



MISSISSIPPI WINS

Workplaces Improving
Nursing Support

LACTATION ACCOMMODATION SOLUTIONS: RETAIL

Retail stores have found many creative solutions to accommodate lactating employees. Even small stores with limited space 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 retail industry can bring about a **3 to 1 Return on Investment**¹ 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. Both large and small retail stores have found that providing basic support is not difficult or expensive, and simple, doable solutions abound.

Space Solutions

Breastfeeding employees need only a small area to express milk. Even a 4' x 5' space can work as long as it is not a bathroom and can accommodate a chair and a flat surface for the breast pump. A variety of options can work in the retail setting.

- ▶ Converted dressing room (cost for installing an electrical outlet can be nominal)
- ▶ Manager's office with personnel files locked and surveillance cameras covered
- ▶ Private space within an employee break area
- ▶ Well-ventilated storage area
- ▶ Privacy screens or partitions to create a small private space
- ▶ Multi-purpose structure built in a storage area for lactation purposes as needed
- ▶ A designated central lactation area in a retail mall for breastfeeding employees from any store





Other Creative Options

- Some retail stores allow a family caregiver to bring the baby to the mother for direct feedings during slower periods.
- Some small retail stores allow employees to keep their infant in arms with them through the work period. A sling can provide discreet coverage while feeding the baby.
- Some small retail outlets arrange with a nearby business to enable employees to express milk at another 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 manager's office or screened area) should include signage that the space is occupied. A well-communicated policy should include respecting a breastfeeding employee's privacy.



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. Retail managers use creative scheduling options with managers or floaters providing coverage as needed. In small gas stations or retail outlets that staff only one employee at a time, scheduled nursing breaks can allow the manager to provide coverage as needed or permit the business to close for short breaks.



Consider...

- ▶ Allow the lactation space to be extended to breastfeeding customers as a valued customer benefit. Converted dressing rooms can work well for this purpose and are easily accessible both to employees and the public. Ensure that employees have priority to express milk when needed.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Policy to ensure equitable access to lactation support for all 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.

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>