EAT SMART NORTH CAROLINA:

Businesses Leading the Way in Support of Breastfeeding
Women with infants and toddlers make up a large part of today’s workforce. Forty percent of mothers return to work within three months of giving birth, and one-half return within six months.¹

Many factors affect a woman’s decision to return to work. Topping that list is her infant's nutrition needs and overall health. Breast milk has long been considered best for babies' health. Unfortunately, only 51 percent of North Carolina mothers continue to breastfeed their babies after eight weeks. Mothers cite returning to work as one of the main factors impacting that decision.²

Why Should Businesses Support Breastfeeding?

Breastfeeding is considered the best choice for infant feeding by

- The World Health Organization (WHO)
- UNICEF
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- The American Academy of Pediatrics
- The American Association of Family Physicians
- The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
- The American Public Health Association
- The American Dietetic Association

and is recommended for at least the first year and preferably for the second year of a baby’s life.

Mothers who want to continue to breastfeed after returning to work face numerous challenges. Often, there is little privacy for pumping breast milk or insufficient break time during work to pump. There may not be adequate refrigeration or proper facilities to wash equipment.

Employers can help. The N.C. Division of Public Health and its many partners recommend that North Carolina businesses protect, promote and support breastfeeding. Eat Smart North Carolina: Businesses Leading the Way in Support of Breastfeeding is a planning and resource guide for employers who want to support their breastfeeding employees and customers. These important policies and services are easy to put into practice at minimal cost to businesses.

A nationally recognized resource for businesses implementing or strengthening worksite breastfeeding support programs is the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services publication, The Business Case for Breastfeeding: Steps to Creating a Breastfeeding Friendly Worksite. Additional information on this publication can be found in the resource section of this guide.

Overall Cost Savings
Breastfed babies are well babies. Parents spend less time away from work caring for sick children. Fewer doctor visits reduce health care costs. Businesses that provide breastfeeding support services save $3 for every $1 spent on these services.³ This saves $400 per baby in the first year of life.³

Decreased Absenteeism
Employees who breastfeed their babies are less likely to miss work with a sick child.⁴

Increased Employee Retention
Businesses with breastfeeding support programs have a retention rate for all employees of 94.2 percent compared to the national retention rate of 59 percent.⁵,⁶

Increased Employee Job Satisfaction
Mothers who participate in employer sponsored breastfeeding support programs report having an overall positive work experience and less stress due to fewer child illnesses.⁷

Employee Recruitment Incentive
Female employees value businesses that provide breastfeeding support.

Positive Business Image
Businesses that provide breastfeeding support for their patrons enjoy customer loyalty. Employees, customers and the community at large view businesses that support breastfeeding as family-friendly.⁴ Many businesses receive local, state and national recognition for supporting breastfeeding.
Benefits of Breastfeeding

Businesses benefit from breastfeeding. Babies, women and families benefit as well.

**Babies**
Breastfed babies are healthier babies. Compared to babies who are formula fed, breastfed babies have stronger immune systems and are:
- less likely to have allergies
- less likely to be obese
- less likely to develop type 1 and type 2 diabetes
- less likely to suffer from lower respiratory illnesses like pneumonia and bronchitis
- less likely to have gastrointestinal infections
- less likely to have middle ear infections
- less likely to develop asthma
- less likely to die from SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).

**Mothers**
Breastfeeding benefits mothers as well. Women who breastfeed their babies are:
- less likely to develop breast cancer
- less likely to develop ovarian cancer
- less likely to develop diabetes
- less likely to develop osteoporosis.

Breastfeeding mothers recover faster from labor and delivery. They also return to their pre-pregnancy weight sooner.

**Families**
Breastfeeding is more cost effective than bottle-feeding for families. Families spend $1,200 to $1,500 a year on formula per child.

Citations
What Can Businesses Do to Support Breastfeeding?

Write a Breastfeeding Policy for Your Business

Working mothers say that they value their employer’s written support for breastfeeding. A clear and public statement can also boost a company’s public image. Posting a written policy in a public place, such as a lobby or break room, informs employees and customers about services and available support.

A Sample Policy

Business Breastfeeding Support Policy for

Employer: ____________________________ Date: __________

1. Our business supports its breastfeeding employees.

2. Breastfeeding employees are allowed a flexible schedule for nursing or expressing milk. The time allowed will not exceed the normal time allowed for lunch and breaks. For time above and beyond normal lunch and breaks, employees can use leave or the employee can work an adjusted schedule.

3. A private room (not a toilet stall or restroom) will be available for employees to breastfeed their baby or express milk. The room will have electrical outlets for an electric breast pump and a sink close by for washing hands and rinsing pump parts.

