



**OHIO
WORKPLACE
PLUS**

Providing Lactation
Upgrades and Support

**OUTREACH
GUIDE**



Outreach Guide

You Are a Community Leader

As a county stakeholder, your assistance is crucial to employers in your community. You promote and support breastfeeding, and know what new mothers need to reach their breastfeeding goals. You are aware of their barriers and concerns, and why it can be difficult to continue breastfeeding after they return to work. You also know your community. You know the available resources to help mothers overcome common concerns and where they can turn for help.

This makes you an invaluable resource to the businesses in your community!

Successful advocacy begins with understanding the businesses in your community and developing a working relationship with key decision-makers. You can share practical solutions that are doable within the business environment and company culture. You can explain what new mothers need. You can share ideas for ways to upgrade practices to provide optimal support within businesses. You can offer technical assistance and share resources.

STEPS TO OUTREACH

Plan Your Outreach

Employers prefer to learn about breastfeeding support through an in-person visit. This provides the opportunity to ask questions and explore options to address their unique needs.

Before reaching out to an employer, do your homework so you are prepared!

- Visit the company website to learn:
 - History and values of the company
 - Whether lactation accommodations and policies are already in place
 - Size of the company, and number of women of childbearing age, if available
 - Other family-friendly benefits provided by the company
 - Highlights of their annual report to understand priorities
 - Availability of employee health divisions (e.g., occupational health, wellness, etc.)
- Talk to current or past employees at the company, if possible. Learn about the company's priorities and benefits. Find out what a typical day is like for employees.
- Identify the best person to approach about lactation accommodations. This is usually the Human Resource department.



- Imagine common barriers breastfeeding employees experience in the work environment. What barriers might make it difficult for supervisors and management to provide accommodations?
- Consider possible solutions that might address barriers, including potential locations for milk expression space and ideas for providing coverage during milk expression breaks.
- Identify possible benefits to managers and supervisors for providing lactation accommodations in their Company.
- Collect information on breastfeeding initiation and duration rates in your county.
- Identify solutions that have worked in similar businesses in Ohio or elsewhere in the country.
- Prepare a list of local breastfeeding resources.
- Prepare brief key messages.

Who to Approach

There are a variety of departments or divisions within a company to approach about lactation support needs of employees. Do your homework before conducting outreach to find out the availability of employee health services and offer your organization as a resource.

Human Resources

Most successful outreach programs begin by targeting the human resources (HR) division. HR serves as the link between management and employees. Their role is to support employees and serve as a resource in their work experience. HR provides services and programs to develop employees, provide career growth, and foster a positive work environment. HR staff have a variety of responsibilities, including:

- Employee recruitment
- Screening, interviewing, and placing workers
- Employee onboarding and orientation
- Supervisor training
- Ongoing continuing education of employees and managers
- Employee relations (including employee complaints and navigating legal rights)
- Health and wellness
- Safety issues
- Administering employee benefits
- Understanding employment laws and regulations, such as the “Break Time for Nursing Mothers Act.”



How Lactation Fits:

Lactation support is a legal right of overtime-eligible workers. It is also proven to provide bottom-line benefits to companies *and* improve employee productivity and morale. HR staff are aware of legal requirements for workers and often can find many creative solutions to address barriers to compliance.

Many companies have implemented a “family-friendly” benefits platform to acknowledge the importance of considering the personal family needs of workers. Lactation support dovetails well with a company’s family-friendly priorities. Lactation support fits well within the scope of the HR department.

If breastfeeding employees feel their lactation needs are not respected or supported, they should bring their concerns to the HR department to find solutions with supervisors and managers. As a breastfeeding supporter in the community, you may hear first-hand from breastfeeding employees who are experiencing difficulties. You may be in a position to advocate for them directly with their employer.

Wellness Program

Many larger companies have a wellness division that focuses on creating a healthy environment for employees. The Wellness Department provides a variety of services that improve employee wellness. Some provide an on-site gym, exercise programs, health screenings, healthy vending and food services, or health fairs. They often promote campaigns to encourage physical activity, healthy weight, chronic disease prevention (such as diabetes and obesity), healthy eating, and other activities that improve the health of employees. Wellness programs focus on prevention. Services and activities that encourage employee health can lower employee stress, improve mental health and employee productivity, and lower healthcare costs.

How Lactation Fits:

Lactation support is a natural fit within a company’s wellness priorities. Specifically, lactation programs support the healthy behavior chosen by breastfeeding employees. A lactation support program supports the optimal health of both infants and their mothers. Further, it can prevent mastitis, an illness caused by infrequent pumping or breastfeeding. Supporting breastfeeding employees also enhances productivity and morale. The health and wellbeing of breastfeeding employees fits well within a worksite wellness program.



Occupational Health Staff

Many larger companies, such as manufacturing firms, provide an occupational health division. Often a healthcare provider and/or occupational health nurses staff the division. Medical staff give direct assistance to employees to prevent and manage illnesses and injuries. They are a valuable resource to promote healthy practices such as health screenings, nutrition programs, and fitness activities. Occupational staff are knowledgeable about laws related to workplace safety, including eligibility for the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) laws.

