



Australian Government
Department of Human Services

Returning to work from parental leave

The Department of Human Services is committed to workplace diversity and inclusion. A key principle of the department's Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2011-15 is making sure that all of our staff are treated fairly and with respect. This includes supporting staff when they return to work from parental leave.

Returning to work

Usually a staff member returning from parental leave (maternity, supporting partner, adoption/foster care and parental leave) will return to the position they had before they went on leave. If that position no longer exists the staff member will return to a suitable position at the same classification and pay. Parents returning to work after taking parental leave can access part time arrangements until the child's third birthday. More information on returning to work from parental leave is available in the [Department of Human Services Enterprise agreement 2011-14^{\[1\]}](#) [PDF, 1.1MB].

Paid lactation breaks

Our agreement provides for staff members to access up to 10% of their working time for breastfeeding or expressing milk.

The manager and staff need to agree when the breastfeeding breaks will occur.

Lactation breaks should be recorded as 'miscellaneous leave with pay – general' in ESSentials.

More details on which leave codes to use when applying for leave are available in the [Leave and Attendance guidelines^{\[2\]}](#).

Facilities for breastfeeding

If there is a carer's room available, it can be used for breastfeeding or expressing milk. Detailed information on the booking and use of Carers Rooms is available on [Room facilities for carers^{\[3\]}](#).

Room facilities for carers

A first aid /sick room may also be used in liaison with the site First Aid Officer.

In the absence of a carers or first aid/sick room another suitable space must be made available.

This space must, at a minimum:

- be clean, hygienic and private, to allow the staff to breastfeed or express milk without interruption

- contain a table, chair and power point

Ideally, a private fridge for storing expressed milk would be available. If a general staff fridge is used the milk must be appropriately labelled. A portable fridge may also be a good option.

Please note; A toilet is not a suitable facility for breastfeeding or expressing milk.

Manager and staff responsibilities

To facilitate the staff's return from parental leave the manager needs to initiate a discussion before they return to work. The manager and staff need to agree on the staff member's duties, hours of work, when lactation breaks will be taken and what facilities will be made available for breastfeeding or expressing milk.

The agreed arrangement should be confirmed in writing by the manager, generally by email. The staff member must record lactation breaks as they are taken.

Telephone breastfeeding advice

The [Australian Breastfeeding Association](#)^[4] (ABA) provides the [National Breastfeeding Helpline](#)^[5] 1800 686 268. The Helpline is available 7 days a week and is staffed by trained, volunteer counsellors. The Breastfeeding Helpline is also available via the National Relay Service (NRS) on 133 677.

Information on breastfeeding and storage of milk is available on the [ABA website](#)^[4].

Business Owner
Ethics, Values and Diversity
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Hyperlink reference

1. <http://hsi.csda.gov.au/hsi/intranet/hr/payconditions/agreement/files/dhs-final-agreement.pdf>
2. http://hsi.csda.gov.au/wps/portal/dhs_hspi/intranet/about/policies/people/leave-and-attendance-policy.htm
3. http://hsi.csda.gov.au/wps/portal/dhs_hspi/intranet/hr/workplace-diversity/carers-room.htm
4. <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bf-info/breastfeeding-and-work/can-you-return-work-and-still-breastfeed>
5. <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/breastfeeding-helpline>



Australian Government
Department of Human Services

Room facilities for carers

Our commitment

Our Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2011-15^[1] recognises staff may have caring responsibilities including for children and elder relatives. We provide carers rooms at many locations to support staff to balance caring responsibilities with their working lives.

Considerations, roles and responsibilities

We encourage and support the use of carers rooms for short periods for staff to care for members of their immediate family, household and other people for whom they have caring responsibilities.

Usage

Use is normally limited to 3 consecutive days. If a sick room is unavailable, the room may be used for a staff member who is feeling temporarily unwell, or requires basic first aid.

Only 1 carer and their dependent may use the room at any time. Use will be granted to the first staff member to book the room. If 2 staff want to use the room at the same time it may be possible to negotiate a compromise.

