



Inquiry into Breastfeeding

"How the Commonwealth government can take a lead role to improve the health of the Australian population through support for breastfeeding."

Submission

by Trish Makarian

This submission addresses terms of reference "d"; initiatives to encourage breastfeeding. In particular, my recommendation is centred on what the community (specifically employers) can do to encourage breastfeeding.

Recommendation

For the Commonwealth Government to do all things necessary to encourage private and public business to assist employed women with children and adopt breastfeeding support programs in the workplace.

Health Benefits

There is no doubt in anyone's mind regarding the health benefits for breastfed babies and their mothers.

We know that breastfed babies:

- Benefit medically from the protective antibodies of breast milk
- Have less ear infections
- Less likely to be obese as children and adults
- Have a reduced incidence of allergies
- Have a reduced incidence of gastrointestinal problems
- May have higher IQs

For the mother it means:

- Increased bonding between Mum and Baby
- Encourages body shape to return to normal faster
- Decrease in incidence of some cancers
- No concerns regarding sterilisation of feeding equipment
- Convenience: Food is there on demand
- Financial benefits when infant formula does not have to be purchased

What can a business do to adopt a Workplace Lactation program?

Taken from the paper "Workplace breastfeeding Support" by the United States Breastfeeding Committee, the table below outlines suggested components of workplace breastfeeding support.

Adequate	Expanded	Comprehensive
Facilities		
<p>A clean, private, comfortable multipurpose space (that is not a bathroom) with an electrical outlet in order to pump milk or to breastfeed.</p> <p>Employee provides her own breast pump.</p> <p>Table and comfortable chair.</p> <p>Sink, soap, water, and paper towels. If these are very far from BMBR, extra time is allowed for cleaning hands and equipment.</p> <p>Employee supplies cold packs for storage of milk.</p>	<p>A Breastfeeding Mothers' Break Room (BMBR) for use only by breastfeeding women.</p> <p>Employer provides one multi-user electric breast pump, and employees provide their own collection kits.</p> <p>Improved aesthetics to promote relaxation.</p> <p>Items listed in "Adequate" column are available near the BMBR.</p> <p>Employer makes available refrigerator space designated for food near BMBR.</p>	<p>A Breastfeeding Mothers' Break Room (or rooms) close to women's worksites.</p> <p>Employer provides collection kits. Additional multi-user electric pumps are provided if needed.</p> <p>Room large enough to accommodate several users comfortably.</p> <p>Items listed in "Adequate" column are available in the BMBR.</p> <p>Employer provides a small refrigerator in the BMBR for storage of human milk.</p>
Written Company Policy		
<p>Employer grants a 6-week unpaid maternity leave.</p> <p>Employer allows creative use of accrued vacation days, personal time, sick days, and holiday pay after childbirth.</p> <p>Employer allows two breaks and a lunch period during an 8-hour work day for expressing milk or breastfeeding the child.</p>	<p>Employer grants 12-week unpaid maternity leave (FMLA).</p> <p>In addition, employer allows part-time work, job sharing, individualized scheduling of work hours, compressed work week, or telecommuting.</p> <p>Employer allows expanded unpaid breaks during the workday for expressing milk or breastfeeding the child.</p>	<p>Employer offers a 6- to 14-week paid maternity leave (ILO).</p> <p>In addition, mother can bring child to work, caregiver can bring child to workplace, or on-site day care is available.</p> <p>Nursing breaks are paid and are counted as working time.</p>
Workplace Education		
<p>Company breastfeeding support policy is communicated to all pregnant employees.</p> <p>Employer provides a list of community resources for breastfeeding support.</p>	<p>New employees, supervisors, and co-workers all receive training on the breastfeeding support policy.</p> <p>Employer contracts with skilled lactation care provider on an "as needed" basis.</p>	<p>Breastfeeding education is offered to the partners of employees who are expectant fathers.</p> <p>Employer hires a skilled lactation care provider to coordinate a breastfeeding support program.</p>

Benefits to the Company

- Healthier babies equates to less absenteeism of staff
- Increased productivity of staff knowing they are supported
- Increased employee satisfaction
- Employees may return to work earlier knowing they do not have to give up breastfeeding
- Increased retention rate of staff
- Increased loyalty and morale of staff
- Improved ability to attract and retain quality staff
- Improved image and reputation in the community

What can the Commonwealth Government do to help organisations achieve breastfeeding awareness for employees?

Implement legislation and policies promoting workplace support for breastfeeding women through:

- Protective laws concerning discrimination of breastfeeding mothers
- Supporting adequate paid maternity leave, encouraging the private sector to match the benefits by the public sector
- Tax incentives to companies who accommodate the needs of breastfeeding employees
- Establish or design workplace lactation programs
- Financial assistance, grant or subsidy to companies wanting to improve or instigate breastfeeding support for their staff
- Public recognition and praise of companies implementing a breastfeeding policy
- Research and replication of existing legislation within the international community

Case studies (within and outside Australia)

Suncorp, Queensland - Where possible, Suncorp provides employees with access to the use of breastfeeding, parent or First Aid rooms, or another private area for the purpose of breastfeeding and/or expressing milk. Where it is not possible for such facilities to be provided, time away from the workplace can be negotiated with leaders for employees to access a private space to breastfeed or to express milk.

CIGNA Corp., Philadelphia – Instigated the Working Well Moms program that encourages women to breastfeed for as long as they can. Lactation rooms are available at 250 CIGNA sites across the country. CIGNA spends about \$80,000 a year providing lactation rooms and pumps for women across the country and spends about \$200 for each employee that takes part in the Working Well Moms program.

Arthur Andersen, Illinois - Has a nurse available at some sites to handle breastfeeding problems and the company has a hotline for nursing mothers to get support or advice. The company provides lactation rooms at most of its offices and supplies pumps in many of them.

Johnson & Johnson, New Jersey - Has lactation rooms and an on-site day care centre at its headquarters. Johnson & Johnson has a company-wide breastfeeding program with lactation rooms at most of its sites across the country and access to lactation consultants.

Genentech, California - Offers employees help getting day care and also operates a 250-child day care centre near the headquarters office. The company also has lactation rooms and its insurance plan has special services for pregnant women and new mothers.

United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC) - The mission of the USBC is to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding in the United States. The USBC exists to ensure the rightful place of breastfeeding in society. The USBC works to achieve the following goals:

1. Ensure access to comprehensive, current, and culturally appropriate lactation care and services for all women, children, and families.
2. Ensure that breastfeeding is recognized as the normal and preferred method of feeding infants and young children.
3. Ensure that all federal, state, and local laws relating to child welfare and family law recognize and support the importance and practice of breastfeeding.
4. Increase protection, promotion, and support for breastfeeding mothers in the work force.

Related links and resources

Guide to Combining Breastfeeding and Work
www.workplace.gov.au

Australian Breastfeeding Association
www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency
www.eowa.gov.au

ACCI/BCA National Work & Family Awards
www.workplace.gov.au

Bibliography and references

United States Breastfeeding Committee. *Workplace Breastfeeding Support* [issue paper]. Raleigh, NC: United States Breastfeeding Committee; 2002

Breastfeeding.com. *Corporate Efforts: What some companies are doing to accommodate nursing moms* by Robina Riccitiello www.breastfeeding.com

Breastfeeding.com. *Starting a Lactation Program* by Amy Carey
www.breastfeeding.com

Suncorp Parental Leave and Return to Work Policy, Human Resources March 2005

Signed: Trish Makarian
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