NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Current Trends in Breast Feeding Promotion in Businesses

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University Honors Program

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With University (Upper Division) Honors

Department of Human and Family Resources

by

Linda K. Eugene

DeKalb, Illinois

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Approved by: Janine King

Department of: Human & Family Resources

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................. 1

Methodology
   Sample............................................................... 3
   Informed Consent.................................................. 3
   Procedures.......................................................... 3
   Plan for data analysis.............................................. 4

Introduction ............................................................ 5

Why Breast Feed.......................................................... 6

Advantages of Breast Feeding........................................... 6

Facts About Breast Feeding............................................. 9

What Pediatricians Recommend........................................ 10

Breast Feeding at Work?.................................................. 11

Company response sheets.............................................. 13

Breast Feeding and Employment...................................... 23

Employers Attitudes Toward Breast Feeding......................... 23

Current Services Provided............................................. 24

Will Changes Be Made in the Future?................................. 26

Conclusions from Surveys.............................................. 28

Promotion Strategies.................................................... 29

Conclusions............................................................... 31

Appendices
Mothers who breast feed their children face a difficult decision when the time comes to return to work. Unfortunately, many women cease breast feeding and turn to bottle feeding as an alternative because their employer is unable or unwilling to compromise with them to allow breast feeding to continue. The attitude of businesses, which is predominantly negative against breast feeding in the workplace, is unfortunate due to the many positive effects breast feeding provides to mother and child. The purpose of this study is to find out exactly what businesses are or are not doing for their female employees regarding pregnancy and breast feeding. Some of the issues addressed are the following: on-site day care; adequate refrigeration for milk storage; comfortable lounge areas for breast feeding or breast pumping; flexible hours; and extended breaks and days off. In addition, how businesses can implement breast feeding in the workplace and what materials would be helpful to managers to do so will be discussed. The data supplied to answer these questions and to make a justifiable analysis of current business trends regarding breast feeding came from a survey of large businesses in the DeKalb County area. This analysis, therefore, is limited to current business attitudes of the DeKalb County area only. The research methods for completing this report included sending an eleven question survey to 35 DeKalb County businesses with the option to participate in a survey project regarding company policies for pregnancy, maternity leave and
breast feeding. Only ten of the thirty-five companies participated in the study. Of the responding companies, some currently do work with female employees so that they may continue breast feeding at work. Of the businesses in support of breast feeding at work, most supply adequate storage for milk, flexible time schedules and private lounge areas. None of the companies have on-site day care facilities which means that the mother must be allowed to leave work more often or that the baby is brought to her at different times during the day. Some mothers only desire to pump at work so that their child will still be able to be fed breast milk despite the mother's work schedule. Of the companies against breast feeding or pumping at work, the main reason was due to impracticality or inadequate facilities. However, some businesses are willing to change in the future to better meet the needs of their female employees on this issue if given appropriate literature on ways to incorporate breast feeding in the workplace. Due to the necessity of dual incomes in today's society, businesses supporting in-office breast feeding could tremendously help today's working mother. This is a new issue that is increasingly becoming a concern to mothers and employers.
METHODOLOGY

This study is a detailed analysis of current trends regarding breast feeding promotion in businesses. The questionnaire distributed (see Appendix A) consisted of eleven questions. A mixture of open ended and limited answer questions were utilized to obtain responses from employers about their company's attitudes about breast feeding in the office.

Sample

The sample surveyed consisted of 35 companies in the DeKalb County area. The particular companies chosen were selected because they employ over 100 people. A large company size was desired to complete the survey to ensure an adequate number of women would be employed at this facility.

Informed Consent

A cover letter (see appendix B) stating the goals and objectives of this research assignment accompanied the survey along with the option of the company to participate or to not participate in the study. The cover letter clearly emphasized that each company name would remain anonymous as well as the company's responses to each question. Also, the letter clearly stated the data was to be used for research purposes only and would be used for no other purpose. Informed consent was inferred from the return of the questionnaire.

