

Mother-Friendly Worksite Toolkit



The Mother Friendly Worksite initiative is being led by MaineGeneral Medical Center, which is currently seeking certification as a Baby Friendly Hospital which supports breastfeeding among patients and staff throughout the facility.

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Mother-Friendly Worksite Initiative

The purpose of the Mother-Friendly Worksite Initiative is to increase support of breastfeeding by the worksite culture, increase the breastfeeding duration rate to and beyond 6 months, reduce childhood obesity and illness, and decrease healthcare utilization by mother and child.

Breastfeeding is well-recognized as a means to protect, promote and support the health of infants and young children. Breast milk fosters optimal growth and development of a baby's brain, immune system, and general physiology and is a vital factor in preventing common illnesses, especially diarrhea and infections of the respiratory tract (including pneumonia), ear, and urinary tract.

Breastfeeding also has definite health benefits for mothers. Besides facilitating her postpartum recovery, there is also some evidence that shows breastfeeding reduces a women's risk for some cancers, and reduces the risk of osteoporosis later in life.

This is important to you as an employer because healthy mothers and babies can save health care dollars and enhance employee productivity.

Research shows that companies that have adopted breastfeeding support programs have realized cost savings of \$3 for every \$1 invested in the support¹. Also, use of health care services for never-breastfed infants for diarrhea, ear infection and lower-respiratory illness costs an HMO between \$331 and \$475 per child². In addition, employees whose children are healthier are absent from work less often have higher satisfaction and loyalty to their jobs which creates less turnover and loss of skilled workers.

Through the Mother-Friendly Worksite Initiative we hope to increase the number of local businesses requesting and using technical assistance to create support for breastfeeding mothers at their worksite. This will include worksites offering flexible schedules and space for breastfeeding mothers to pump, worksites referring their employees to breastfeeding support, and employers adopting breastfeeding policies.

This initiative is being led by MaineGeneral Medical Center, which is currently designated as a Baby Friendly Hospital which supports breastfeeding among patients and staff throughout the facility. If you would like to be involved or have any questions, please contact Erin Gray at erin.gray@mainegeneral.org or 621-3740.

- 1) United State Breastfeeding Committee. Workplace Breastfeeding Support [issue paper]. Raleigh, NC: United State Breastfeeding Committee; 2002.
- 2) United State Breastfeeding Committee. Economic Benefits of Breastfeeding [issue paper]. Raleigh, NC: United States Breastfeeding Committee; 2002.

Employer Support Is Critical

Many breastfeeding mothers find it hard to continue breastfeeding after they return to work. Employer support can make or break a woman's resolve to provide her child with the best nutrition that nature has to offer. Workplace support helps mothers, children and society reap the *immediate and lifelong health benefits of breastfeeding*.

These three important facts have implications for employers and the health of their worker's young children . . .

- 1** Women with infants and toddlers are the fastest-growing segment of today's workforce.
- 2** More than 50 percent of women who are working when they become pregnant return to work by the time their infant is only eight to 12 weeks old.
- 3** The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that breastfeeding continue for *at least* 12 months.



How to Become a Mother Friendly Worksite In Brief

1) Find a private area for women to pump

A private area that is not a toilet stall or public restroom should be made available for nursing or expressing breast milk. It should be quiet, clean and have enough room for a comfortable chair and a place to set a pump. Ideally, the room will have a sink or have one nearby to rinse supplies. Don't think you have space? We can help you identify a place you might have overlooked.

2) Flexible breaks

A break in the morning and afternoon should be provided for the woman to nurse or express her breast milk. If necessary, the beginning and/or ending of the work day can be adjusted to accommodate these breaks. The employee could also take a shorter lunch to allow for more time as well. Flexibility is key, since all women need different amounts of time to pump. Some employers offer opportunities for part-time work, job sharing, or a gradual return to work.

3) Support

You could also provide breastfeeding mothers with additional education such as pamphlets or books, access to a lactation consultant, or breastfeeding classes or support groups. Other employers offer an electric breast pump on-site. This is an efficient way to express milk, and is often cost-prohibitive for employees.

4) Breastfeeding policy

Women need to feel that they are supported by their supervisors and co-workers and are not made to feel guilty or out-of-place by providing for their child at work. A written policy which states the employer's support of a woman's choice to breastfeed her child and describes the accommodations and/or benefits available to her will create a supportive and respectful environment.

Please see the attached Resource CD for much more information about becoming Mother-Friendly (includes sample policies, how to create a breastfeeding room, educational materials, and much more!)

Need help?

For technical assistance contact:

Erin Gray, Prevention Center, MaineGeneral Medical Center
erin.gray@mainegeneral.org or 621-3740

Find other local worksite coordinators who have made some of these steps in the "Local Examples" section of your resource CD.