4. The nursing mother’s area/room will be easily accessible for all breastfeeding employees and contain a comfortable chair with arms, a small low table, and other equipment as necessary.

5. A refrigerator will be available for safe storage of expressed milk. Breastfeeding women will provide their own containers, and milk stored in the refrigerator will be clearly labeled with name and date. If a refrigerator is not available, mothers can bring in a small, insulated lunch bag with re-freezable ice for storing their milk.

6. All employees and customers will be informed of this policy.

(Adapted from Oregon Department of Human Services’ How to Become a Breastfeeding Mother Friendly Employer)

Create Support Systems

Breastfeeding mothers benefit from support both in the workplace and in their community. Businesses can support breastfeeding by:

• Creating email list serves, newsletters, nursing buddies and support group meetings to provide employees ways to discuss breastfeeding and receive support from others.

• Building breastfeeding support into other worksite wellness programs.

• Providing education to all employees on the benefits of breastfeeding and breastfeeding policies.

• Providing information to employees about support services available online and in the community.

• Contracting with a lactation consultant.

Provide a Nursing Mother’s Room for Employees and Customers

Nursing Mother’s Rooms are private spaces for women to breastfeed their babies or express milk. Businesses that provide a Nursing Mother’s Room enable breastfeeding mothers to meet the needs of their babies while still meeting workplace demand.

It is important to create a plan for using the room so that women will have less wait time for the room and miss less time from work. Schedule room use based on employees’ schedules. Offer sign up times via email or on a clipboard. Post an “Occupied” notice on the door when the room is in use.

Provide Flexible Breaks and/or Work Schedule Options for Your Employees

Businesses can offer breastfeeding employees temporary work schedule changes. These changes enable mothers to breastfeed or express milk and may include:

• Telecommuting/working from home.

• A flexible break in the morning and afternoon for pumping. Employees may come in to work earlier, stay later or take a shorter lunch to make up for these breaks.

• A gradual return to work with fewer hours per day.

• Part-time employment.

• Compressed work week: working longer hours four days during the week in order to take one day off to be at home with the baby.

Breastfeeding or expressing milk takes little time. Women usually need 2–3 breaks that range from 15 to 30 minutes each, not including setup and cleanup. The need for breaks becomes less frequent as babies age and begin eating solid foods.
A Nursing Mother’s Room Includes:

- Clean, comfortable space with lockable door. Do not use restrooms, as they are not clean, comfortable or private.
- Chair for mother
- Low table for breast pump
- Wastebasket
- Electrical outlet for breast pump
- Electric breast pumps (employers can rent or purchase pumps, or a mother can provide her own. Some health insurance companies reimburse the cost of an electric breast pump for their members. There are also organizations that loan electric pumps.)
- Pump kits—one per mother (Employers can purchase or mothers can provide their own.)
- Refrigerator or ice chest to store milk (Store breast milk in a separate refrigerator—not the employees’ refrigerator—or a mother can provide her own cooler.)
- Sink with hot water for washing pumping equipment
- Towel and soap
- Sanitizer for spills
- Other suggested items: bulletin board, pictures, library of breastfeeding resources, comment box, footstool, and tape and permanent pen to label milk containers

The cost for a nursing mother’s room can range from $145 to $1,680 depending on accommodations.

SUCCESS STORIES

“I ATTENDED THE BREASTFEEDING SERIES that my employer offers at work which is led by my employer’s lactation educator. They gave me all kinds of information about things that I might run into and also let me know they were there to support me if I needed it. There is also a Nursing Buddies list at my office in case I need advice or encouragement from other breastfeeding moms and a nursing listerv and lending library with books and videos on pregnancy and breastfeeding.

When my son was just a few days old, we met with the lactation educator and made sure we were doing everything correctly. This was helpful because you want to make sure that your child is being well nourished. I also purchased a pump through my employer. It’s a quality pump at a discounted rate.

All of this support took away a lot of the anxiety about breastfeeding. I had a plan in place for when I returned to work. It’s so hard to return to work as it is but this allows you to still feel connected to your child. It may end up keeping you at your job when otherwise you might have decided to not work. It takes away a lot of anxiety about returning to work which helps you focus on your workload. Plus you are missing less work with a sick child since breastfeeding boosts the child’s immune system. I would work through lunch to account for the time that I was breastfeeding and I would also work from home some in the evenings to make up for any extra time.

I felt happier for being there for my son and for my job. I felt there was a happy balance which is important. I feel very lucky that my employer is supportive of family and work. I couldn’t imagine being anywhere else.”

—Leslie Anderson, Employee at SAS, Cary, N.C.

