

CHAMPS

COMMUNITIES AND HOSPITALS
ADVANCING MATERNITY PRACTICES

SUPPORTING BREASTFEEDING
EMPLOYEES IN HOSPITALS



Hospital Employee Lactation Support: A Model For The Workplace

Mississippi Hospitals and Lactation Support

Hospitals are major employers in communities. They also serve as models to help influence healthy living and promote worksite wellness. Federal law requires companies, including hospitals, to provide worksite lactation accommodations of reasonable time and a private space to express milk at work for lactating employees.¹ These services can offer employers bottom-line benefits with a three-to-one return on investment (ROI) due to lower absenteeism and turnover rates, lower healthcare costs, and improved productivity and loyalty.^{2,3}

In 2021-2022, 27 Mississippi hospitals completed a survey on employee lactation support conducted by the Communities and Hospitals Advancing Maternity Practices (CHAMPS) Program. CHAMPS is a nonprofit organization assisting hospitals with implementing practices toward designation as a Baby-Friendly hospital.⁴ Eighteen (67%) of the hospitals had gained this Baby-Friendly designation, which demonstrates a commitment to breastfeeding support for their maternity patients. According to the survey:

- All hospitals offered lactation accommodations (formal or informal) to support breastfeeding among employees while at work and offered milk expression breaks
- 44% had a permanent, dedicated lactation space for employees
- 44% had a workplace lactation policy or written guidelines for employees
- 33% had problems with staff shortages, impacting their ability to support lactating employees, and 44% had problems with staff coverage for pumping breaks
- 41% had no formal process for informing pregnant or breastfeeding employees about available lactation support

The findings informed the development of resources to assist hospitals and other businesses with implementing accommodations for lactating employees.

Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Requirements for Lactation Support

Since 2010, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) has required employers to provide basic accommodations of time and space for lactating employees to express milk at work. On December 29, 2022, the PUMP Act signed into law extended that coverage to include both exempt and non-exempt workers, regardless of their role, in most industries, including hospitals. Under the FLSA, employers must provide two basic provisions to fairly enable all hospital employees to express (pump) their milk during the work period:

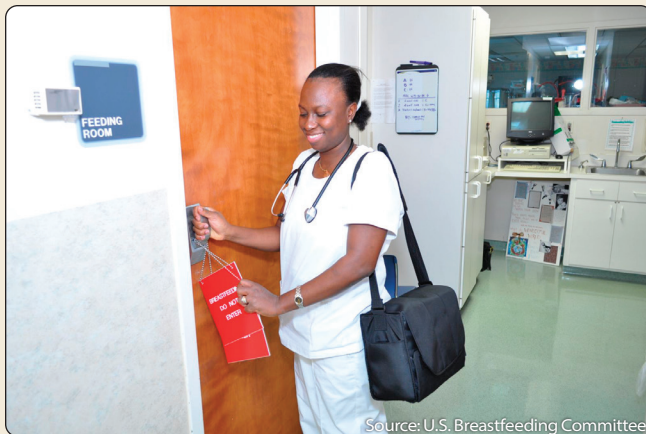
- ▶ **Reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk** whenever the need arises for 1 year after the child's birth. Employers are not required to compensate the employee for breaks to express milk. Employers may not, however, withhold compensation for standard paid breaks should the breastfeeding employee choose to use those breaks to express milk. Some hospitals compensate for additional break time needed beyond standard breaks. The PUMP Act clarified that any employee who works during the time they are expressing milk should be compensated for that time.
- ▶ **A private space to express milk.** Businesses must provide a private space other than a bathroom that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from both coworkers and the public. Although a dedicated lactation room is not required, hospitals often find that a dedicated space better meets the needs of their employees. The space must also be functional for milk expression with a comfortable chair, a flat surface for the electric pump, and an electrical outlet.

1 U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division. FLSA Protections to Pump at Work. Available at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pump-at-work>. Accessed 5-27-23.

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

3 Dickson V, Hawkes C, Slusser W, Lange K, Cohen R. The positive impact of a corporate lactation program on breastfeeding initiation and duration rates: help for the working mother. Unpublished manuscript. Presented at the Annual Seminar for Physicians, co-sponsored by the American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and La Leche League, International, on July 21, 2000.

4 Center for Health Equity, Education, and Research. Mississippi CHAMPS Program. <https://cheerequity.org/mississippi-champs/>.



Source: U.S. Breastfeeding Committee

Private space options

Who is covered? Employees classified as either exempt or non-exempt have the right to lactation accommodations at work. This includes all clinicians, support staff, administrators, and other hospital staff who need to access time and space to express milk.

