

## LACTATION SUPPORT REQUIRES FEW RESOURCES



Companies both large and small benefit from providing a lactation support program. When the following simple, cost-effective components are provided companies enjoy the biggest savings.

### 1. Privacy to Express Milk

If women do not work in a private office, a small, private space (as small as 4' x 5') can be set up for a lactation room. A woman produces milk on a constant basis (see page 6 of *Easy Steps to Supporting Breastfeeding Employees*). This means she needs to express milk approximately every 3 hours to maintain a healthy milk supply and relieve uncomfortable fullness while separated from her infant. Milk can be refrigerated or stored in a personal cooler to provide to the baby later. Many companies also provide a hospital-grade electric breast pump that makes pumping quicker and more efficient (see *Easy Steps to Supporting Breastfeeding Employees* to learn more about accessing quality breast pumps).

Employees should never be asked to express milk or breastfeed in a restroom. Breast milk is food, and restrooms are an unsanitary place to prepare food. In addition, electrical outlets are usually unavailable and it is difficult and uncomfortable managing breast pump equipment in a toilet stall.

### 2. Flexible Breaks

Each milk expression session usually takes around 15 minutes plus time to get to and from the lactation room. Breastfeeding employees typically need no more than an hour per work day to express milk, which can easily be divided between usual paid breaks and the meal period.<sup>12</sup> If milk expression takes longer than expected, a common solution is to allow employees the flexibility to come in early or stay late, or to use a portion of their lunch period, to make up time.

### 3. Education

Employees value information they receive during their pregnancy about continuing to breastfeed upon returning to work. Pamphlets, resources, lunchtime prenatal classes, and access to a lactation consultant can help employees feel more prepared (see the *Resource Guide* section of the *Tool Kit*).

### 4. Support

Supportive policies and practices that enable women to successfully return to work and breastfeed send a message to all employees that breastfeeding is valued. Management can encourage supervisors to work with breastfeeding employees in making reasonable accommodations to help them reach their breastfeeding goals and can encourage other employees to exhibit a positive, accepting attitude.

Providing support is a temporary need for each breastfeeding employee. Once babies begin eating solid foods at 6 months, milk expression requirements gradually diminish.

## Companies that Support Breastfeeding Employees

Many companies provide designated space for breastfeeding employees to express milk, and supportive policies to help them reach their breastfeeding goals. Some of these companies employ significant numbers of women and some do not. Examples of large, mid-sized, and small companies and public agencies with supportive lactation programs include:

### Large Businesses and Public Agencies (500 or more Employees)

- Various departments and agencies of the Federal Government
- Boston University Medical Center
- California Public Health Foundation Enterprises
- CIGNA
- Texas Instruments
- Home Depot
- Fort Lewis and Madigan Army Medical Center
- Mutual of Omaha
- Los Angeles Department of Water and Power
- Pizza Hut Restaurant Service Center
- Sea World

### Mid-Sized Businesses (100-499 Employees)

- Patagonia
- Sears Roebuck & Co. #2179

### Small Businesses (1-99 Employees)

- Andaluz Birth Center (Oregon)
- Childhood Health Associates of Salem (Oregon)
- HCG Software, LLC (Oregon)
- Pecan Ridge School (Texas)
- Western Environmental Law Center

*If only employers knew how much a supportive environment means. Nursing moms don't need much...a private place, time to pump, and someone who can help answer your questions. It's not asking a lot, but we get so much in return! I cannot even imagine being able to continue breastfeeding without this warm, friendly environment that helps me know I can reach my goals. I think my employer gains, too, with fewer sick days for employees. I breastfed my little girl for a year, and never took a single day of sick leave!*

Gina Wilczewski  
Manager, Media Relations  
Boston Medical Center

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### The Business Case for Breastfeeding

Published in 2008 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau.

*"...HRSA, the lead U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Agency for improving access to health care for underserved and vulnerable individuals..."*

This booklet was produced under contract for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration by Every Mother, Inc. and Rich Winter Design and Multimedia.

