



## MISSISSIPPI WINS

Workplaces Improving  
Nursing Support

# LACTATION ACCOMMODATION SOLUTIONS: MANUFACTURING

Manufacturing firms across America have found creative solutions to accommodate lactating employees. 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 manufacturing industry can bring about a **3 to 1 Return on Investment<sup>1</sup>** due to:

- ▶ **Lower absenteeism rates** from unplanned sick days since breastfed babies are healthier.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ **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%.<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ **Lower healthcare costs** and insurance claims when infants are breastfed.<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ **Higher productivity** and loyalty among workers.<sup>5</sup>

## It's Required by Law

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)<sup>6</sup> 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. Manufacturing firms have found that providing basic support is not difficult or expensive, and simple, doable solutions abound.

## Space Solutions

Manufacturing organizations have found a variety of solutions for milk expression space for breastfeeding employees.

### Individual Spaces

- Well-ventilated storage area
- Unused office space
- Constructing a space within a larger area using partitions or screens
- Conference room space that gives breastfeeding employees priority use
- Employee "rest" area
- Space in the company's onsite health clinic
- Lactation "pod" or pop-up tent within larger areas



### Multiple User Space

- Create individual private "stations" within a larger lactation space.
- Use curtains, tall partitions, or screens to provide individual privacy for employees. Or construct walls to create smaller individual areas.
- Provide individual spaces in multiple areas of the plant or multiple buildings throughout the campus.



## Amenities

The U.S. Department of Labor states that lactation areas must be functional for milk expression<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> Other amenities, such as a sink for washing hands and breast pump parts, are not required, but will decrease the amount of break time needed to express milk. Include anti-microbial wipes to wipe down surfaces between users.



## 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 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 2-3 hours throughout their 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. Most employees use their existing breaks and meal period to express milk. In some firms, employees clock in and out or make up extra time by arriving at work earlier or staying later. Manufacturing firms with more rigid schedules often use floater staff for coverage while the employee is on break to express milk.



## Other Support

Onsite health clinics can provide additional support for breastfeeding employees. Some clinics house milk expression space. Occupational health nurses can also be a resource to assist employees with milk expression questions and concerns.

## Consider...

- ▶ Partner with local WIC agency for peer support of breastfeeding employees.
- ▶ Partner with WIC and the State or local breastfeeding coalition to provide training for supervisors.
- ▶ Identify space along the plumbing line to accommodate a sink in the space.
- ▶ Ensure a company-wide policy on lactation to assure equitable access to lactation support.

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](http://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](http://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>