

Making it Work: Engaging and Assisting Employers

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Objectives:

1. Recognize at least three key components of the "business case for breastfeeding support";
2. Describe outreach strategies for approaching employers; and
3. Name at least three potential solutions for facilitating worksite breastfeeding support in office and non-office settings.

Understanding Employers

- Motivators to supporting breastfeeding mothers
 - Making a difference for employees
 - Legislation
 - Recognition
 - Return on Investment (ROI)
 - Solutions that have already been tried by other employers
- Common barriers
 - Lack of awareness
 - Non-issue (few women have requested services)
 - Myths about lactation in the workplace
 - Concerns about sexual nature of breastfeeding in the workplace
 - Lack of space (minimum size is 4'x5') – look for a “funny little space”
 - Compliance with ADA
 - Lack of resources
- Role of Policies
 - Policies help assure fair and equitable access to accommodations by all employees who need them
 - Implementing a policy can be a major barrier for employers
 - Consider integrating lactation language in existing policies (personnel, sexual harassment, gender bias, etc.)
 - Consider integrating lactation as part of an existing family friendly platform of benefits

Research with New York Employers

- While HR directors are typically aware of the law, company managers and supervisors are NOT
- Nearly all were unaware of the benefits to the business
- Most have NEVER even thought about the issue!
- Very few have ever been approached by a woman wanting lactation accommodations
- Male managers are embarrassed about breastfeeding, but are nevertheless enthusiastic about supporting moms at work
- Female managers were split in their support
- Major barriers:
 - Women might take advantage of the privilege
 - Lack of space and limited break time
 - More willing to support responsible employees
- What employers want:
 - Just ask!
 - Provide information on:
 - Benefits of breastfeeding to the employer and workplace
 - What lactation accommodations look like
 - Solutions for space
 - How much time it takes
 - What the manager needs to do
 - Best practices from other businesses

Return on Investment

The return on investment (ROI) for lactation support programs has been calculated by two companies (Aetna and Cigna) to be 2:1 or 3:1. This is because of numerous bottom-line benefits, such as:

- Lower absenteeism
 - One-day absences occur twice as often for employees whose babies are not breastfed
 - Absenteeism rates are lower for male employees when female partners breastfeed
 - Presenteeism rates could also potentially be impacted
- Improved recruitment and retention
 - U.S. national retention rate after maternity leave is 59%
 - The retention rate among companies with lactation programs is >90%
 - The cost of replacing employees is calculated by the DOL to be approximately 1.5 times that person's annual salary
- Improved productivity and loyalty
- Support for nursing moms can be included as part of a company's family friendly benefits package. Employers already know that family friendly benefits (such as flexible workweeks, telecommuting options, gradual phasing back to work options after maternity leave) produce bottom-line benefits in terms of improved loyalty and retention.

Conducting Outreach with Employers

- Do your homework: research the business first!
- Set priorities based on research
- Know who to approach (ex: human resource manager or someone you already know)
- Call for an in-person meeting
- *DO NOT MAIL MATERIALS*
- Prepare for the meeting!
- Show the employer you are here to provide help and resources
- Share the bottom-line benefits
- Give examples of other businesses
- Provide or correct information about federal and state laws
- Leave resources and follow-up!

Resource: *Implementation Strategies for Coalitions*, available with the “Supporting Nursing Moms at Work: Employer Solutions” presentation platform at <http://www.usbreastfeeding.org/SNMW-platform>

Selecting Businesses to Reach

- “Low-hanging fruit” – companies most likely to be easily persuaded. According to the SHRM Employee Benefits Survey, businesses that are most likely to have lactation programs include health care agencies and financial institutions. Government agencies might also be easy to convince because of existing federal mandates.
- “Easy Adopters” –workplaces with a proven record of openness to innovative ideas, or that already offer other unique employee benefits, especially family-friendly programs. Examples: companies with a fitness program (since they are already aware of the importance of employee health), hospitals (because of their interest in health), etc.
- “Biggest Bang for the Buck” – workplaces with a high employee base of women could be important to approach because they may be more likely to see and experience a positive return on investment. A large employer also has the potential for impacting change in a large number of women, establishing a community model. Examples are hospitals, colleges/universities, manufacturing plants, and other large firms.
- “Special Needs” – workplaces that have challenging environments for breastfeeding. This might include manufacturing plants with rigid break schedules, companies that have predominantly male employees, or sites where physical barriers pose physical challenges such as a mine or a police or fire station.

Resources for Supporting Nursing Moms

The HHS Office on Women’s Health launched new resources for employers, mothers, and breastfeeding educators in June 2014 at the National Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) conference in Orlando, Florida.

- “Supporting Nursing Moms at Work: Strategies for Employers” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women’s Health) with searchable online resources featuring 200 business profiles and 29 videos. Available at: www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding-at-work.
- Videos available independently at the Office on Women’s Health Breastfeeding YouTube™ channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLB3959C47157F38B3>.
- Presentation platform available for downloading at the website of the United States Breastfeeding Committee at: www.usbreastfeeding.org/SNMW-platform.
- “Making it Work” (New York Department of Health) – resources for employers, mothers, family members, and breastfeeding educators. Available at: www.breastfeedingpartners.org.
- “The Business Case for Breastfeeding” (HHS Maternal and Child Health Bureau) at: www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/government-in-action/business-case.html.

Solutions for Employers

- Business Solutions
 - Restaurants/Fast Food
 - Retail
 - Health Care
 - Schools
 - Manufacturing
 - Child Care
 - Agriculture
 - Military



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

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

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