time for lactating employees to express milk when the need arises. Employees typically need to express milk every two to three hours throughout their shift. It typically takes 15-20 minutes to express milk, depending on the person and the age of the baby. This does not include travel and clean-up time. Each employee is different and no set amount of time will fit everyone's needs. If coverage is needed, other staff, floaters, or managers can assist. In some settings, milk expression breaks might need to be scheduled.

Consider...

- ▶ Facility policy that requires lactation space as part of any new building development or major renovation.
- ▶ Collecting feedback from employees using the space so ongoing improvements can be made.
- ▶ Allowing employees to have direct access to their baby for feedings.



For more information, contact the Center for Health Equity, Education, and Research (CHEER) at their Mississippi WINS resource site, www.cheerequity.org/resources/breastfeeding-baby-friendly-resources/workplace-resources. Or, visit the “Employer Solutions” website at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office on Women’s Health at www.womenshealth.gov/supporting-nursing-moms-work.

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1 Washington Business Group on Health. Breastfeeding Support at the Workplace. Washington, D.C.; 2000. Issue No. 2.

2 Cohen R, Mrtek MB, Mrtek RG. Comparison of maternal absenteeism and infant illness rates among breastfeeding and formula-feeding women in two corporations. Am J Health Prom. 1995;19(2):148-153.

3 Ortiz J, et al. Duration of breast milk expression among working mothers enrolled in an employer-sponsored lactation program. Ped Nursing. 2004;30(2):111-119.

4 Mutual of Omaha. Prenatal and lactation education reduces newborn health care costs. Omaha, NE: Mutual of Omaha, 2001.

5 Galtry J. Lactation and the labor market: breastfeeding labor market changes and public policy in the United States. Health Care Women Int. 1997;18:467-480.

6 U.S. Department of Labor. Break Time for Nursing Mothers. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pump-at-work>

7 U.S. Department of Labor. Fact Sheet #73: Break Time for Nursing Mothers Under the FLSA. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/73-flsa-break-time-nursing-mothers>

8 U.S. Department of Labor. Request for Information on Break Time for Nursing Mothers. Federal Register 75:80073-80079, Dec. 21, 2010. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2010-12-21/pdf/2010-31959.pdf>