

Guidelines

Title:	Workplace Breastfeeding Support Policy Guidelines
Related to:	DHS OHA -010-020-01
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Purpose

This document provides guidelines for creating a supportive workplace breastfeeding environment that complies with state and federal laws and demonstrates that DHS|OHA promote a culture of breastfeeding support and the role it plays in overall health and worksite wellness.

Breastfeeding is a proven, cost-effective prevention strategy for protecting infants and mothers from many chronic and acute diseases and conditions. It reduces health care costs for families, employers and communities. A work environment that supports breastfeeding and lactation benefits employers through increased retention and employee satisfaction. DHS|OHA will support an individual's choice to breastfeed either publically or privately and provide a clean, private location if that is the preferred option.

Guidelines

1. A breastfeeding individual may breastfeed in private areas set aside for this purpose but is not required to do so.
2. DHS|OHA provides accessible private rooms, near employee workspaces, with locking doors for milk expression or breastfeeding.
 - a. The lactation areas are designed to make users feel comfortable and safe.
 - A. Lactation areas are sanitary, with the standards for cleanliness similar to expectations for food preparation areas.
 - B. Lactation areas are designated for milk expression and breastfeeding with signage designating the purpose of the space, and may not be a sick room or break room.
 - C. The room may be accessed using a key, key card, or code to enter the room.
 - b. If a designated room is not available, DHS|OHA provides an alternative private location, near the employee's workspace, where the employee can breastfeed or express milk concealed from view and without intrusion by other employees or the public. If a locked breastfeeding room is not available:
 - A. Signage outside the alternative space shall advise that the space is in use and not accessible to others.
 - B. Good communication with staff ensures that staff understand their responsibilities related to not entering the lactation space.
 - c. If the agency opens the space to visitors, clients or the public, employee needs are the priority.
 - A. Non-employees accessing lactation spaces should be treated with the same respect and expectations as employees.
 - B. If there is public access to a lactation area, the items in the space may need to be secured.

3. The following amenities are recommended for lactation spaces:
 - a. Furnishings made of durable washable surfaces (no fabric) that can be wiped down or cleaned easily.
 - b. Enhanced options such as a sink for washing hands and pump parts, a small refrigerator for storing milk, soft lighting to help with relaxation, a footstool, mirror, supportive books, magazines or educational material, framed photos or posters, and a place for staff to post photos of their children or other shared information.
4. For questions about creating an accessible lactation room contact DHS|OHA Human Resources or the Northwest Americans with Disabilities Center.
5. Employees are not required to use the private lactation space if they do not prefer it.
 - a. Employees may choose to express breast milk in an alternate location, free from view, such as their own office or work space.
 - b. If an employee is using an electric breast pump in an alternate location, the employee should ensure the noise is not disruptive to near-by co-workers.
 - c. Good communication with other staff ensures that co-workers do not intrude on the employee, or make comments about lactation activities.
6. Each lactation room should have a reasonable method of scheduling time to use the room.
 - a. Time allotted for scheduling is usually in 30-minute increments.
 - b. Scheduling options include a paper sign-in sheet kept in the room, a dry-erase board, or an online calendar schedule.
 - c. Each worksite may keep a log to determine when additional space may be needed.
7. The provision of private, accessible space should be adequate for the number of breastfeeding staff needing this accommodation.
 - a. In some agencies, additional space may be needed to meet employee needs.
 - b. Agencies should consider how many females are employed, the number and size of buildings, and the work schedule and job settings of employees. A general rule is to provide at least one permanent milk expression space for every 50–100 females employed by the agency, and adjust as employee needs increase.
 - c. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) compiled a formula for identifying the number of spaces needed, and estimate that at least six milk expression stations for every 1000 female employees should be the general rule. 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 nursing employees 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

8. Individuals who use the room are responsible for keeping the room clean.
 - a. Staff should use sanitizing wipes for wiping down surfaces and spills.
 - b. Individual agency locations may determine room maintenance responsibilities.
9. Centralized locations make it possible for the greatest number of employees to access the space; each agency location should provide a room in close proximity to employee work areas.
 - a. “Close proximity” means a space close enough to the employee work area that reaching it does not appreciably shorten the break time or meal period, an approximate walking distance of 5 minutes or less.