Mississippi Laws

The State of Mississippi has enacted additional legislation providing further protection to breastfeeding employed parents:⁵

- ▶ Employers are prohibited from discriminating against breastfeeding employees who use their lawful break time to express milk at work.
- ▶ Licensed childcare facilities must provide breastfeeding people with a sanitary place that is not a toilet stall to breastfeed or express milk, provide a refrigerator to store expressed milk, train staff in the safe and proper storage and handling of human milk, and display breastfeeding promotion information to the clients of the facility.

Steps for Implementing or Improving Lactation Support

- ▶ **Form an interdisciplinary committee.** Many hospitals gather stakeholders from within the hospital and community to assess the needs of breastfeeding employees. Consider appropriate representatives from the facilities department, marketing and public relations, human resources, finance and accounting, wellness program, various hospital departments (e.g., obstetrics, pediatrics, maternity, dietary, pharmacy, administration, and support staff), lactation



Source: U.S. Breastfeeding Committee

Interdisciplinary committees assess employee needs

consultants in the hospital and private practice, local breastfeeding coalition, and Women, Infants & Children (WIC) program.

- ▶ **Assess needs.** The interdisciplinary committee assesses needs and uses this information to prioritize appropriate actions. At a minimum, the assessment should address the following areas:
 - Number of women by job category who are likely to need lactation support services
 - Number of milk expression spaces needed
 - Potential locations for lactation spaces
 - Department to provide oversight
 - Policies regarding supporting breastfeeding employees
 - Training needs
 - Promotion of the program
- ▶ **Develop a plan to address needs.** The task force should assess if basic compliance with federal law is sufficient to meet the hospital's needs. They may elect more comprehensive support that best meets the needs of all employees and brings about a positive ROI. The plan should first include an administrative home. Many hospitals house the lactation support program within a wellness program or human resources. Oversight is often provided by staff from the maternity unit, including staff lactation consultants. Space is also important as hospitals often need multiple lactation rooms to meet the needs of all breastfeeding employees. Some hospitals establish rooms that accommodate multiple users at one time (multi-user rooms).

⁵ National Conference of State Legislatures. Breastfeeding State Laws. <https://www.ncsl.org/health/breastfeeding-state-laws>. Accessed 5-27-23.

Note: the Mississippi WINS Employer Guide, available at <https://cheerequity.org/resources/breastfeeding-baby-friendly-resources/workplace-resources/>, provides more details on best practices to consider when implementing a plan.

Lactation Policy for Employees

A lactation support policy gives supervisors and department managers specific action steps to support breastfeeding employees. A policy institutionalizes this support as an ongoing practice that is not affected by changes in personnel or leadership. It also ensures that lactation practices will be fair and consistent for all hospital staff, as well as support staff, clinicians, residents, students, and other identified constituents who need these accommodations. Employees often learn about such policies when they are hired as part of their onboarding process, as well as when preparing for maternity leave. The Mississippi WINS toolkit includes a sample policy, “Hospital Employees Lactation Policy,” specifically geared for hospitals. The sample policy aligns with federal FLSA requirements.

The following guidelines may be helpful in using this policy. Most employees are likely to pump or express milk but some may take time to directly breastfeed if, for example, there is a daycare onsite or a caregiver brings the baby to the parent.

Providing time to express milk or breastfeed: Most breastfeeding employees need to express milk every 2-3 hours throughout their shift. Employees working 12-hour shifts may need to express milk more often than those working 8-hour shifts and should be accommodated



General space options - lactation pod, Ochsner Medical Center

accordingly. Employees may wish to use their normal breaks and mealtimes to breastfeed/express milk, regardless of job role. Options for handling additional time beyond usual breaks include using available PTO time, personal leave, unpaid time, or making up the time as negotiated with their supervisor or unit manager. Some hospitals do not track extra break time used.

Solutions for using breaks: A hospital schedule requires continual 24/7 care. Employees are encouraged to take their breaks to rejuvenate and improve performance. Hospitals use a variety of coverage options when nursing staff are away from their assigned patients, including:

- Ensure adequate staffing to help employees take needed breaks
- Schedule milk expression breaks at the outset of the shift
- Utilize managerial staff to provide patient coverage
- Arrange “floater nurses” on every shift
- Use a “buddy” system on a daily basis
- Encourage staff to help each other out as needed

Providing space: Multiple spaces may be needed in various locations, depending on the size of the campus to minimize walk time for employees taking milk expression breaks. Options can include dedicated lactation rooms or flexible options such as vacant patient rooms, vacant exam rooms, conference or consult rooms, or other comfortable locations determined to be private and sanitary. Some hospitals find that locating spaces near a central bank of elevators improves quick access when needed. Hospitals should inform all employees about the available areas.

