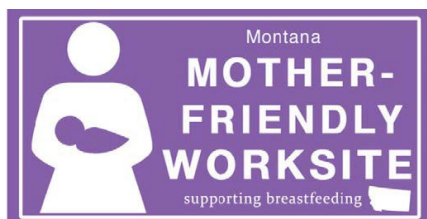


MONTANA MOTHER-FRIENDLY WORKSITES SUPPORTING BREAST-FEEDING

TOOLKIT FOR
EMPLOYERS &
EMPLOYEES



MONTANA
NUTRITION & PHYSICAL
ACTIVITY PROGRAM

The Montana Nutrition and Physical Activity Program
Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services
November 2025

Letter of Introduction

Welcome to the **Montana Mother-Friendly Worksites Supporting Breastfeeding Toolkit**. This toolkit is designed to help Montana employers create supportive, family-friendly workplaces by providing practical steps and resources to assist breastfeeding employees.

Across the United States, about eight in ten mothers begin breastfeeding, but only about half continue at six months. Limited lactation support, inadequate paid leave, and the lack of workplace accommodations are major barriers. This toolkit focuses on addressing those key challenges to supporting breastfeeding in the workplace through practical, online, and printable resources.

The *Mother-Friendly Worksites Supporting Breastfeeding Toolkit* outlines three simple steps employers can take to build a successful lactation support program:

1. Flexible **time** for milk expression
2. Private **space**
3. **Policy** ensuring ongoing breastfeeding support

Employers who implement these supports can receive official recognition as a Montana Mother-Friendly Worksite. Beyond compliance, these accommodations benefit businesses by improving employee satisfaction, retention, and overall workplace wellness.

This resource aligns with national best practices and consistent messaging from key public health initiatives including [The Surgeon Generals Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding](#), [The Business Case for Breastfeeding](#) and [Employer Solutions to Lactation Accommodations](#).

Montana has long been a leader in supporting maternal and infant health. Our state's breastfeeding rates exceed national averages for several [Healthy People 2030](#) objectives, including exclusive breastfeeding through six months (33.9%) and breastfeeding at one year (41.2%). However, Montana still falls short of the national goals for breastfeeding exclusively through six months (42.4%) and for breastfeeding at one year (54.1%). By working together to expand workplace support, we can continue improving breastfeeding outcomes for Montana families and strengthen the health of communities across our state.

Thank you for your commitment to supporting Montana's families and workforce.

Sincerely,

Montana Nutrition and Physical Activity Program

Montana Mother-Friendly Worksite to Support Breastfeeding

Families are healthier when workplaces support women during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Mothers make up a growing part of the United States workforce, with about one-third returning to work within three months of giving birth and nearly two-thirds returning within six months. Employer support can make a critical difference—helping mothers continue breastfeeding after returning to work, improving employee satisfaction, and benefiting business through better retention and productivity.

What is a Mother-Friendly Worksite?

The *Montana Mother-Friendly Worksite Initiative* recognizes businesses that actively support employees who choose to breastfeed their infants. Creating a Mother-Friendly workplace is simple and cost-effective.

A Mother-Friendly Worksite provides:

1. **A private space** for expressing milk (other than a restroom);
2. **Flexible scheduling** to allow for milk expression breaks; and
3. **A written policy** designating time and space accommodations for breastfeeding.

Steps to Mother-Friendly Worksite Recognition

1. **Start the conversation.** Assess the needs of breastfeeding employees and develop a workplace lactation policy.
2. **Implement supports.** Identify and provide appropriate space and break time options that meet state and federal requirements.
3. **Sustain and promote.** Continue improving lactation support through employee education, supervisor training, and regular policy reviews.

It's Good for Business!

Supporting breastfeeding employees is good for both families and employers. Research shows that offering workplace lactation support provides an estimated **3:1 return on investment** through lower health care costs, reduced absenteeism, higher employee retention, and improved morale. These benefits also contribute to a positive workplace reputation, helping to attract and retain quality staff.

Lower Absenteeism Rates

Breastfed infants tend to be healthier, which means their parents miss fewer days of work. Studies show that one-day absences due to infant illness occur twice as often among parents of non-breastfed babies.

- **CIGNA Insurance Company** reported saving approximately **\$60,000 per year** in reduced absenteeism among employees whose babies were breastfed.

Lower Healthcare and Insurance Costs

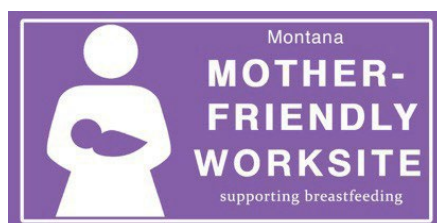
Healthier infants lead to lower health care expenses for families and employers. Babies who are not breastfed require more doctor visits, more hospital stays, and more prescriptions than breastfed infants.

- **Mutual of Omaha** found that employees participating in their workplace lactation support program had **newborn health care costs three times lower** than employees who did not participate.

Higher Retention Rates

Employees who receive lactation support are more likely to return to work after maternity leave and stay with their employer longer. Supportive policies can also increase job satisfaction and productivity.

- A study of companies with lactation programs showed an **average employee retention rate of 94.2%** after maternity leave, compared with the **national average of 59%**.
- **Mutual of Omaha** reported an **83% retention rate** among women employees after implementing a lactation support program compared to the national average of only 59%.



Accommodating Nursing Mother's at Work is the Law

Federal: Break Time for Nursing Mother Law, US Department of Labor the [Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\)](#) requires employers to provide reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk for a nursing child for one year after the child's birth each time such employee has need to express the milk. Employees are entitled to a place to pump at work, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public.