- b. Spaces shall be in easily accessed locations evenly distributed within large buildings and across a large campus.
 - c. Within a building, lactation spaces may be located near a central bank of elevators, the entrance to a facility, or the employee lounge or eating areas.
10. Work schedule and work pattern flexibility are provided to express milk during work hours as often as needed. Scheduling is arranged on a case-by-case basis depending on the specific needs of the employee.
- a. Employees and supervisors shall consider flexible work hours, phase-back scheduling options (a temporary part-time schedule to gradually transition back to work full-time), part-time and telecommuting opportunities, as well as flexible breaks and assignments when feasible.
 - b. The time and frequency needed for feeding or expressing milk varies between employees, depending on the age of the child, milk supply and other factors.
 - A. It is not unreasonable for an employee to need to pump three times during an 8-hour workday.
 - B. Employees and their supervisors shall work out arrangements suitable to both parties in order to address the employee's biological need and the organization's business need. Such arrangements may be modified over time.
 - C. It is not unreasonable for each expression of milk session to take about 30 minutes. This includes walking to the room, setting up the pump, expressing milk, storing the breast milk, rinsing the pump parts and returning to the work station.
 - c. It is expected that the employee and employer will discuss the accounting of the break time and will determine arrangements that are suitable to both parties. Possible arrangements include:
 - A. Employee makes up the time by coming in a little earlier or leaving a little later, so there is no change in pay status.
 - B. Employee obtains prior authorization from supervisor to use already accrued annual leave or compensatory time.
 - C. Employee takes unpaid leave for the additional time, resulting in a decrease in pay. If this arrangement is selected, employers must count pumping time to determine an employees' eligibility for health insurance.
 - D. Other scenarios as arranged and approved by the employee and employer.
 - d. If a private location is not within close proximity to the employee's work area, the time taken to travel to and from the location shall be considered work time and is not be counted as break time.
 - e. If feasible, the employee shall take the pumping breaks at the same time as the regular meal and break times already provided by the employer, adding additional unpaid time, vacation time or accrued compensatory time to these breaks in order to successfully feed or pump.
 - f. A breastfeeding employee can feed an infant brought in during lunch or breaks when the workplace is safe for infants.
11. Breastfeeding employees can store their milk in a workplace refrigerator; breast milk is not a hazardous bodily fluid, and it is not a contamination danger.
- a. Handling and supervision of the expressed milk is the sole responsibility of the employee.
 - b. The employer may choose to provide a refrigerator dedicated exclusively for storage of breast milk at the workplace; this dedicated refrigerator is not to be used for other purposes like storage of employee lunches.
 - c. Individual agency locations are responsible for determining refrigerator maintenance responsibilities.
12. To promote access to breastfeeding facilities, information should be available in multiple areas and formats that will help staff and visitors find information and support including:

- a. In agency lobbies.
 - b. In staff break areas and where other mandated notices are displayed.
 - c. On agency web pages such as the DHS|OHA Shared Services site, Intranet Health & Safety, and Human Resources webpages.
 - d. In staff communications such as newsletters, email messages and other announcements.
 - e. In new employee training and orientation.
 - f. From managers and supervisors when staff or volunteers voluntarily disclose pregnancy or during return-to-work planning with parents if lactation support requested.
 - g. From managers and supervisors through periodic communication to all staff.
 - h. To managers and supervisors through training that ensures understanding and implementation of the policy.
13. Employee should provide notice that breaks to feed or pump breast milk during the work day will be needed with the return to work.
- a. It is preferable that notice be provided prior to returning to work.
 - b. After receiving notice from the employee, DHS|OHA ensures that workplace support is available by the time the employee needs it.
14. Some position requirements, such as high physical activity, uniform requirements, or significant travel away from a consistent workstation, may create barriers for nursing parents. Employees and supervisors should work together establish appropriate work arrangements, including temporary work-duty reassignment.
15. Prenatal and postpartum nursing, breastfeeding and lactation information is available for interested employees from Human Resources, Employee Assistance Plan service provider, health benefit providers and on the Public Health Division website.
16. Managers, supervisors, and employees are expected to create and maintain an environment that encourages and supports employees and eliminates barriers to milk expression. A supportive, respectful environment includes a workforce that does not tolerate comments or actions that may dissuade lactating employees from utilizing the resources available for lactation support.

References

[Northwest Americans with Disabilities Act Center](#)

1-800-949-4232

nwadactr@uw.edu

Forms referenced

Related policies

[DAS 50.010.01 Discrimination and Harassment Free Workplace Policy](#)

[DHS|OHA-010-019 Healthy Meetings, Conferences, and Events](#)

[DHS|OHA-010-019-01 Healthy Meetings, Conferences, and Events Guidelines](#)

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