Accommodating multiple users: Multi-user rooms enable more than one employee to express milk at the same time in the



Multi-user space options



Source: HHS Office on Women's Health

Multi-user space options



Source: Every Mother, Inc.

Providing access and privacy, Ochsner Medical Center



Source: HHS Office on Women's Health

Providing access and privacy



Source: CDC, Every Mother, Regina Maria Roig-Romero

Essential amenities for the space

same area. If multi-user spaces are provided, federal law requires that each lactating employee be provided with individual space that is private and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public. Most hospitals use partitions, curtains, or other means of privacy within the multi-user area. Some hospitals provide a "suite" of small individual lactation rooms with a common sink area to wash hands and breast pump parts.

Providing access and privacy: Lactation spaces should ensure privacy for employees during breastfeeding or expressing milk. Although a lock on the door is not required by federal law, most employees find that their milk flows better when they are able to relax, increasing their success with milk expression. A privacy lock with/without a keypad and code, or electronic key are common options for accessing the lactation space. A registration process allows the hospital to issue keys or electronic key codes to employees. Spaces should also be able to be locked by the user from inside the room.

Essential amenities for the space:

- A comfortable chair that can be wiped clean for sanitizing between users
- A flat surface for the breast pump (table, counter, desk)
- An electrical outlet
- Anti-microbial wipes, hand sanitizer
- Regular cleaning of the space by housekeeping staff

Other valued amenities:

- Running water/sink to wash hands and breast pump parts (or nearby access at a minimum)
- A door with a functional lock
- Small refrigerator for storing expressed milk
- Artwork and other attractive furnishings
- Soft lighting or the ability to dim overhead lights
- Microwave (for sanitizing pump parts)
- Educational materials and local breastfeeding support resources



Source: U.S. Breastfeeding Committee

Other valued amenities

Solutions for calculating number of spaces: A general rule is to provide at least one permanent milk expression space or station for every 50-100 women employed by the organization and adjust as needs increase. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) devised a formula for identifying the number of spaces that might be needed and estimated that at least six milk expression stations or spaces would be needed for every 1,000 female employees. This number is based on a pregnancy rate of 5-7 percent among the female population, a breastfeeding initiation rate of 75 percent, and an assumption that most breastfeeding employees tend to cluster milk expression periods around a similar period from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. during a standard work day. The chart below is based on their general guide:

MILK EXPRESSION SPACES	
Number of Female Employees	Number of Stations Needed
Under 100	1
Approximately 250	2
Approximately 500	3
Approximately 750	4
Approximately 1000	6
For every additional 1000 employees	6 additional stations



Source: HHS Office on Women's Health

Other valued amenities

Hospital Resources for Employees

Communications: A strong communications plan will ensure that any and all pregnant and breastfeeding employees are aware of the support services that are available. It also alerts supervisors to their responsibilities and helps create a supportive culture within the hospital system.

Education: Hospitals often include “back-to-work” education and consults as part of their general patient prenatal and postpartum education. Opening these classes to employees is an easy way to provide ongoing education. Staff are also provided with breastfeeding resources such as educational materials and videos.

Lactation consultants: Many delivering hospitals have staff who are credentialed International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) or who have completed advanced training in lactation. These experts provide direct breastfeeding assistance to patients. They are also a valuable resource for employees who breastfeed after returning to work. Hospital lactation consultants often provide inpatient care during the maternity stay, as well as back-to-work consultations. Free access to lactation consultants is highly valued among hospital employees.

Access to Breast Pumps: Many hospitals also provide a multi-user breast pump in the lactation space to maximize efficiency in expressing milk. The hospital lactation team often assists with education about the use of the pump and helps employees troubleshoot challenges. Some hospitals provide the attachment kits for the pumps; others subsidize the cost for employees.



