



Employer's Information

The Business Case for Breastfeeding

Why should an employer be concerned about breastfeeding?

When employees continue breastfeeding after returning to work, there are many benefits to the employer:

- **Financial value:** 3 to 1 return on investment, primarily due to reduced cost of health care.
- **Retain employees:** Employees who feel supported in their decision to breastfeed report higher job satisfaction – resulting in less turnover of skilled employees and higher morale.
- **Enhanced recruitment:** Employers who support breastfeeding have added recruitment incentives for families as well as a positive image in the community
- **Healthier babies:** Breastfed babies are less likely to get ear infections, diarrhea, respiratory diseases, asthma, and other common childhood illnesses. Breastfed babies have reduced risk of obesity and diabetes as children and adults. Healthier babies mean parents miss less work – resulting in better productivity for employers. In addition, health care costs are significantly lower for breastfed infants.

What is a Breastfeeding-Friendly Employer?

Breastfeeding-friendly employers provide breastfeeding employees with:

- **Time:** A flexible schedule for nursing mothers, allowing them to take breaks to express milk for their baby or go to visit the baby for feedings.
- **Space:** A private, sanitary space in which the mother can either express milk or feed her baby.
- **Support:** Create a supportive atmosphere for nursing mothers.

In addition to these basic items, a breastfeeding-friendly worksite is enhanced by the following:

- A written company policy stating your company's support and respect for a woman's right to breastfeed her baby.
- Information packets given to all expectant parents encouraging breastfeeding, stating your company's support, and listing local breastfeeding resources.
- Employee health insurance that covers lactation consultant visits, breast pumps and supplies.
- Educate all employees about the breastfeeding policy. Support from coworkers is an important component of a breastfeeding-friendly workplace.
- Provide a designated lactation room for breastfeeding mothers.
- Provide 10-12 weeks of parental leave – the extra time gives mother more time to heal, and helps get breastfeeding well established. Parental leave should be 6-8 weeks minimum.

- Offering paid parental leave (either full or partial) makes your company particularly appealing when recruiting young families.
- Allow a new mother to gradually transition back to work through a combination of part-time, flex-time, job sharing, and/or working from home.
- Provide breast pumps either through company health insurance or at company expense (a good-quality breast pump generally costs \$200-300).
- If your company has several new or expecting mothers, engage the services of a lactation consultant to provide breastfeeding assistance.
- Provide on-site child care so that mothers can conveniently visit their babies at feeding times.

Breastfeeding and Your Bottom Line

Show me the numbers: How does breastfeeding support improve my bottom line?

- Companies that have adopted breastfeeding support programs have noted cost savings of \$3 per \$1 invested in breastfeeding support.¹
- Parental absenteeism is three times higher for formula-fed infants as compared to breastfed babies.²
- Companies with an employee lactation support program experience less turnover and lower losses of skilled workers after childbirth. Additionally, these companies are rewarded with higher employee satisfaction, loyalty, and morale.³
- \$13 billion of direct pediatric health care costs and over 900 infant deaths would be saved annually if 90% of women breastfed according to medical recommendations.⁴
- Maternal disease and premature death from suboptimal breastfeeding is estimated to cost \$734 million in direct costs and \$126 million in indirect costs.⁵

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that mothers breastfeed exclusively for the first six months, and continue breastfeeding with the addition of complementary foods until the baby is at least one year old.⁶ The Department of Health and Human Services stresses the importance of facilitating the continuation of breastfeeding after mothers return to their jobs.^{7 8}

How can my company gain recognition as a Breastfeeding Friendly Employer?

Breastfeeding Friendly Employer recognition is given annually by the Vermont Department of Health during World Breastfeeding Week in August. The awards are published in an annual press release, listed on the Department of Health website, and included in other promotional materials.

Applications and more information can be found on the Vermont Department of Health website: <http://www.breastfeedvermont.info> – click the link for the [Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Project](#).

- Breastfeeding Friendly Employer awards are given on three levels in order to recognize employers who provide basic support, as well as those companies that can provide enhanced lactation support for their employees.
- The [Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Checklist](#) found at the Department of Health website provides guidelines to determine your company's level of recognition.

¹ United States Breastfeeding Committee. Workplace Accommodations to Support and Protect Breastfeeding. Washington, DC: United States Breastfeeding Committee; 2010.

² Cohen, R. Mrtek, MB, Mrtek RG. *American Journal of Health Promotion* 1995; 10:148-5

³ United States Breastfeeding Committee. Workplace Accommodations to Support and Protect Breastfeeding. Washington, DC: United States Breastfeeding Committee; 2010.

⁴ Bartick M, Reinhold A. The burden of suboptimal breastfeeding in the United States: a pediatric cost analysis. *Pediatrics*. 2010;125(5):e1048-56.

⁵ Bartick MC, Stuebe AM, Schwarz EB, Luongo C, Reinhold A, Foster EM. Cost analysis of maternal disease associated with suboptimal breastfeeding. *Obstet Gynecol*. 2013;122(1):111-119.

⁶ American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement. Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk. *Pediatrics* 129 (3); e827. 2012.

⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. HHS Blueprint for Action on Breastfeeding, Washington, D.C. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health, 2000.

⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General; 2011