Breastfeeding: A Common-Sense Solution To Improve Your Company's Bottom Line

When a baby is ill, everyone pays.

When a child is ill, parents often miss work for doctors' visits and to care for a sick child who cannot be left in regular day-care. Health care costs and medical claims go up.

Healthy mothers and babies can save health care dollars and improve productivity among your employees. Breastfeeding is proven to promote better health among mothers and children...an investment in improving your company's bottom line!

For example, did you know?

- Among employed women with children under age 3, approximately 70% work full time. One-third of mothers return to work within 3 months after giving birth and two-thirds return within 6 months.¹
- If a parent misses 2 hours of work for the excess illness attributable to formula feeding, greater than 2,000 hours - the equivalent of 1 year of employment - are lost per 1,000 never-breastfed infants.²
- For private and government insurers, a minimum of \$3.6 billion must be paid each year to treat diseases and conditions preventable by breastfeeding.²

Bottom Line:

Parental absenteeism due to infant illness is three times greater among parents of formula fed children than those who are breastfed.³

Bottom Line:

Breastfed babies have less illness and lower health care costs than formula fed babies. Formula fed infants have higher levels of hospitalization, more clinical office visits and more pharmacy costs.⁴

Bottom Line:

Companies with an employee lactation support program experience less turnover and loss of skilled workers after childbirth and higher employee satisfaction, loyalty, and morale.¹

Bottom Line:

Breastfeeding support programs in the workplace result in an improved ability to attract valuable employees and portrays the company as family-friendly.¹

Worksite support makes the difference!

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that mothers breastfeed exclusively for the first 6 months, continue breastfeeding with the addition of appropriate complementary foods until the baby is at least one year of age, and continue thereafter for as long as mother and baby wish.⁵

The HHS Blueprint for Action on Breastfeeding and the United States Breastfeeding Committee's Breastfeeding in the United States: A National Agenda outlines goals, objectives and strategies for worksites to facilitate the continuation of breastfeeding after mothers return to their jobs.^{6,7}

Workplace barriers can create added stress for a mother who is trying to do her best for both her employer and her baby. Research studies show that many women discontinue breastfeeding early because of workplace constraints. Many others choose never to initiate breastfeeding at all due to concerns over how they will manage breastfeeding and working. Your support can make the difference.

References

- 1) United States Breastfeeding Committee. Workplace Breastfeeding Support [issue paper]. Raleigh, NC: United States Breastfeeding Committee; 2002.
- 2) United States Breastfeeding Committee. Economic Benefits of Breastfeeding [issue paper]. Raleigh, NC: United States Breastfeeding Committee; 2002.
- 3) Cohen, R. Mrtek, MB, Mrtek RG. American Journal of Health Promotion 1995; 10:148-5
- 4) Ball T, Wright A. Health Care Costs of Formula-feeding in the First Year of Life. Pediatrics. Volume 103, Number 4, April 1999.
- 5) American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement, "Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk." Pediatrics 97; 100:6.
- 6) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. HHS Blueprint for Action on Breastfeeding, Washington, D.C. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health, 2000.
- 7) United States Breastfeeding Committee (2001). Breastfeeding in the United States: A National Agenda. Rockville MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau.

Table 1: Components of a Workplace Breastfeeding Support Program

The table below outlines components of several levels of workplace breastfeeding support. The choice of components depends on the number of women who need support and the resources and realities of the workplace.

Adequate	Expanded	Comprehensive
Facilities		
<p>A clean, private, comfortable multi-purpose space (that is not a bathroom) with an electrical outlet in order to pump milk or to breastfeed.</p> <p>Employee provides her own breast pump.</p> <p>Table and comfortable chair.</p> <p>Sink, soap, water, and paper towels. If these are very far from BMBR, extra time is allowed for cleaning hands and equipment.</p> <p>Employee supplies cold packs for storage of milk.</p>	<p>A Breastfeeding Mothers’ Break Room (BMBR) for use only by breastfeeding women.</p> <p>Employer provides one multi-user electric breast pump, and employees provide their own collection kits.</p> <p>Improved aesthetics to promote relaxation.</p> <p>Items listed in “Adequate” column are available near the BMBR.</p> <p>Employer makes available refrigerator space designated for food near BMBR.</p>	<p>A Breastfeeding Mothers’ Break Room (or rooms) close to women’s worksites.</p> <p>Employer provides collection kits. Additional multi-user electric pumps are provided if needed.</p> <p>Room large enough to accommodate several users comfortably.</p> <p>Items listed in “Adequate” column are available in the BMBR.</p> <p>Employer provides a small refrigerator in the BMBR for storage of human milk.</p>
Written Company Policy		
<p>Employer grants a 6-week unpaid maternity leave.</p> <p>Employer allows creative use of accrued vacation days, personal time, sick days, and holiday pay after childbirth.</p> <p>Employer allows two breaks and a lunch period during an 8-hour work day for expressing milk or breastfeeding the child.</p>	<p>Employer grants 12-week unpaid maternity leave (FMLA).</p> <p>In addition, employer allows part-time work, job sharing, individualized scheduling of work hours, compressed work week, or telecommuting.</p> <p>Employer allows expanded unpaid breaks during the workday for expressing milk or breastfeeding the child.</p>	<p>Employer offers a 6- to 14-week paid maternity leave (ILO).</p> <p>In addition, mother can bring child to work, caregiver can bring child to workplace, or on-site day care is available.</p> <p>Nursing breaks are paid and are counted as working time.</p>
Workplace Education		
<p>Company breastfeeding support policy is communicated to all pregnant employees.</p> <p>Employer provides a list of community resources for breastfeeding support.</p>	<p>New employees, supervisors, and coworkers all receive training on the breastfeeding support policy.</p> <p>Employer contracts with skilled lactation care provider on an “as needed” basis.</p>	<p>Breastfeeding education is offered to the partners of employees who are expectant fathers.</p> <p>Employer hires a skilled lactation care provider to coordinate a breastfeeding support program.</p>