This booklet is available during 2008 at [www.mchb.hrsa.gov/pregnancyandbeyond](http://www.mchb.hrsa.gov/pregnancyandbeyond)  
Print copies can be obtained from the HRSA Information Center 1-888-Ask-HRSA

## The BUSINESS CASE for BREASTFEEDING

STEPS FOR CREATING A BREASTFEEDING FRIENDLY WORKSITE

FOR BUSINESS MANAGERS



B O T T O M L I N E B E N E F I T S





## THE BUSINESS CASE FOR BREASTFEEDING

Companies successful at retaining valued employees after childbirth find that two components can make the difference: providing dedicated space (as small as 4' x 5') for breastfeeding employees to express milk in privacy, and providing worksite lactation support.

The payoff is significant: more satisfied, loyal employees and cost savings to the business. These savings are seen in such areas as:

- Retention of experienced employees;
- Reduction in sick time taken by both moms and dads for children's illnesses; and
- Lower health care and insurance costs.

This booklet provides business executives and managers, as well as human resource managers, with the business case for breastfeeding...how supporting breastfeeding employees contributes to their company's return on investment (ROI).



## 2. Breastfeeding lowers health care costs

The reduced health care costs for breastfed infants translate into lower medical insurance claims for businesses. Babies who are not breastfed visit the physician more often, spend more days in the hospital, and require more prescriptions than breastfed infants. One study found that for every 1,000 babies *not* breastfed, there were 2,033 extra physician visits, 212 extra hospitalization days, and 609 extra prescriptions for three illnesses alone – ear, respiratory, and gastrointestinal infection.<sup>2</sup> This does not include the risks of numerous other childhood illnesses and infections, or women's diseases such as pre-menopausal breast cancer, which are reduced when a mother breastfeeds.<sup>3</sup>



### Business Savings

- The insurance company CIGNA conducted a 2-year study of 343 employees who participated in their lactation support program, and found that the program resulted in an annual savings of \$240,000 in health care expenses, 62 percent fewer prescriptions, and \$60,000 savings in reduced absenteeism rates.<sup>4</sup>

## 3. Investing in a worksite lactation support program can yield substantial dividends to the company

Companies of all types have found that implementing a lactation support program can have a positive impact on their bottom line. Just a few of these important dividends include lower turnover rates, additional health care savings, higher productivity and loyalty, and positive public relations.

### Lower Turnover Rates

Employees are more likely to return to work after childbirth when their workplace provides a supportive environment for continued breastfeeding. Being able to keep experienced employees after childbirth means lowering or eliminating the costs a company otherwise would incur to hire temporary staff or to recruit, hire, and train replacement staff, both of which involve additional lost revenue while getting these new staff up to speed.

### Business Savings

- Mutual of Omaha's lactation support program led to a retention rate of 83 percent of their maternity workforce compared to the national average of only 59 percent.<sup>5</sup>
- Another study of several companies with lactation programs showed a retention rate of 94.2 percent.<sup>6</sup>
- A New Zealand study estimated \$75,000 in savings for each employee who returns to work after maternity leave.<sup>7</sup>

## Additional Health Care Savings

Companies that provide comprehensive onsite lactation support programs enjoy additional health care cost savings. That's because these programs encourage employees to breastfeed longer and to breastfeed exclusively to 6 months (the recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics) which provides the greatest health advantages for breastfeeding employees and their infants. When programs include prenatal education to help improve birth outcomes, the savings are even greater.



### Business Savings

- Mutual of Omaha found that health care costs for newborns are three times lower for babies whose mothers participate in their company's maternity and lactation program. Per person health care costs were \$2,146 *more* for employees who did not participate in the program, with a yearly savings of \$115,881 in health care claims for the breastfeeding mothers and babies.<sup>4</sup>

## Higher Productivity and Loyalty

Employees whose companies provide breastfeeding support consistently report improved morale, better satisfaction with their jobs, and higher productivity.<sup>8</sup> They also feel the support eases their transition back to work and enables them to return from maternity leave sooner.