“I CHOSE TO RETURN TO WORK 3 MONTHS after the birth of my baby so that I could continue my career along with my new mom career. It was a hard road at first, but I was determined to continue breastfeeding even after returning to work. My employer has supported my decision to breastfeed by offering a nursing mother’s room where I was able to pump milk for my baby on the schedule that he would normally breastfeed. It was important to me to provide the best for him and I feel like I have been able to do this and continue my career as well. Without the support and understanding of my employer, I would have had to give up breastfeeding as soon as I returned to work.

If I could tell businesses one thing about their employees and breastfeeding, it would be this: While many mothers want to continue their career, many have spent six or more weeks with their child every moment and coming back into the workplace is a big change. By simply providing them with a private place to pump and breaks when needed, you are supporting one thing in their family’s life that is so important to them and can make the difference between choosing to stay at a job or not.

Breastfeeding is nutritionally the best option for babies and is also financially easier than bottle-feeding which is important to a lot of people right now. It only takes away a few moments from your work day, but it will mean so much to women to have support from their employer in continuing to care for their child as they choose, for as long as they choose. My child is 9 months old now and I continue to breastfeed. I never even thought that I would, but now I’m so glad I did!”

—Keri Stepp, Employee at Henderson County Health Department, Hendersonville, N.C.
Both large and small businesses have successfully supported breastfeeding. The table below highlights several possibilities. When deciding which options are best, consider the number of women who need support as well as the resources available to your business and the type of business setting.

### Examples of Business Breastfeeding Support

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASIC</th>
<th>BETTER</th>
<th>BEST</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Written Business Policy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Employer allows break time for breastfeeding or expressing milk, including time for cleanup.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Employer allows creative use of vacation days, personal time, sick days and holiday pay after childbirth.</td>
<td>• In addition, employer allows part-time work, job sharing, compressed work week or telecommuting.</td>
<td>• In addition, mother can bring child to work, caregiver can bring child to workplace, or on-site day care is available.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Employer allows two breaks and a lunch period during an 8-hour workday for expressing milk or breastfeeding.</td>
<td>• Employer allows expanded unpaid breaks during the workday for expressing milk or breastfeeding.</td>
<td>• Employer counts nursing breaks as paid working time.</td>
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<td><strong>Support Systems</strong></td>
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<td>• Employer tells pregnant employees about breastfeeding policy.</td>
<td>• Employer educates all new employees, supervisors and coworkers about the breastfeeding policy.</td>
<td>• In addition, employer offers breastfeeding education to employees who are expectant fathers.</td>
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<td>• Employer provides a list of community resources for breastfeeding support.</td>
<td>• Employer contracts with lactation consultant on “as needed” basis.</td>
<td>• Employer hires a skilled lactation care provider to coordinate a breastfeeding support program.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nursing Mother’s Room</strong></td>
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<td>• Employer provides a clean, private, comfortable space (that is not a bathroom) with a lockable door and an electrical outlet for pumping. Room is outfitted with table and comfortable chair, sink, soap, water and paper towels.</td>
<td>• Employer provides a Nursing Mother’s Room for exclusive use of breastfeeding women. Room is outfitted with table and comfortable chair, sink, soap, water and paper towels. The room may also have a bulletin board for displaying baby pictures.</td>
<td>• Employer provides a Nursing Mother’s Room for exclusive use of breastfeeding women. Room is outfitted with table and comfortable chair, sink, soap, water and paper towels. The room may also have a bulletin board for displaying baby pictures, a breastfeeding library and soft music.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Employee provides own breast pump.</td>
<td>• Employer provides one, multi-user electric breast pump, and employees provide their own pump kits.</td>
<td>• Employer provides one multi-user electric breast pump and pump kits (one per employee); employer provides additional multi-user electric pumps if needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Employee supplies cold packs and coolers for milk storage.</td>
<td>• Employee supplies cold packs and coolers for storage of milk.</td>
<td>• Employer provides a small refrigerator for storage of milk.</td>
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<td><strong>Serve as a Role-Model Business</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Employer encourages other businesses to support breastfeeding and shares successes and resources.</td>
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RESOURCES

Use the resources listed below for more information about breastfeeding and how your business can support breastfeeding mothers and customers.