Procedures

The cover letter, questionnaire and postage-paid return address envelope was sent out to the selected businesses on March
15, 1992. The deadline for returning questionnaires was April 1. Each survey and each company was coded with a number, one through thirty-five, for easy tracing of the returned surveys. When a survey was returned, its number was simply matched to the corresponding company.

Plan for data analysis

The data received will not be statistically analyzed nor will quantitative analysis be preformed. The data will be used only to report current business attitudes toward breast feeding and to find out what business currently provide to its female employees in regards to this issue.
INTRODUCTION

With today's family relying on two incomes, the importance of women returning to work after the birth of child is essential. For women who choose to breast feed a child, returning to work can be a problem. As a result, many women may only breast feed for the six-week maternity leave and switch to bottle feeding when they return to work. Having to terminate breast feeding due to returning to work is unfortunate due to the many beneficial effects breast feeding has on mother and baby.

The first part of this report will focus on the desirable effects breast feeding provides. Psychological, physiologically and social issues will be addressed. Secondly, a discussion of what businesses do today for breast feeding female employees and the data collected from the surveyed companies will be provided. Lastly, this report will focus on the future of this issue. For example, how can companies learn to incorporate breast feeding in the workplace without disrupting normal operating procedures and what impact will these changes have on mothers and employers.
WHY BREAST FEED?

Before discussing what businesses do today to support breast feeding mothers, it is important to discuss the reasons why breast feeding should be promoted in general terms.

Breast feeding is a way of providing ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants. Ideally, only breast milk should be given to infants for the first 4-6 months of life (1). The first milk, colostrum, is of particular nutritional and health value to infants because of its high protein content and fat-soluble vitamins. Breast milk has a unique biological and emotional influence on the health of both a mother and her child (1). Also, the anti-infective properties of breast milk help to protect infants against some diseases. It is the infant's first immunization.

ADVANTAGES OF BREAST FEEDING

Lactation is natural process and thus it is no surprise that a number of advantages are present for mothers and infants.

Immunity. First of all, breast milk has anti-infective properties. This helps infants develop immunity to certain diseases which decrease infant morbidity in the early months of life.

Optimal Nutrition. Secondly, breast milk is optimal infant food. Researchers suggest that breast milk frees infants from diseases produced from formula feedings (2). For example, new mothers may incorrectly mix formulas in correct proportions and
improperly sanitize infant feeding devices. Both of these may promote complications for bottle fed babies. A number of factors are contained in breast milk whose functions are unclear (2). The beneficial factors of these nutrients are only apparent when infants are discontinued from infant formulas. Breast milk also has a fat composition and protein content ideally suited to the development of babies (2).

Optimal growth pattern. Studies have shown that breastfed infants follow a pattern of growth that is desirable for optimal growth in babies (2). Although bottle-fed and breastfed infants follow a similar growth pattern until about the fourth month of life, after this time bottle-fed babies gain weight at a much faster rate than do breastfed infants. Many pediatric specialists feel that the slower rate of growth is better (2).

Reduced risk of allergy. Formula feeding has been associated with increased susceptibility to food allergies (2). This is possibly linked to the "foreign" antigens in commercial formula products, differences in intestinal shape or form with different food sources, a protective action of breast milk or a combination of these (2). Some studies have shown that antibodies directed toward milk components have been found in breast milk, and these may be involved in the prevention of allergies by hindering the absorption of these food proteins.

Maternal benefits. Mothers who have breastfed their babies have reported a special closeness with their child. Breast feeding can promote strong emotional ties while meeting the
infant's needs ideally. Mothers also state that the effects from breast feeding, such as developing a special relationship with their child, continue well after breast feeding is terminated.

Cost. Although cost is not a major reason to promote breast feeding it does deserve some consideration. For some women it may be a very relevant factor, especially single mothers. Ready-to-feed formulas require purchasing milk, nipples, bottles and plastic bags. A single mother could possible be on Welfare and would benefit from saving money by breast feeding.

The previous pages have discussed some of the major benefits of breast feeding. It is clear to see that breast feeding does not benefit the baby only, it benefits the mother too. Other benefits of breast feeding include the following: faster return to pre-pregnancy weight for the mother, psychological benefits and economic advantages. The following table presents a few additional advantages of breast feeding.

PROPOSED ADVANTAGES OF BREAST FEEDING

1. Breast milk is nutritionally superior to any alternative.
2. Breast milk is bacteriologically safe and always fresh.
3. Breast milk contains a variety of anti-infectious factors and immune cells.
4. Breast milk is the least allergenic of any infant food.
5. Breastfed babies are less likely to be overfed.
6. Breast feeding promotes good jaw and tooth development.
7. Breast feeding generally costs less than the commercial infant formulas.
8. Breast feeding is more convenient once the process is established.
FACTS ABOUT BREAST FEEDING

As previously discussed, breast feeding has numerous beneficial effects. The general public is probably unaware of the many positive outcomes associated with breast feeding.

1. **Breast feeding protects babies from illness.**

   Breast feeding has a protein which represents a stimulatory effect on the GI development.

   Breast feeding seems to protect against wheezing respiratory tract illnesses during the first four months of life.

   Human milk contains components capable of inhibiting intestinal bacteria.

2. **Breast milk provides all the nutrition babies need.**

   The protein in breast milk is optimal for the young infant's digestive tract. The protein is of a perfect consistency that is easy for the baby to digest. Formula fed babies tend to develop digestion problems and colic to the difficulty of digesting some cow's milk formulas.

3. **Breast feeding provides a safety cushion for the poor.**

   Increased time and frequency of breast feeding considerably reduces the cost of health for poverty stricken families.

4. **Breast feeding has health benefits for the mother.**

   Protective effects have been found for women who breast feed. For example, decreased risk of ovarian cancer.
WHAT PEDIATRICIANS RECOMMEND

Currently, pediatricians strongly endorse breast feeding. Approximately 10 years ago the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a statement endorsing breast feeding as the optimal method of feeding infants:

"Breast feeding is strongly recommended for full-term infants, except in the few instances where specific contraindications exist. Ideally, breast milk should be practically the only source of nutrients for the first four to six months of infant life."

In the past few years, the AAP has outlined several responsibilities of the pediatric community with respect to the promotion of breast feeding. For example, pediatricians are expected to be knowledgeable about breast feeding and to provide appropriate staff and environments which will encourage nursing. The AAP also recommends that women who return to work should breast feed as long as possible. Although, doctors usually promote breast feeding to their patients there are other issues involved that may discourage doctors from consistently making this recommendation. For example, formula feeding companies rely on the medical profession to promote their products. Doctors may receive a profit from these companies if they promote commercial formulas over breast feeding. However, these issues are not within the scope of this report.
**BREAST FEEDING AT WORK?**

Now that the benefits of breast feeding have been clearly defined, it is easy to understand why breast feeding should continue as long as a mother is able to produce milk. For these reasons, it is important that today's businesses work with their female employees who wish to return to work while they are breast feeding a child. Although not all businesses are equipped with adequate facilities for women to have their child on the premise, other arrangements can be made so a woman does not have to discontinue breast feeding. For example, as long as refrigeration is available at the office and a lounge is available, a female employee would have adequate privacy to pump her milk into bottles and store it for later use. In addition, if companies offer flexible schedules to new mothers, breast feeding can continue if the mother is allowed to take frequent and/or extended breaks.

**EMPLOYERS AND CHILDREN RELY ON WORKING MOTHERS**

An employer relies on a female employee to come to work on time each and to perform her job to the best of her ability. A breastfed baby relies on his/her mother for a continuous supply of milk. Due to an increased emphasis on the nutritional and economical benefits of breast feeding, more and more women are choosing to do so even though they may have a full-time job.

The previous paragraphs touched upon some of the issues regarding breast feeding in the workplace. However, what exactly
are businesses doing for their female employees? Do employers promote breast feeding at work? Do employers compromise with women so they do not have to switch to formula feeding? These questions and some other issues were presented to 35 companies in the DeKalb County area to learn about how employers feel about this issue and if it is a present concern of the female employees at their office. Attitudes about breast feeding at work, current services provided to female employees, and what information would be help to employers to incorporate breast feeding at their worksite were obtained from each company to make a general assumption about where businesses stand on this issue today.

