

# Creating a Lactation Space for your Workforce



As stated by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), “Working moms have hit a ‘maternal wall’ which is the motherhood equivalent of the glass ceiling that all women face.” And sadly, breastfeeding is one of the major contributors to women leaving the workforce.

A recent study found that half of all pregnant women said they’d consider leaving their workplace for a job that better accommodates breastfeeding mothers<sup>1</sup>. The good news is that we know support like paid parental leave and enabling breastfeeding infrastructure makes a tremendous difference in retaining women in the workforce. Companies with lactation support programs have a retention rate for employees after maternity leave of 94%, compared to national average of just 57%<sup>2</sup>.

## What can you do to support breastfeeding and baby feeding for moms returning to work after having a baby?

First, it is required by law to create a lactation room that is not a bathroom stall or closet. Employers covered under Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) must provide a private space for lactation that is not a bathroom<sup>3</sup>. “Private” means that other people cannot see an employee while she is pumping breastmilk. Often this means putting a lock on the door, but some companies use mobile screens or tall cubicle areas. The space does not have to be a permanent, dedicated lactation room.

### The recommended setup for lactation room/space includes:

- ✓ Comfortable chairs and bench/desk at the appropriate height
- ✓ Door that locks
- ✓ A flat surface for pumping equipment
- ✓ Sink with drying rack and dish soap so parent does not need to carry this in every day
- ✓ Refrigerator
- ✓ Cubbies to store items
- ✓ Electrical outlet for plugging in a breast pump near each station
- ✓ “Occupied” sign for the door
- ✓ Wastebasket, cleaner for surfaces, cleaner for hands, routine daily maintenance
- ✓ Good lighting and ventilation



### At a minimum, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, employers must provide a space that is<sup>4</sup>:

- ✓ Functional for expressing milk (at a minimum, has a chair and a flat surface for pumping equipment)
- ✓ Shielded from view
- ✓ Free from intrusion by the public and coworkers
- ✓ Available whenever a mother needs to pump or express milk
- ✓ Not a bathroom

## What else can I do to support moms returning to work?



Along with providing a private space for baby feeding, you can train managers to encourage moms to:

- Make a plan that works for them
- Test out their plan before returning to work because the first day matters
- Block off time on their calendars for pumping
- Set management & co-worker expectations
- Find a near peer or community at work
- Provide access to lactation and telelactation support through services like SimpliFed to help navigate the transition back to work

## What if your business is small?



Even businesses with very little space can support a mother's breastfeeding goals and comply with federal regulations under FLSA. A functional space is usually large enough for a chair and a flat surface for the mother's breast pump. Flexible and temporary options, such as allowing the employee to use a manager's office or screening off a small area, often work well. Some companies even partner with neighboring businesses to share lactation space for nursing moms.

## In case you missed it: the PUMP Act is Federal Law

Last year, the [Providing Urgent Maternal Protections for Nursing Mothers Act](#) (i.e. PUMP Act) was passed in Congress that expands workplace protections for employees with a need to express breastmilk and requires that employers provide accommodations for salaried employees and other types of workers not covered under existing law.



### What does the law include?

- Time spent expressing breastmilk must be considered hours worked if the employee is also working and the bill also extends these accommodations from one to two years.
- It provides clarity on pumping time and states that employers must provide a place, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public, which may be used by an employee to express breast milk
- The language in this bill is important because it recognizes that expressing breast milk is considered a "physiological need," which has largely been missing from the conversation to-date

## About SimpliFed

SimpliFed provides virtual breastfeeding and baby feeding support fully covered by health plans from pregnancy to weaning at no cost to your organization or your employees. We have national commercial, Medicaid, and TRICARE contracts to allow your employees to get access to support for free and no buy-up is required for your organization.

If you are interested in learning more or getting access to resources to share with your employees, you can email [contactus@simplified.us](mailto:contactus@simplified.us) and we will setup a time to chat.

### References

1. Aerflow 2018 Study "BREASTFEEDING AND PUMPING IN THE WORKPLACE - A SCORECARD"
2. Ortiz, J., McGilligan, K., & Kelly, P. (2004). [Duration of breast milk expression among working mothers enrolled in an employer-sponsored lactation program](#). *Pediatric Nursing*, 30(2), 111-119.
3. <https://www.womenshealth.gov/supporting-nursing-moms-work/what-law-says-about-breastfeeding-and-work/what-employers-need-know>
4. U.S. Department of Labor. (n.d.). [Frequently Asked Questions – Break Time for Nursing Mothers](#).