



MISSISSIPPI WINS

Workplaces Improving
Nursing Support

LACTATION ACCOMMODATION SOLUTIONS: HEALTHCARE

Healthcare organizations have a unique mission to promote health. This means it is even more important that they model healthy practices of supporting their employees with lactation accommodations. 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 healthcare industry 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. Hospitals and other healthcare organizations found that providing basic support is not difficult or expensive, and simple, doable solutions abound.

Space Solutions

A variety of options can work in healthcare settings.

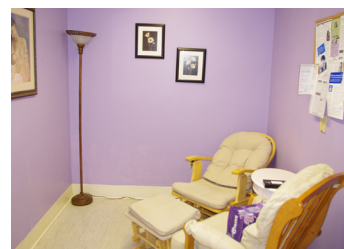
Smaller Health Agencies

- Seldom-used exam room or patient room
- Private office space
- Conference room
- Patient consultation room
- Well-ventilated closet or storage area
- On-call sleeping room when unoccupied



Larger Organizations or Health Systems

- Identify multiple spaces in key areas of the health unit.
- Locate spaces near a central bank of elevators to improve quick access.
- Consider spaces with a sink to minimize the amount of break time needed.
- Consider "multi-user" spaces with separate privacy stations for individual users.
- Ask employees to schedule their lactation time via the hospital intranet to assure available space when needed.
- Monitor usage of the space to identify when additional spaces are needed.





Designated Lactation Space

- Consider a system-wide policy to be used by all hospitals or units within the system.
 - Extend lactation space to visitors and parents pumping for a hospitalized child.
 - Allow employees to use a refrigerator in the lactation space or their own cooler to store expressed milk.
 - Some hospitals allow a caregiver to bring the baby to the employee for direct breastfeeding when needed.
- If the employee is using a hospital onsite childcare, offer direct breastfeeding during meal breaks.

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. Breastfeeding employees typically need to express milk every 2-3 hours throughout their shift. Employees working 12-hour shifts will need to express milk more often than those working an 8-hour shift. It takes around 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, nurse managers or other staff can assist. In some settings, nursing breaks might need to be scheduled.



Consider...

- ▶ Make multi-user breast pumps owned or rented by the hospital available for employees. Some hospitals either provide or subsidize the cost of breast pump attachment kits for employees.
- ▶ Invite employees to attend breastfeeding classes offered at the hospital.
- ▶ Allow the hospital lactation team to provide lactation support for employees experiencing breastfeeding concerns.

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.

The State of Mississippi is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Provider of ADA Services

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>