The following pages briefly outline the major questions and the answers provided by each of the companies. Although 35 companies were invited to participate in the study, only 10 companies chose to respond.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>COMPANY NO. 1</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEMALE EMPLOYEES BETWEEN AGES 20 AND 40:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **SERVICES PROVIDED TO PREGNANT FEMALE EMPLOYEES:** | Insurance benefits  
Dependent Care Assistance Program  
Parenting Programs  
Time off for medical appts. |
| **SERVICES AVAILABLE TO MOTHERS RETURNING TO WORK:** | Flexible hours  
Refrigerator for milk storage  
Private Space to breast feed  
Lounges available |
| **IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING:** | Yes |
| **IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:** | No |
| **EMPLOYER WOULD MAKE CHANGES TO ALLOW MOTHER TO BREAST FEED AT WORK:** | Yes |
| **INFORMATION EMPLOYER WOULD REQUIRE BEFORE ALLOWING BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:** | Education materials for employees |
## COMPANY NO. 2

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<td>SERVICES PROVIDED TO PREGNANT FEMALE EMPLOYEES:</td>
<td>Insurance benefits</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Information on maternity leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exercise/Wellness groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time off for medical appts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERVICES AVAILABLE TO MOTHERS RETURNING TO WORK:</td>
<td>Flexible hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYER WOULD MAKE CHANGES TO ALLOW MOTHER TO BREAST FEED AT WORK:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFORMATION EMPLOYER WOULD REQUIRE BEFORE ALLOWING BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:</td>
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| **SERVICES PROVIDED TO PREGNANT FEMALE EMPLOYEES:** | Insurance benefits  
Information on maternity leave |
| **SERVICES AVAILABLE TO MOTHERS RETURNING TO WORK:** | N/A |
| **IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING:** | Yes |
| **IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:** | Yes |
| **EMPLOYER WOULD MAKE CHANGES TO ALLOW MOTHER TO BREAST FEED AT WORK:** | Yes |
| **INFORMATION EMPLOYER WOULD REQUIRE BEFORE ALLOWING BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:** | Education materials for employees  
How to incorporate breast feeding in the workplace  
How to set up a breast feeding lounge |
**COMPANY NO. 4**

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| **SERVICES PROVIDED TO PREGNANT FEMALE EMPLOYEES:** | Insurance benefits  
Information on maternity leave  
Time off for medical appts. |
| **SERVICES AVAILABLE TO MOTHERS RETURNING TO WORK:** | Refrigerator for milk storage |
| **IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING:** | Yes |
| **IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:** | Yes |
| **EMPLOYER WOULD MAKE CHANGES TO ALLOW MOTHER TO BREAST FEED AT WORK:** | Yes |
| **INFORMATION EMPLOYER WOULD REQUIRE BEFORE ALLOWING BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:** | N/A |
## COMPANY NO. 5

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<td>SERVICES AVAILABLE TO MOTHERS RETURNING TO WORK:</td>
<td>Lounges available</td>
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<tr>
<td>IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYER WOULD MAKE CHANGES TO ALLOW MOTHER TO BREAST FEED AT WORK:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>INFORMATION EMPLOYER WOULD REQUIRE BEFORE ALLOWING BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:</td>
<td>Support groups for employed moms</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES:</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEMALE EMPLOYEES BETWEEN AGES 20 AND 40:</strong></td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SERVICES PROVIDED TO PREGNANT FEMALE EMPLOYEES:</strong></td>
<td>Information on maternity leave</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SERVICES AVAILABLE TO MOTHERS RETURNING TO WORK:</strong></td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHANGES EMPLOYER WOULD MAKE TO ALLOW MOTHER TO BREAST FEED AT WORK:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>INFORMATION EMPLOYER WOULD REQUIRE BEFORE ALLOWING BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>FEMALE EMPLOYEES BETWEEN AGES 20 AND 40:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>SERVICES PROVIDED TO PREGNANT FEMALE EMPLOYEES:</strong></td>
<td>Insurance benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SERVICES AVAILABLE TO MOTHERS RETURNING TO WORK:</strong></td>
<td>Refrigerator for milk storage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING:</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EMPLOYER WOULD MAKE CHANGES TO ALLOW MOTHER TO BREAST FEED AT WORK:</strong></td>
<td>Anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INFORMATION EMPLOYER WOULD REQUIRE BEFORE ALLOWING BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:</strong></td>
<td>Education materials for employees, How to incorporate breast feeding in the workplace, How to set up a breast feeding lounge</td>
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## COMPANY NO. 8

