



Oregon

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Dear Oregon Employer:

In August 1998 the Oregon Health Division developed a new project called the *Breastfeeding Mother Friendly Employer Project* to recognize employers who are already breastfeeding friendly and to help other Oregon businesses become *Breastfeeding Mother Friendly Employers*.

We are compiling a list of breastfeeding mother friendly businesses that we will be publishing annually.



Did you know that supporting working breastfeeding mothers makes good business sense? Women who breastfeed miss work less often because their babies are healthier. A healthier baby translates into lower medical expenses. Research has shown that breast milk provides immunity to many diseases, and is critical to a child's health and cognitive development. In 1997, the **American Academy of Pediatrics** released a new policy statement about breastfeeding:

Infants should be breastfed for at least the first 12 months of life.

Support in the workplace is essential for mothers to be able to follow this new recommendation since at least 50% of women who are employed before they become pregnant return to work by the time their baby is 3 months old. Recognizing this the American Academy of Pediatrics also recommended that:

- *Arrangements be made to provide expressed breast milk if mother and child must be separated during the first year.*
- *Employers be encouraged to provide appropriate facilities and adequate time in the workplace for breast-pumping.*

To support our own employees, the Oregon Health Division implemented the enclosed *Breastfeeding Mother Friendly Employer Policy* for the workplace. **It is my hope that many more Oregon businesses will join in our efforts to support one of the healthiest choices a working mother can make: to breastfeed her baby for the first 12 months of life. One key factor in making her decision to breastfeed may be knowing that returning to work will not be a barrier to nursing her baby.**

Assisting People to Become Independent, Healthy and Safe
An Equal Opportunity Employer

How can you help your female employees? Nursing mothers have simple needs - availability of a private and comfortable location to pump breast milk, flexibility to use break and lunch time to pump breast milk, and an efficient breast pump.

How can you use the Breastfeeding Mother Friendly Employer packet?

The packet contains detailed information on the benefits of becoming breastfeeding mother friendly to the employee, the employer and to the health of the child, as well as, step by step procedures for implementing breastfeeding friendly practices.

I strongly encourage you as an Oregon employer to institute breastfeeding mother friendly policies in your workplace and send in the enclosed application to be awarded *Breastfeeding Mother Friendly Employer* status by the Oregon Health Division. Many of you already have policies in place that support breastfeeding employees. If you already meet the criteria, simply complete and submit the *Breastfeeding Mother Friendly Employer* application form and your business will be awarded the *Breastfeeding Mother Friendly Employer* status.

By making your workplace supportive for nursing mothers you will reap many benefits including: less employee turnover, reduced absenteeism, lower health care costs *and* you will be a part of achieving an important preventive health goal; to give all children the healthiest nutrition possible for their first year of life - their own mother's breast milk. You will also be sending a clear message to your employees that they and their families are important.

Thank you for your investment in the health of Oregon children.

Sincerely,



Grant Higginson, M.D., M.P.H.
State Health Officer
Deputy Administrator
Oregon Health Division

For more information on the Breastfeeding Mother Friendly Employer Project, please call
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