### Business Savings

- Although 80 percent of its employees are male, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power found that a lactation support program for mothers, fathers, and partners of male employees made a dramatic difference in reducing turnover and absenteeism rates for both male and female workers. They also found that 83 percent of employees were more positive about the company as a result of the program, and 67 percent intended to make it their long-term employer.<sup>9</sup>

## Positive Public Relations

Providing a supportive environment for breastfeeding employees improves your overall company image and enhances your ability to recruit top-notch staff. Many companies with support programs receive local, state, and national recognition and media attention, a positive boost to recruitment efforts and general goodwill in the community.

## THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT

*Supporting your breastfeeding employees saves money. Here's how.*

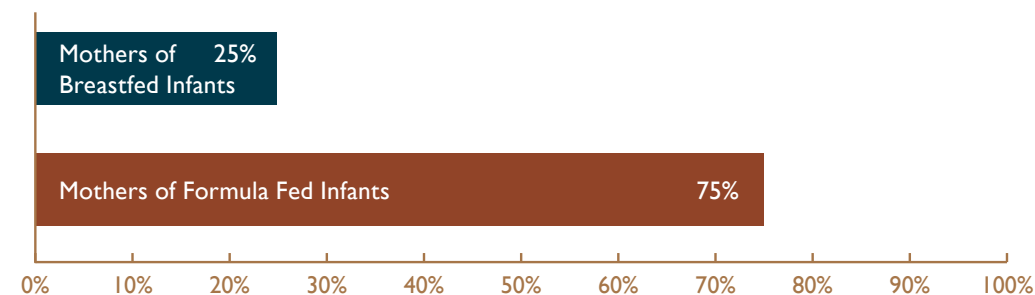
### I. Breastfeeding employees miss work less often

That's because breastfed infants are healthier! Human milk boosts an infant's immune system and helps protect him from common childhood illnesses, infections, and dermatitis. For infants in childcare settings where they are exposed to a multitude of germs and viruses, human milk provides even greater protection. Mothers and fathers of breastfed infants typically spend more time at work rather than taking leave to care for sick children.

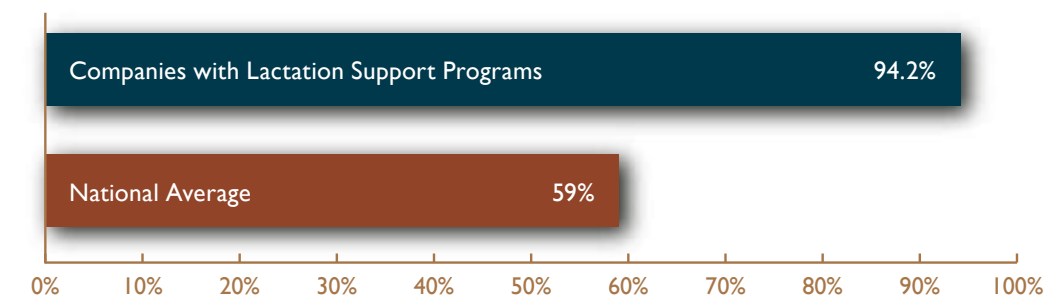
### Business Savings

- One-day absences to care for sick children occur more than twice as often for mothers of formula feeding infants.<sup>1</sup>

Percentage of Infant Illnesses Requiring 1-Day Maternal Absence from Work<sup>1</sup>



Retention Rate for Employees of Companies with Lactation Support Programs



## Profits and People

Today, women with children are the fastest growing segment of the workforce. Nearly 55 percent of women with children under the age of 3 are employed.<sup>10</sup> In the United States, more than 70 percent of all new mothers today choose to breastfeed to give their babies important nutrition and health benefits.<sup>11</sup> Family-friendly policies and programs that provide lactation support for both female employees and partners of male employees enhance your employee health benefits package and help protect your company's investment in staff through better retention of valued employees.