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<th>TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:</th>
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<td>FEMALE EMPLOYEES BETWEEN AGES 20 AND 40:</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| SERVICES PROVIDED TO PREGNANT FEMALE EMPLOYEES: | Insurance benefits  
Information on maternity leave |
| SERVICES AVAILABLE TO MOTHERS RETURNING TO WORK: | Refrigerator for milk storage |
| IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING: | Yes |
| IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING AT WORK: | No |
| EMPLOYER WOULD MAKE CHANGES TO ALLOW MOTHER TO BREAST FEED AT WORK: | Yes |
| INFORMATION EMPLOYER WOULD REQUIRE BEFORE ALLOWING BREAST FEEDING AT WORK: | How to incorporate breast feeding in the workplace  
How to set up a breastfeeding lounge  
Support groups for employed mothers |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>COMPANY NO. 9</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEMALE EMPLOYEES BETWEEN AGES 20 AND 40:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **SERVICES PROVIDED TO PREGNANT FEMALE EMPLOYEES:** | Insurance benefits  
Information on maternity leave |
| **SERVICES AVAILABLE TO MOTHERS RETURNING TO WORK:** | Refrigerator for milk storage |
| **IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING:** | No |
| **IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:** | No |
| **EMPLOYER WOULD MAKE CHANGES TO ALLOW MOTHER TO BREAST FEED AT WORK:** | N/A |
| **INFORMATION EMPLOYER WOULD REQUIRE BEFORE ALLOWING BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:** | Education materials for employees  
How to incorporate breast feeding in the workplace  
Support groups for employed moms |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:</strong></th>
<th>503</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES:</strong></td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEMALE EMPLOYEES BETWEEN AGES 20 AND 40:</strong></td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **SERVICES PROVIDED TO PREGNANT FEMALE EMPLOYEES:** | Insurance benefits  
Information on maternity leave |
| **SERVICES AVAILABLE TO MOTHERS RETURNING TO WORK:** | Refrigerator for milk storage  
Private space to breast feed/pump  
Lounge available |
| **IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING:** | Yes |
| **IN SUPPORT OF BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:** | Unsure |
| **EMPLOYER WOULD MAKE CHANGES TO ALLOW MOTHER TO BREAST FEED AT WORK:** | Yes |
| **INFORMATION EMPLOYER WOULD REQUIRE BEFORE ALLOWING BREAST FEEDING AT WORK:** | How to establish an on-site day care for infants so that the employee would be able to nurse the baby during breaks and lunch  
How to set up a breastfeeding lounge  
Support groups for employed mothers |
BREAST FEEDING AND EMPLOYMENT

The prevalence and duration of breast feeding have declined in many parts of the world for a variety of social, economic and cultural reasons. Unfortunately, due to employers inability to meet the needs of female breast feeding employees this downward trend continues. For breast feeding to be successfully initiated and established, mothers need the active support, during pregnancy and following birth, not only from family members and communities but also from employers.

EMPLOYERS ATTITUDES TOWARD BREAST FEEDING

From the surveys returned 80 percent of the businesses support breast feeding as opposed to bottle feeding. However, only 50 percent of the companies support breast feeding in the workplace. The main reasons that the companies gave for not allowing female employees to breast feed at work are because it is impractical and could disrupt efficient operation of the company. Many of the companies stated that without an on-site day care center they cannot help their employees. In addition, employers feel that if the mother has to go home or have the baby brought to her a few times a day it is hardly worth the effort for her to continue breast feeding. Another company stated that it disrupts the working environment.