Resources in North Carolina

**BELLAS Breastfeeding**
(Breastfeeding Encouragement Learning Liaison and Support)
www.bellasbreastfeeding.org
Peer counseling breastfeeding program offering peer support, especially to low-income teens

**Carolina Breastfeeding Institute**
www.sph.unc.edu
Includes breastfeeding research articles and information about how breastfeeding is being promoted at the state, national and international levels

**Eat Smart Move More:**
North Carolina’s Plan to Prevent Overweight, Obesity and Related Chronic Disease
www.EatSmartMoveMoreNC.com
North Carolina’s plan for decreasing obesity, which includes goals, objectives and strategies that support breastfeeding

**La Leche League of North Carolina**
www.lllofnc.org
Offers breastfeeding support via phone, monthly meetings and lending libraries

**Mid South Lactation Consultants Association**
www.midsouthlca.org
Provides a listing of lactation consultants

**My Eat Smart Move More**
www.myeatsmartmovemore.com
Connects moms with resources on the benefits of breastfeeding and organizations that offer support

**North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition**
www.ncbfc.org
Provides information on the activities of the state’s breastfeeding coalition and links to resources available in North Carolina

**N.C. HealthSmart Worksite Wellness Toolkit**
www.EatSmartMoveMoreNC.com
Detailed information on creating a worksite wellness program

**N.C. Nutrition Services Branch Breastfeeding Support**
www.nutritionnc.com
Includes a workplace training packet, information about breastfeeding basics and breastfeeding support contact information available through local agency WIC programs in N.C. (some resources available in Spanish)

**Promoting, Protecting, and Supporting Breastfeeding—A North Carolina Blueprint for Action, 2006**
www.nutritionnc.com
www.eatsmartmovemore.com
North Carolina’s plan for increasing breastfeeding rates and support in the state

**Additional Resources**

**Breastfeeding.com, Inc.**
www.breastfeeding.com
Answers common questions and provides information about babies with special needs

**The Business Case for Breastfeeding**
Health Resources and Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
http://ask.hrsa.gov/index.cfm
Provides detailed information on the benefits of business breastfeeding support and gives numerous examples of ways to support breastfeeding employees

**International Lactation Consultant Association**
www.ilca.org
Provides listing of lactation consultants available in each state

**La Leche League International**
www.llli.org
Includes detailed information about breastfeeding with suggested books for further reading

**March of Dimes**
www.marchofdimes.com
Includes breastfeeding picture guides and information on how to schedule feedings (also available in Spanish)

**The Mayo Clinic**
www.mayoclinic.com
Provides information for mothers on breastfeeding positions, schedules, feeding amounts, breastfeeding versus formula and transitioning to work

**National Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition**
www.hmhb.org
Provides information on research in the areas of pregnancy and breastfeeding

**The National Women’s Health Information Center**
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office on Women’s Health
www.womenshealth.gov
Provides information on many topics including the benefits of breastfeeding and how to solve problems related to breastfeeding (also available in Spanish)

**United States Breastfeeding Committee**
www.usbreastfeeding.org

**United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)**
www.fns.usda.gov

**United States Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention**
www.cdc.gov
Includes research related to breastfeeding and provides resources for breastfeeding mothers

**World Health Organization**
www.who.int
Provides information on the importance of breastfeeding both in the U.S. and internationally
Lead Project, Writing, and Review Team Partners

Diane Beth, MS, RD, LDN  
Nutrition Manager  
Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch  
N.C. Division of Public Health  

Vicki Carlson, RN, IBCLC, RLC  
Clinical Director  
Coastal Breastfeeding Services  
North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition, Chair  

Diane Beth, MS, RD, LDN  
Nutrition Manager  
Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch  
N.C. Division of Public Health  

Vicki Carlson, RN, IBCLC, RLC  
Clinical Director  
Coastal Breastfeeding Services  
North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition, Chair

Leigh Haugseth, MSPH  
Worksite Wellness Specialist  
Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch  
N.C. Division of Public Health  

Bethany Holloway, MEd, RD, LDN, IBCLC, RLC  
Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program Coordinator  
Nutrition Services Branch  
N.C. Division of Public Health  

Elizabeth MacLachlan, MPH, RD  
Worksite Wellness Team  
Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch  
N.C. Division of Public Health  

Carey Serafin, MPH, MSW  
Student Intern, UNC-CH  
Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch  
N.C. Division of Public Health  

Catherine Sullivan, MPH, RD, LDN, IBCLC, RLC  
Breastfeeding Coordinator  
Nutrition Services Branch  
N.C. Division of Public Health  

Meg van Staveren, MPH, RD  
Worksite Wellness Manager  
Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch  
N.C. Division of Public Health  

Reviewers  

Sharon Morgan, DDS  
Family and General Practice Dentist  
Greensboro, N.C.  

Nancy Register RN-CS, FNP, IBCLC  
Clinical Operations Liason  
SAS Health Care Center, W1222  
Cary, N.C.  

Cathy Thomas, MAEd  
Branch Head  
Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch  
N.C. Division of Public Health  

Sheree Thaxton Vodicka, MA, RD, LDN  
Healthy Weight Communications Manager  
Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch  
N.C. Division of Public Health  

Members of the North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition