



SUPPORTING NURSING MOMS AT WORK

SOLUTIONS FOR AGRICULTURE

A FACT SHEET FROM THE OFFICE ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

Supporting nursing women can work, even in agricultural settings where private, enclosed space is often not available. Agricultural firms use many creative solutions to give employees time and space to express milk at work. These solutions can be inexpensive and easy to put into place. They are also highly valued by employees and help improve employee retention, productivity, and morale.

Bottom-Line Benefits to Business

Support for employees who are nursing their children is a valued employee benefit. It is also good for the company's bottom line, yielding a 3 to 1 Return on Investment¹ due to:

- ▶ Lower absenteeism rates of both mothers and fathers (since breastfed babies are healthier)²

- ▶ Higher retention rates (94% among employers who support nursing moms vs. national average of 59%)³
- ▶ Lower health care costs and insurance claims when infants are breastfed⁴
- ▶ Higher productivity and loyalty among workers⁵

ACA Requirements

Section 7 of the Fair Labor Standards Act has been amended to provide for basic accommodations for nursing women during the work period, including:

- ▶ Reasonable time to express milk during the work day
- ▶ Private space that is not a bathroom

The law applies to businesses of all sizes, and creative solutions



abound. Learn more at the U.S. Department of Labor at www.dol.gov/whd/nursingmothers.

Simple Space Solutions

Nursing women require privacy to express milk. In outdoor settings typical of large agricultural farms and orchards, space may not be readily available. Flexible outdoor and mobile options can be considered, including:



- ▶ Pop-up mobile tent
- ▶ Retrofitted portable restroom placed in safe locations
- ▶ Cab of farming equipment
- ▶ Company vehicle with privacy coverings for the windows
- ▶ Small buildings in the field
- ▶ Indoor office space, supervisor office, occupational health clinic, or converted storage areas

The space must be large enough for a chair or a place to sit and a flat surface for the breast pump. Privacy must also be ensured. With flexible, mobile options a locked door is not always

available. Signage and a well-communicated policy will help ensure privacy.

Time Solutions

Most women use their usual breaks and meal periods at work to express milk. Creative scheduling can help adjust for employee breaks. Many companies use floater staff to provide coverage when a worker must be away from her work station. The time needed to express milk is around 15-20 minutes per session, depending on the distance between the employee's work station and the private space.

Storing Expressed Milk

In outdoor settings, it may not be possible to provide refrigeration. In that case, mothers can store their milk in their own personal cooler.

Other Considerations

A written policy helps assure that all levels of staff have equal access to support, and that the needs of nursing moms will be respected. Include benefits of the company's support as part of new employee orientation so all employees will be aware of the company's policy. Many large companies include information about the legal requirements and practical solutions in their supervisory training.



Learn More!

Agricultural firms across the country have found many other creative solutions for supporting nursing women at work. To learn more, check the online searchable resource, *Supporting Nursing Moms at Work: Employer Solutions* at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, Office on Women's Health at www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding-at-work.

¹Washington Business Group on Health. Breastfeeding support at the workplace. Washington, D.C.; 2000. Issue No. 2.

²Cohen R, Martek MB, Mrtek RG. Comparison of maternal absenteeism and infant illness rates among breastfeeding and formula-feeding women in two corporations. *Am J of Health Prom*; 1995. 10(2):148-153.

³Ortiz J, et al. Duration of breast milk expression among working mothers enrolled in an employer-sponsored lactation program. *Ped Nursing*; 2004. 30(2):111-119.

⁴Mutual of Omaha. Prenatal and lactation education reduces newborn health care costs. Omaha, NE: Mutual of Omaha; 2001.

⁵Galtry J. Lactation and the labor market: breastfeeding, labor market changes, and public policy in the United States. *Health Care Women Int*; 1997. 18:467-480.