How Lactation Fits:

Occupational health staff focus on employee health, including reducing employee absenteeism and lowering healthcare costs. Some companies house the employee lactation support services under the occupational health umbrella. Breastfeeding support has a direct impact on employee absenteeism and healthcare costs. Approach staff to discuss the basic needs of breastfeeding employees. You can also provide information on local resources for breastfeeding support. Some companies partner with local breastfeeding coalitions or the department of health to train occupational health staff to be the onsite resource when questions arise about using a breast pump or maintaining milk production.

Employee Assistance Program

An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a voluntary program that offers free and confidential assessments and follow-up services to employees who have personal or work-related problems. The program addresses issues that can affect mental and emotional well-being of employees such as stress, substance abuse, grief, and family problems. EAPs address issues such as workplace violence, emergency response, and other programs that affect an employee's ability to cope with mental and emotional concerns.

How Lactation Fits:

In some companies, lactation support is housed within the Employee Assistance Program, or coordinated with EAP staff. Lactation accommodations contribute to lower stress by meeting employee needs for staying connected to their baby during the workday as well as preventing health concerns that can arise from not removing milk regularly.

Breastfeeding Mothers in the Company

Employees are often the ones to initiate lactation support in their company. When breastfeeding employees are willing to speak up about their needs, they can help bring about needed changes and policies to assure that other breastfeeding employees will also be supported.



Outreach Checklist

- Do your homework to learn all you can (see “Plan Your Outreach”).
- Contact the Human Resource division (or other division identified in your research) to set an in-person meeting.
- Ask for a 15-20-minute in-person meeting.
- Collect materials to share. Keep it simple! Options:
 - Ohio Workplace PLUS Employer Guide
 - Ohio Workplace PLUS Business Resources
 - Ohio Workplace PLUS TIP Sheet pertinent to the industry
 - Ohio Workplace PLUS Employee Guide
 - List of local breastfeeding resources
- Review key messages:
 - Brief health imperative of breastfeeding
 - Breastfeeding rates for your county
 - Legal requirements under the FLSA
 - Bottom-line benefits of lactation support to the company
 - Simple needs of breastfeeding employees
 - Solutions for support
 - Policy suggestions
 - Ways you/your organization can provide assistance
- Offer assistance. This might include offering to:
 - Take a tour of the facility to help identify appropriate milk expression areas
 - Review company lactation policies and offer suggestions
 - Teach a “back to work” class for pregnant and breastfeeding employees
 - Train supervisors on the importance of breastfeeding support
 - Troubleshoot options for space and time constraints
 - Other:
- Follow-up with a phone call or email to thank the business for meeting with you. Offer additional information discussed at the meeting.



Common Employer Barriers

- Lack of knowledge about Federal legislation
- Lack of awareness of bottom-line benefits
- Lack of knowledge about the needs of breastfeeding employees
- Lack of awareness of the number of women of childbearing age who breastfeed
- Lack of space for employees to express milk; may consider a bathroom suitable
- Lack of flexible scheduling options
- Limited options for coverage when employees leave their workstation to express milk
- Breastfeeding considered an uncomfortable or embarrassing topic
- Breastfeeding may be considered a “non-issue” if nobody has ever asked for accommodations (or the company is predominantly male)

Common Employer Motivators

- Positive public image
- Legal requirements
- Retaining valued employees after family leave
- Lower absenteeism rates
- Lower healthcare costs
- Knowing solutions have worked in similar industries
- Recruitment advantage

Engage Business Organizations

An effective outreach strategy is to engage local business leaders and organizations. A variety of business groups may be available in your community, such as:

- **Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)** local chapters. A total of 25 SHRM chapters are available throughout Ohio. Each chapter usually has a monthly meeting with an educational presentation. SHRM chapters provide networking opportunities for HR staff, updates on Federal and state policies related to HR issues, and professional development opportunities. Learn more at the Ohio SHRM website at <https://www.ohioshrm.org/chapters/chapter-finder.cfm>.
- **Ohio Chamber of Commerce** provides opportunities for networking and updates regarding legislation, policies, and issues affecting the business community. The Ohio Chamber of Commerce, with chapters throughout the state, provides educational webinars, email alerts, lunch-and-learn events, newsletters, and other resources. Learn more at the Ohio Chamber of Commerce website at <https://ohiochamber.com/>.



OHIO WORKPLACE PLUS

Providing Lactation Upgrades and Support

- **Rotary Club** is an international service organization that brings together business and professional leaders to address humanitarian service and promote goodwill in communities. Rotary International has listed breastfeeding support as part of its health emphasis. Visit the directory of Ohio chapters at <https://rotarydistrict6630.org/clubdirectory>.
- **Young Professionals Clubs/Chapters** are membership organizations that serves as a hub for social & business networking, recreational sports, workforce development, and giving back within a community. A quick internet search will uncover local chapters and clubs in Ohio.
- **Healthcare Businesswomen’s Association** is an organization focused on the advancement and impact of women in the business of health care. They have chapters in Cincinnati and Columbus. Details at <https://www.hbanet.org/hba-ohio>.
- **American Business Women’s Association** brings together women in business of diverse occupations and provides opportunities to help them grow personally and professionally. Dayton chapter details at <https://www.facebook.com/GemCityABWA/>.