Frequently Asked Questions

Where can my company find space for a room for breastfeeding mothers?

A mother's room does not need to be a large or even permanent space. The best solution is an existing room that may have minimal usage. Some companies have found that a storage room could be emptied or rearranged and converted for use as a mother's room. Other companies have converted large bathroom lounge areas into suitable mother's rooms. Ideally, it is best to have a room with a sink however if this is not feasible then it is important to consider having a sink nearby. It is important to consider your employee population when planning. If you have many women of childbearing age you may need a more permanent solution. If you only anticipate having one request at a time, then you can convert an existing space when needed and return it to its original use when the mother is finished. A separate pumping room is not always needed. It depends on the environment of the worksite. For example, mothers with their own private office area may prefer to lock their door and pump at their desks. (See Resource CD for more information on putting together a Mother's Room.)

What will a room for breastfeeding mothers cost?

First, let's remember the money your company will save because of lower absenteeism and reduced health care costs. However, there will be a few expenses to creating an appropriate space and it will vary from one company to another. The kind of amenities you provide will affect the amount of money you initially spend getting the room established. Often times a company may have some of the required furnishings already which will minimize the cost further. In any event, this will be a one-time cost. (See CD for estimated cost of a room)

Who should administer the program?

Human Resources personnel, a company nurse, a manager, supervisor or employee can manage the administration of this program. With the accompanying materials and guidelines and the support of MaineGeneral Medical Center this is a simple program that does not require a lot of staff time.

How much time will it take my employee to express her milk?

With a quality double-electric pump most women need between 15-30 minutes 2-3 times during the work day.

Who can I contact if I have questions about setting up a breastfeeding program in my business?

Erin Gray, Prevention Center, MaineGeneral Medical Center
621-3740 or egray@mainegeneral.org

If you think a Mother Friendly worksite is a good idea, here are some tips to address some objections your organization and leadership might have...



Objection: This kind of thing is not within our worksite's mission.

Response: Employee health and wellness is important to the long term success and well being of any organization. Healthy employees are more productive and cost the company less for insurance and sick time.

Objection: We might be willing to support a woman who asks to breastfeed, but we won't bring up the subject.

Response: Knowing that their worksite supports women who choose to breastfeed can actually play a part in a women's original decision on how to feed her child. The employee is in the inferior role and may feel uncomfortable bringing up this topic with her superiors. If the worksite has a formal policy then it will be less awkward for a woman to bring up the subject with a supervisor.

Objection: This is not an issue at our worksite. I don't know of anyone who has ever asked about this.

Response: Do you have women of child bearing age? Have you ever had any women go on maternity leave? If the answer is yes to either of those questions there is likely someone at your worksite who considered breastfeeding at one time. Knowing that their worksite supports women who choose to breastfeed can actually play a part in a women's original decision on how to feed her child.

Over →

Objection: We will only consider supporting breastfeeding on a case-by-case basis; we will not have a formal policy.

Response: Supporting nursing moms can sometimes be implemented as a volunteer or informal effort without a formal policy. However, without a policy, these activities may only last as long as the original participants are involved. A formal policy officially establishes the program and defines program features for managers and employees, such as clarifying human resources guidelines for employees taking time to use the pumping room.

Objection: My hands are tied; this kind of thing is decided at a corporate level.

Response: Would you become an advocate from the local level to the corporate level? Would you gather women who feel this is important and bring it to the corporate level? Many corporations are realizing that family friendly policies are the way to keep employees loyal and productive. Sometimes a push from the local level can make change throughout the corporation.