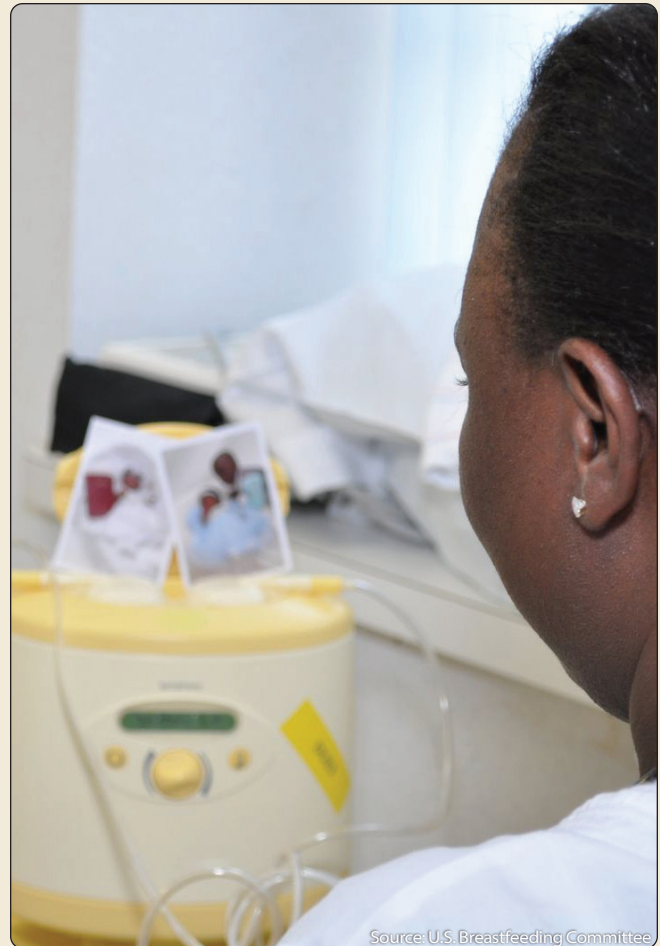
Source: U.S. Breastfeeding Committee

Hospital resources: Lactation consultants and breast pumps



Source: HHS Office on Women's Health

Hospital resources: Lactation consultants



Source: U.S. Breastfeeding Committee

Hospital resources: Breast pumps

Manager and supervisor training: Managers and supervisors provide training to departmental staff on federal law requirements to help promote a supportive culture. Training should include CEOs, CFOs, QI staff, department managers, directors, administrators, and others who directly supervise employees. In addition to training, managers benefit from having a key contact person if questions should arise. Training options should include the following:

- New supervisor orientation
- Information provided at department meetings
- Direct communication from human resources or wellness departments
- Web-based trainings
- Annual management human resource updates
- Other internal communications
- CHAMPS Webinar: “Enhancing Lactation Support for Hospital Employees” View Recording (also available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0ib6_8p9to)

Program promotion: Promotion is central to a successful lactation support program to ensure all hospital staff receive access to private pumping spaces. Options for increasing awareness include new staff orientation, initial onboarding training, employee handbook or manual, intranet education modules, Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) materials, and resources and information shared by department managers or supervisors. Additional options are a hospital newsletter and/or website, a breastfeeding store or pump rental station, a health fair, or a map of lactation spaces for employees.

Managers can remind pregnant employees about breastfeeding support available to them upon returning to work. Facilities that operate within a hospital system can promote lactation support among all hospitals within the system. The entire network should be aware of policies, the importance of support for all breastfeeding employees, and legal requirements under the FLSA.

Mississippi Hospitals Making It Work!

Southwest Regional Medical Center - McComb, MS

Southwest Regional Medical Center is an integrated healthcare delivery network serving people in Southwest Mississippi. The hospital achieved Baby-Friendly status in 2019, and as part of that journey to improve breastfeeding support for patients, hospital staff recognized the need to support employees at their facility, as well.

With enthusiastic support from hospital leadership and led by the education department in conjunction with the mother-baby team and the Baby-Friendly Task Force, the hospital created the “Mommy and Me Room,” a quiet space available for both employees and visiting patients. The space includes glider rockers with curtains for individual privacy, a changing table, soft lighting, and individual temperature control. Attractive artwork, mirrors, and a sink for washing hands and pump parts make the room fully functional and comfortable for milk expression. Additional space is also available in another area of the hospital. The hospital also provides access to a multi-user breast pump, if needed by the employee.

Employees can take their usual breaks and meal periods to express milk. If more time is needed, they follow usual leave

policies. Since there is a childcare facility located across the street, some employees are able to directly breastfeed their baby or have a family member bring the baby to them for direct feedings in the employee lactation room.

Including both the education and public relations departments on their Baby-Friendly task force allowed them to generate widespread support. The hospital developed a robust communications plan to include new staff orientation, including information in materials distributed to community provider offices, and integrating policy language into their electronic information system that requires all staff to read and verify the policy. Word of mouth has also been helpful.

“When we support our own employees, they can go on to give that same kind of support to someone else. It all starts right here with our own staff. When we care for one another, we pass it on both to our patients and throughout our community.”

– Lactation Educator



Source: All photos courtesy of Southwest Regional Medical Center



Supporting Breastfeeding Employees in Hospitals

Supporting Breastfeeding Employees in Hospitals was produced in 2023 by Communities and Hospitals Advancing Maternity Practices.

This booklet is available at
<https://cheerequity.org/mississippi-champs/mississippi-champs-hospitals>