On December 29, 2022, the [PUMP for Nursing Mothers Consolidated Appropriations Act](#), expanding these rights to more nursing employees, including agricultural workers, nurses, teachers, truck and taxi drivers, home care workers and managers.



An employer that employs fewer than 50 employees and proves an undue hardship may be exempt. The employer must apply for exemption through the Department of Labor. Nothing in this law shall preempt a State law that provides greater protections. For more information or to file a complaint contact the [Federal Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division](#): 1-866-487-9243

State: Workplace Breastfeeding Protection, Public employer policy of support of women & breastfeeding [Mont. Code Ann. § 39-2-215](#) (2023) requires all public employers—including state, county, and municipal governments, school districts, and the university system—to have a written policy that supports employees who wish to continue breastfeeding after maternity leave. The policy must provide for a private, appropriately equipped space (with privacy, lighting, and electrical access) for breastfeeding or expressing milk, which must be readily available when needed but does not have to be permanent. The law also makes it unlawful for public employers to refuse to hire, discharge, or discriminate in pay or working conditions against an employee for expressing breast milk in the workplace, unless the action is based on a bona fide occupational qualification. For more information or to file a complaint contact: [Montana Human Rights Bureau](#) 1-406-444-2884.

Breastfeeding Benefits Everyone

With support, many mothers have found that they can continue to give their babies the important health benefits even after they return to work. This toolkit will offer resources to support employee's transition back to the workplace.

Benefits for Baby

- The cells, hormones, and antibodies in breast milk help protect babies from illness. This protection is unique and changes every day to meet your baby's growing needs.
- Lower risk of Necrotizing Enterocolitis, a disease that affects the gastrointestinal tract in premature babies, or babies born before 37 weeks of pregnancy.
- Breast milk is easier to digest than formula.
- Breast milk contains antibodies that protect infants from certain illnesses, such as ear infections, diarrhea, respiratory illnesses, and allergies. The longer your baby breastfeeds, the greater the health benefits.
- May reduce risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Benefits for Mom

- Breastfeeding triggers the release of a hormone called oxytocin that causes the uterus to contract. This helps the uterus return to its normal size more quickly and may decrease the amount of bleeding you have after giving birth.
- Breastfeeding leads to a lower risk of type 2 diabetes & certain types of breast cancer & ovarian cancer.

The 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for about 6 months, followed by continued breastfeeding as complementary foods are introduced, with continuation of breastfeeding for 1 year or longer as mutually desired by the mother and infant.



Step 1: Garner Support

- Begin by reaching out to all levels of management to garner support for lactation accommodations.
- Form a committee of people who have an interest in the program including health promotions, facilities manager, current and previous breastfeeding and/or parenting employees, and pregnant employees.

Step 2: Assess & Develop Policy

When developing your policy keep in mind that employers (with some exemptions) are subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act, and must provide nursing employees with private space and “reasonable” unpaid breaks to express breast milk, for up to one year after the birth of a child.

- Assess how your organization currently supports worksite lactation by evaluating the current population, policies, environments, supports, needs, and constraints.
- Develop a policy that outlines what the employees can expect from the organization and what the organization expects from them.
- Policy should include space and time to pump parameters.

Step 3: Implement & Evaluate

Considerations when rolling out your Mother-Friendly Program.

1. Space: Provide employees a private, accessible area, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public, for either expressing breastmilk.
2. Time: Provide work schedule and work pattern flexibility to, at a minimum, accommodate a reasonable break time for an employee to express breastmilk for one year or longer after the child's birth.
3. Promote your worksite lactation program. It helps women in the organization know about the program's existence and offers good public relations value for recruiting and retaining other employees.
4. Continue to evaluate the program. The results of the evaluations should be incorporated into future policy revisions and program updates.

Nominate a Worksite

Nominate Your Worksite to Receive Mother-Friendly Worksite Recognition

1. Fill out this simple form at:
https://mdphhs.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_51GuMf5pKP3ke9L
2. We will contact the worksite to thank them and discuss next steps.

A Mother-Friendly Recognized Worksite Receives

1. Gains in employee satisfaction and productivity, lower absenteeism and community recognition.
2. Recognition on the Montana Nutrition & Physical Activity Program website, social media pages and press releases.
3. Mother-Friendly Worksite certificate of recognition and window cling.
4. Lactation accommodation program support.

Need Assistance? Contact us!

We have staff available to provide technical assistance to help your worksite with the process of setting up a lactation accommodation program including, creating breastfeeding support policies, and setting up a private space and more!

Contact Terry Miller, NAPA Senior Breastfeeding Consultant at tmiller6@mt.gov

References

The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/Dietary_Guidelines_for_Americans_2020-2025.pdf

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

<https://www.eatrightpro.org/advocacy/federal-policy-initiatives/all-legislation/breastfeeding-in-the-workplace>

The American Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine

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<https://www.aap.org/>

Healthy People 2030 Objectives for the Nation

<https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/nutrition-and-healthy-eating>

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<https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2019/02/11/breastfeeding-work/>

The Surgeon General's Call to action to support Breastfeeding

<https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/breastfeeding/index.html>

Texas Mother Friendly

<http://texasmotherfriendly.org>

United States Breastfeeding Committee

<https://www.usbreastfeeding.org/>

Women's Health.gov - Business Case for Breastfeeding

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-home-work-and-public/breastfeeding-and-going-back-work/business-case>

Women's Health.gov – Supporting Nursing Moms at Work: Employer Solutions

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/supporting-nursing-moms-work/resources>