

Breastfeeding & COVID-19 Webinar Series

Webinar #3: Supporting Breastfeeding Employees During COVID-19

Presented by: Cathy Carothers, IBCLC, FILCA

Every Mother, Inc.

cathy@everymother.org

Personal Disclosure

Contracts with:

- HHS Maternal Child Health Bureau
- HHS Office on Women's Health
- Ohio Department of Health
- New York Department of Health

Objectives:

1. Describe basic provisions under the FLSA for breastfeeding employees.
2. Name milk expression space solutions for common non-office settings.
3. Identify practices that can improve safety of milk expression areas at work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Profile of Working Women

- National legislation in the United States under the Affordable Care Act requires employers to provide hourly workers with reasonable time and private space that is not a bathroom to express milk during the work period. (*DOL, Bureau of Labor Statistics*)
- Today nearly 60% of women are in the workforce in the United States, and similar figures are seen in many developed countries across the world.
- Women with children are the fastest growing segment of the work force. Today in the U.S., 71.4% of women with children are in the work force, and 56% of women with infants under the age of one are in the work force. (*DOL, Bureau of Labor Statistics*)
- Studies have shown that up to 60% of women stop breastfeeding sooner than they would like, Half of new mothers say their plans for employment affecting their breastfeeding decisions. (A Better Balance.)
- Because breastfeeding rates have been linked to infant mortality rates, this poses grave concerns for health educators to seek solutions to help women continue breastfeeding more exclusively and for longer durations...especially after they return to work.

Common Barriers to Breastfeeding Among Employed Women

- Around 80% of breastfeeding women discontinue breastfeeding within the first month back at work. (Cardenas 2005)
- Common challenges include:
 - Short maternity leave
 - Emotional and physical demands
 - Lack of support from family
 - Lack of accommodations in the workplace (time and space)
 - Lack of support from employer and co-workers
- Emotional challenges include role conflicts, competing demands, fatigue, sadness, and guilt.

Additional Barriers of Low-Wage Earners

For women working in low-wage jobs, additional challenges can make breastfeeding difficult, including:

- Earlier return to work
- Faster return to work among African American mothers
- Job settings that are not conducive to milk expression or breastfeeding
- Childcare concerns
- Lack of job autonomy and flexibility
- Erratic work schedules and nonstandard hours
- Lack of job security; perception that women are replaceable (therefore leading to hesitancy bringing up breastfeeding needs with supervisors)

Job Reality	Low-Wage Earners	Middle Income Workers
Can Take Off to care for Sick Child	24%	54%
Have a say in when to take breaks	33%	57%
Have a say in the start/quitting time	12%	26%

Federal and State Legislation

- Federal legislation housed under Section 7 of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938
- Language of federal legislation:
 - “Reasonable Break Time”
 - “Private space shielded from view from coworkers and the public”
 - Space cannot be a bathroom

- Milk expression breaks do not have to be paid
- Applies to hourly workers considered “non-exempt”
- Companies with fewer than 50 employees must still comply unless they can demonstrate undue financial hardship
- Companies in states with laws providing greater protection must follow their state laws. (See *National Conference of State Legislatures* for your state breastfeeding laws at <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/breastfeeding-state-laws.aspx>.)
- Other potential legislative protections:
 - Title 7 of the Civil Rights Act now prohibits employers from firing, harassing, or retaliating against workers for breastfeeding/pumping at work (Pregnant at Work).
 - State Pregnancy Workers Fairness laws (available in 30 states and 5 cities)
 - Other state laws providing accommodations for medical conditions
- Resources:
 - U.S. Department of Labor - <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/nursing-mothers>
 - Center for Work Life Law - <https://www.worklifelaw.org/>
 - ✓ Free Legal Hotline: (415) 703-8276
 - ✓ Free Legal Hotline Email: hotline@worklifelaw.org
 - A Better Balance - <https://www.abetterbalance.org/resources/breastfeeding-while-working/>
 - ✓ “How to Talk to your Boss about Your Pump”

Helping Mothers Prepare for their Return to Work

- Support for mothers begins by helping her identify her goals and then providing information and support to help her reach her family’s goals.
- Mothers also need:
 - A supportive work environment
 - Adequate maternity leave
 - Flexible return to work options
 - Direct access to the baby
 - Private time and space to express milk
 - Access to professional support
 - Support from managers and coworkers
 - Support from family (partner and female relatives are especially critical)

During Maternity Leave

- Establish milk production through evidence-based practices
- Importance of the magical first hour for building milk supply
- Skin to skin contact in the first hour – and beyond
- Frequent milk removal
- Use maternity leave to exclusively breastfeed to build production capacity

- Get help with early problems

After Returning to Work

- The “magic” number (Mohrbacher 2012) - <http://www.nancymohrbacher.com/blog/2010/8/13/the-magic-number-and-long-term-milk-production-part-1.html>
- Use the supply – but replace it!
- Breastfeed exclusively when home with the baby
- Breastfeed or express milk during night when prolactin levels may be higher
- Finding a relaxing area to express milk
- Setting up a realistic pumping schedule (Wright 2013) - <http://lactationmatters.org/2012/05/17/pumping-strategies-for-the-working-mother/>
- Using expressed milk for supplements that might be needed

Building Milk Production

- Skin to skin helps increase production
- Fully empty breasts at least once daily
- Breastfeed at night
- Power pumping (concept by Cathy Watson-Genna, *Supporting Sucking Skills in Breastfeeding Infants*)
- Frequent milk removal and breast stimulation
- Hands-on milk expression (Jane Morton at www.stanforduniversity.edu/breastfeeding)

Back at Work

- Getting organized
 - Pumping schedules
 - Phasing back to work more gradually
 - Preparing baby for mom’s return to work
- Approaching supervisors
 - Begin the conversation during pregnancy
 - Document requests for accommodations
 - “My Lactation and Work Plan” – New York “Breastfeeding Partners” – www.breastfeedingpartners.org
 - Focus on mother’s needs and her desire to be a productive employee
 - Language to consider:

It is important to me to be a good employee and continue contributing to making this a great place to work. It’s also important to me to breastfeed my baby for my child’s health. In fact, my doctor has urged me to continue breastfeeding for his long-term health and for my own health. I’m going to need your help to make that happen, and I have a few ideas we could talk about.

- Dealing with co-workers
 - “Breaks are predictable; absences are not!”
 - Establishing a sense of teamwork
- Childcare considerations

- Suggest childcare options close to where mom works instead of where she lives
- USDA Child and Adult Care Feeding Program - reimburses for feeding infants breastmilk provided by the mother, or when the mother directly breastfeeds at the childcare facility (see: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/feeding-infants-child-and-adult-care-food-program>)
- Engaging family members
 - 40% of babies are cared for by family members (and is especially true for low-income families who may not be able to afford the high costs of childcare)
 - Include family members in counseling and education efforts
 - Provide simple guidelines on handling human milk
 - Resource: New York Department of Health toolkit, *Making it Work*, with resource for family members. Available at www.breastfeedingpartners.org.

Safe Lactation Spaces During COVID-19

- Employees should wear masks, wash hands frequently, and use hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol at work.
- Practice physical distancing from others and avoid hand shaking.
- Avoid sharing office space to express milk at work.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces touched frequently.
- Clean outside of breast pump with antibacterial wipes and follow CDC guidelines for cleaning pump parts.
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/healthychildcare/infantfeeding/breastpump.html>
- Examine facility ventilation system.
- Resources:
 - CDC Guidance, “Businesses and Workplaces” (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>)
 - Ohio Workplace PLUS Toolkit - www.odh.ohio.gov/breastfeeding “Safe Milk Expression Areas during COVID.”
 - Michigan “Pumping at Work: Supporting Lactating #Employees During Coronavirus (COVID-19).” <https://mibreastfeeding.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/COVID-19-Workplace-Guidance.pdf>

Working from Home

- Open communication with supervisor
- Schedule time with children
- Embrace technology; engage family assistance
- Look for silver linings
- Resources:
 - American Academy of Pediatrics - “Age-Based Tips to Help Parents Juggle Parenting & Working at Home During COVID-19.” <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Tips-to-Juggle-Parenting-and-Working-at-Home-COVID-19.aspx>
 - Yale Medicine Family Health - “8 tips for working from home with kids during COVID-19.” <https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/8-tips-work-at-home-with-kids-covid-19>.

General Resources

- “Supporting Nursing Moms at Work: Strategies for Employers” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women’s Health) with information about various industries; 29 videos included. <https://www.womenshealth.gov/supporting-nursing-moms-work>
- “The Business Case for Breastfeeding” (HHS Maternal and Child Health Bureau). Available at: <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/pregnancyandbeyond/breastfeeding>.
- Ohio Workplace PLUS Toolkit - www.odh.ohio.gov/breastfeeding - for employees and employers
- New York Department of Health “Making it Work Toolkit” (New York Department of Health) – resources for employers, mothers, family members, and breastfeeding educators. Available at www.breastfeedingpartners.org.
- North Carolina “Work Well North Carolina” at <https://workwellinc.com/NCMakingItWork.php>.
- Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition - “Support for Breastfeeding Employees and Students” at <https://ksbreastfeeding.org/cause/business-case-for-breastfeeding/>.



Cathy Carothers

Email: cathy@everymother.org

Every Mother Website: www.everymother.org

Every Mother Facebook: Every Mother, Inc.

Personal Facebook: Cathy Carothers

<http://www.pinterest.com/cathycarothers/breastfeeding-resources/>

<http://www.pinterest.com/cathycarothers/breastfeeding-resources-workplace/>

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