Options for engaging with organizations:

- Become a member of the chapter, if possible. That will help you find out more about the organization and ways lactation support resources can be communicated.
- Ask for a phone meeting with the chapter coordinator to discuss your organization and the resources you can make available to members.
- Offer to make a presentation about lactation support in the workplace at a monthly chapter meeting. You can personalize the presentation, “Supporting Ohio Nursing Moms at Work” by adding local resources and contacts.
- Offer to provide a webcast as part of the chapter’s ongoing educational efforts.
- Offer to write a short article for a chapter newsletter or online news alert. Provide information about the new Ohio Workplace PLUS toolkit and local resources.

When providing group presentations:

1. Know your audience. Are they HR professionals, employees, or business owners? Tailor your remarks to address their world.
2. Practice your presentation to be sure that you will keep within the allotted time frame. If necessary, delete content that is less important so you can focus on the most important points.



OHIO WORKPLACE PLUS

Providing Lactation Upgrades and Support

3. Bring simple handouts for attendees. Suggestions:
 - Ohio Workplace PLUS “Tip Sheets” for pertinent industries
 - DOL Fact Sheet #73: “Break Time for Nursing Mothers under the FLSA” - available at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/73-flsa-break-time-nursing-mothers>
 - Ohio Workplace PLUS “Business Resources” listing local resources
 - Your business cards
4. Always send a follow-up thank-you to your contact at the organization.
5. Offer to provide a full Ohio Workplace PLUS toolkit for the chapter coordinator.
6. Provide quarterly follow-up emails to check in and let the chapter know you are available for free technical assistance as needed.



Sample Introductory Email Language for HR Outreach

Dear _____,

My name is _____, and I am writing on behalf of _____
Your Name *Organization Name*

Our county is part of a statewide initiative in Ohio to assist employers with providing or improving lactation accommodations for breastfeeding employees. As you are no doubt already aware, Section 7 of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 requires that breastfeeding employees receive both:

1. Reasonable time to express milk during the work period
2. Private space that is not a bathroom to express milk

The Ohio Department of Health has funded development of free practical resources specific to Ohio businesses, called **Ohio Workplace PLUS** (*Providing Lactation Upgrades and Support*). These resources are designed for companies who are beginning to consider lactation accommodations, as well as companies that want to upgrade their support services.

Studies have shown that businesses providing lactation accommodations can enjoy a **3 to 1 return on investment** and bottom-line benefits of lower healthcare costs, lower absenteeism rates, lower turnover rates, and improved employee productivity and loyalty.

The Ohio Workplace PLUS toolkit will give you the *how*. It includes:

- Employer Guide – a focus on solutions for support in a variety of businesses, and examples of Ohio businesses who have made it work.
- Industry-specific “TIPS” – solutions specific to a variety of major industries in Ohio, including manufacturing, health care, retail, restaurants, and education.
- Business Resources – including a sample policy, practical implementation checklist, and Ohio and Federal resources with answers to common questions.
- Employee Guide – for breastfeeding women, with step-by-step suggestions to consider during pregnancy and family leave and after return to work.

Please let me know a convenient time for us to discuss your company’s lactation support. About 10-15 minutes would be enough time to for me to learn about the support you provide your breastfeeding employees and to share the new Ohio toolkit with you. I can help answer any questions you might have and offer technical assistance free of charge.



Sample Letter from Healthcare Provider to Employer

[Adapted with permission from the Texas Mother-Friendly Worksite Program and the HHS *Business Case for Breastfeeding*]

Dear Employer:

I am writing on behalf of _____ and _____.
Mother's Name *Baby's Name*

This mother will soon be returning to work at your facility following her childbirth leave. As the mother's and baby's healthcare provider, I have strongly advised her to continue providing breastmilk to her baby after she returns to work.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that mothers give their babies nothing but breastmilk for the first 6 months of life and to continue giving breastmilk for at least 1 year or longer. The evidence overwhelmingly shows that the powerful boost to an infant's immune system through breastfeeding helps lower the baby's risk of many common childhood infections and diseases. This is especially important for working mothers whose infants are in childcare centers, where babies are at greater risk for illness. Research also shows that the longer a woman breastfeeds, the more she reduces her own risk of diseases such as breast and ovarian cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.

When you support your employee's decision to continue breastfeeding, you ensure a more loyal and productive employee, happy in the knowledge she can contribute to her child's health even when she is at work. Studies show breastfeeding women who receive basic accommodations at work are less likely to be absent from work because both she and her baby are healthier. Support also results in lower employee turnover and lower healthcare costs.

There are several key ways you can support her:

- Let her know you are proud of her for making the decision to breastfeed.
- Give her a safe, clean area where she can express milk in privacy per the legal requirements under the FLSA.
- Encourage supervisors to work with her so she can use her usual breaks and lunch period to express milk.

If you have any questions, please contact our office. We can put you in touch with local resources for more information on supporting breastfeeding employees.

Sincerely,

Healthcare Provider

Date