Fortunately, there were companies who positively responded to allowing their female employees to breast feed on the job. One company stated that since maternity leave is a short six
weeks, a mother just gets the hang of nursing when it is time to return to work. As a result, this company is willing to work with its employees to find a middle of the road solution that benefits the mother and employer. Surprisingly, one company stated that it would take any action to ensure that the mother is able to continue working.

**CURRENT SERVICES PROVIDED**

Today's businesses offer a variety of helpful services and benefits to its female employees regarding pregnancy and maternity leave. Almost all of the companies stated that they provide special insurance benefits and information on maternity leave which indicates that they do care about their employees and are concerned with them receiving optimal health care services. Unfortunately, none of the companies responded positively to having a day care or child care services at their location. This heavily impacted the responses of the businesses. One of the companies currently provides women's support groups, a dependent care assistant program and parenting programs which is also beneficial in helping breast feeding mothers deal with this issue. All of the businesses also are flexible when female employees need time off for medical employments. All the companies stated that they do arrange for the women to have flexible schedules to accommodate for this needed time off.
SERVICES PROVIDED TO BREAST FEEDING MOTHERS

Of the businesses supporting breast feeding at work, they currently provide refrigerator for milk storage, private comfortable lounges to breast feed or pump their milk and flexible time schedules. Interestingly, the companies that do not support this issue also have adequate refrigeration on-site which indicates that changes could be made if the company so desired.

Although an employer may not allow or have adequate facilities for a mother to breast feed her child at her place of employment, she can still continue breast feeding by simply pumping her milk at work. The Journal of Nurse-Midwifery states that "Even if the mother practices 'pumping and dumping', such regular expression helps her to maintain her milk supply" (5) This would enable the mother to keep her job, continue breast feeding her child and keep her employer happy. The following tables state how milk can be pumped at work and how milk can be stored at work.

HELPFUL IDEAS FOR MOTHERS PUMPING THEIR BREAST MILK AT WORK

Mothers can pump for 20 minutes during their lunch break, and for a shorter period during mid-morning and afternoon break.

Mothers can pump for 20 minutes twice daily, women can pump in women's restroom at work, or another place that has comfortable furniture.
HOW BREAST MILK CAN BE STORED AT WORK

Milk should be expressed into a clear plastic bottle that has been previously sterilized in boiling water or in a plastic bag.

Store milk in small amounts of 2 to 4 ounce bottles. Write the time and day that milk is expressed into bag or bottle so the freshness can be easily determined.

WILL CHANGES BE MADE IN THE FUTURE?

The issue of breast feeding at work is definitely becoming more popular due to the number of women and working moms returning to the work force. In the past, a number of women have chosen to breast feed at work and have succeeded. Joan Lunden, Good Morning America TV hostess, returned to work after the birth of her daughter. She brought her infant daughter to the set so she could breast feed her. Susan Catania, a former Illinois state representative did the same thing. She carried her breast feeding baby onto the floor of the state legislature. Marian Tompson, co-founder of La Leche League, devotes herself to education women on breast feeding. Her views about breast feeding in the office are as follows (4):

"A women who fervently wishes to keep a baby on breast milk once she returns to her job is putting forth a great effort, even if it means having a sitter bring the baby to her at intervals or pumping her milk and storing it so a sitter can bottle-feed it to the baby while his/her mom is at work. Unfortunately, many working women who nurse, find they are faced with hostility from coworkers who disapprove of a mother nursing at work."

26
Of the companies who currently do not allowing female employees to breast feed at work only two stated they would be willing to make changes in the future. However, all the companies expressed a desire to have additional materials on what employers can do about this issue. The number one request of the companies was how to get information on setting up a child care center. This was the greatest limiting factor is regards to allowing the mother to nurse at work. I believe that if more companies had on-site day care centers breast feeding and employment would be supported by a majority of employers. Other concerns expressed by the companies were the following: how to set up a lounge conducive to breast feeding and how to establish support groups for working mothers. The following table discusses what businesses can do to help their female employees.