Breastfeeding

Staff who choose to breastfeed and express milk during working hours can gain access to the carers room at any time. A screen may provide privacy.

Contagious illness

A person with a contagious illness may not use the carers room—carers room coordinators may request a doctor's certificate if they have reason to believe a person's illness may be contagious.

The National Health and Medical Research Council has information relating to infectious diseases^[2], including recommended minimum periods of exclusion^[3] from school, pre-school and child care centres.

Manager Responsibilities

All staff should be made aware if there is a carers room available for use at their worksite. Managers should discuss the need to use the room with staff to ensure this is the most appropriate option—other options may include temporary home-based work or personal/carer's leave.

Carers Room Management

Local sites are responsible for the management of carers rooms at their site. Staff who wish to use the room should sign the carers room disclaimer form—completed forms will be stored appropriately by those responsible for managing the room. The [Welcome to the Carers Room^{\[4\]}](#) [PDF, 95kB], [Welcome to the Carers Room^{\[5\]}](#) [DOCX, 159kB] form should be printed out and displayed in the Carers Room.

Carers' Responsibilities

Carers must supervise children under 12 years old at all times, and ensure children over the age of 12 are not left unattended for more than 30 minutes. Noise levels should be kept down so there is no disturbance to other staff. Carers should provide toys, DVDs and other requirements for their dependent/s and leave the room locked, clean and tidy, with the computer and any other equipment turned off. Normal security requirements apply to the use of computers and sensitive information.

Workplace Health and Safety

Before a carers room is used for the first time, a safety inspection must be conducted and documented. Electrical equipment should be protected by a residual current device (RCD) where practicable. Where fixed RCDs are not installed, portable RCDs must be used with any electrical equipment installed in the room. First aid and emergency contact information should be displayed in carers rooms. Carers rooms should be not too close to customer service areas.

Bookings

To make a carers room booking:

- obtain verbal approval from your manager
- obtain approval and any relevant instructions from the room manager
- sign the [carers room disclaimer form^{\[6\]}](#) to ensure you are aware of your responsibilities and terms of use of the room

Facilities

Carers rooms will usually be located close to the toilet and kitchen and may provide the following facilities:

1. TV and VCR / DVD Player on a cabinet
2. Cupboard / first aid storage
3. First aid kit (which should be locked when a child is present)
4. Adjustable office chair
5. Adjustable workstation
6. TV aerial point connected to Master Antenna Television System (MATV) or exterior aerial
7. Telephone
8. Computer
9. Armchair / recliner that folds out to a single bed
10. Baby change table
11. Screen to provide privacy for breastfeeding or expressing milk
12. Fridge

The department will not be responsible for any loss, damage or theft of private property.

More information

For more information on how we support carers, please visit the [Recognising and supporting carers in the workplace](#)^[7] intranet page, contact the [People Advisory Centre](#)^[8] or email [diversity](mailto:diversity@humanservices.gov.au)^[9].

Business Owner

Ethics, Values and Diversity Team

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1. http://hsi.csda.gov.au/wps/portal/dhs_hspi/intranet/hr/workplace-diversity/div-incl-strat-2011-2015.htm
2. http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/ch55_staying_healthy_5th_edition_updated_130701_0.pdf
3. <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ch55>
4. <http://hsi.csda.gov.au/hsi/intranet/hr/workplace-diversity/files/welcome-to-the-carers-room-information.pdf>
5. <http://hsi.csda.gov.au/hsi/intranet/hr/workplace-diversity/files/welcome-to-the-carers-room.docx>
6. http://hsi.csda.gov.au/wps/portal/dhs_hspi/intranet/standards/forms/dhs-forms/pp/pp024.htm
7. http://hsi.csda.gov.au/wps/portal/dhs_hspi/intranet/hr/workplace-diversity/supporting-carers.htm
8. http://hsi.csda.gov.au/wps/portal/dhs_hspi/intranet/hr/payconditions/pac.htm
9. Email Address: diversity@humanservices.gov.au

