



MISSISSIPPI WINS

Workplaces Improving
Nursing Support

LACTATION ACCOMMODATION SOLUTIONS: RESTAURANTS

Restaurants have found many creative solutions to accommodate breastfeeding employees. Even small restaurants and fast-food industries with limited space and rigid time schedules can make it work. Solutions need not be expensive or complicated. Best of all, they can be 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 restaurant 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 co-workers and the public" that employees can use to express milk.

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

Space Solutions

In the restaurant industry, space is a premium. Yet even a space as small as 4' x 5' can suffice as long as it is not a bathroom, and accommodates a chair and a flat surface for the breast pump. A number of flexible options in small spaces such as restaurants can work.

- ▶ Well-ventilated storage room or area
- ▶ Manager's office area (with personnel files locked and surveillance cameras covered)
- ▶ Private space within an employee "break" area
- ▶ Small area enclosed with an inexpensive privacy screen or partition
- ▶ Pop-up tent placed in an area not viewed by restaurant patrons





Other Creative Options

- Creative scheduling can help! Some employees work a “split shift” (e.g., the busy lunch and dinner periods and go to their baby between shifts to directly breastfeed).
- Some restaurants allow a family caregiver to bring the baby to the employee for direct feedings during slower periods.
- Some small restaurants arrange with a nearby business to enable employees to express milk at a shared location.



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 When space is limited, flexible spaces such as a partition should include signage that the space is occupied along with a well-communicated policy that respects the employee’s privacy.



Storing Expressed Milk

Expressed milk can be stored in a separate small refrigerator or in the employee’s 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. Restaurant managers often use creative scheduling options to assure the employee has the time and coverage needed. In some settings, milk expression breaks might need to be scheduled.



Consider...

- ▶ Partner with your local WIC agency for peer support of breastfeeding employees.
- ▶ Partner with the health department, WIC, or local breastfeeding coalition to provide training for supervisors.
- ▶ A company-wide policy on lactation to assure equitable access to lactation support and set expectations for honoring the privacy of breastfeeding employees.

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>