### HOW EMPLOYERS CAN IMPLEMENT BREAST FEEDING AT THE WORKSITE

- Create an environment for mothers that supports breast feeding.
- Educate other staff members on the reasons why breast feeding mothers need employer support.
- Provide mothers with a private, comfortable room to use their own breast pumps.
- Provide adequate refrigeration and storage for breast milk.
- Allow for flexible work schedules so that women can pump their milk or go to their baby.
- Develop on-site day care services
THE NEED FOR SOCIAL SUPPORT

For women to provide an adequate volume of milk social support must be provided. The Journal of Nurse-Midwifery stresses that withdrawal of social support may encourage women to wean (5). In addition, social support must be viewed as a variable that is complex and multifaceted; furthermore, it appears to be most effective when it incorporates no only task assistance but also recognition of the emotional components of the breast feeding relationship (5). Women feel very comfortable and appreciated when they receive support from outside sources. Women are especially grateful when others recognize the importance of breast feeding to them and pay verbal tribute and provide active assistance to them (5). Having adequate social support helps the mother adjust to her new situation.

CONCLUSIONS FROM SURVEYS

While reading the responses of the surveys, it was very easy to tell if the person answering the questions was male or female. A few of the respondents stated that they had breast fed while working with some difficulty. The main reason for this was the uncomfortable areas for nursing. They also stated that employers would definitely need to make changes in their offices before this became a regular employer supported program in their office. On the hand, some of the businesses were very strongly against breast feeding in businesses. They stated they did not support it because it disrupted the employee's concentration and working
ability. I interpreted responses such as these to have been said by male employers or women who had not breastfed their own children. Fortunately, there are businesses who currently support this issue and are willing to make compromises with their female employees. Although this study was done on only a few businesses, hopefully a positive trend exists between this issue and businesses worldwide.

PROMOTION STRATEGIES

To promote breast feeding in the workplace a variety of steps must be taken. One of those steps is to show employers that allowing employees to breast feed at work can benefit them as well as the mother. The following table discusses these reasons.

HOW EMPLOYERS CAN BENEFIT FROM SUPPORTING BREAST FEEDING WORKERS

Women will be able to return to work sooner after delivery.

Increase productivity: A working mother who can successfully continue breast feeding will be more satisfied with her job.

Reduced sick time/personal time usage for women, since breasted infants have more resistance to illness.

Reduced staff turnover after the birth of a child. Recruitment incentive: A supportive workplace for breast feeding women can assist in hiring.

Improved employee morale and loyalty.

29
Employers also need to be willing to make these changes and have adequate materials and information on how to make them. The following table discuses possible changes to make.

**WHAT CHANGES COULD BE MADE AT WORK TO HELP MOTHERS CONTINUE BREAST FEEDING**

- **Longer, or more breaks at work** can give mothers adequate time to express milk at work, or to nurse the child.

- **A clean, quiet and comfortable place** to express milk, or nurse.

- **Refrigerator space** to store milk. Having baby brought to mother.

- **Mother going to baby** during breaks or lunch period to breast feed.

Working mothers should actively seek help if they desire to breast feed on the job. The following list provides some ideas about what mothers can do to get help from their employers.

**WHAT WORKING MOTHERS CAN DO TO GET HELP FROM EMPLOYERS**

- Find out how many mothers share similar concerns. Talk to co-workers and employee committees.

- Combine breast feeding concerns with issues that affect larger numbers of women.

- Learn about what other businesses provide, how much change is necessary in your office, what the cost will be, and how your employer may benefit from the situation.

- Communicate with employer openly.
CONCLUSIONS

Breast feeding at work is a growing concern of all female employees. Due to the need of a higher family income women are forced to return to work after the birth of child. Unfortunately, if the women chooses to breast feed this may severely limit the amount of time she continues to do so. Today's businesses provide only minimal support in allowing a female employee to breast feed at work. Although some businesses would allow on-site nursing to be carried out they lack essential items that would are necessary to carry out this process such as a comfortable, clean, quiet lounge area. It is important to realize how beneficial breast feeding is to all people involved. Due to the numerous benefits, today's businesses should do all they can to support breast feeding in their offices.
Breastfeeding Support Survey Project

For each question, complete the answer, or check those that apply.
Thank you for your cooperation.

1. What is the total number of employees at your company?  
2. Of the total number of employees, how many are female?  
3. What percentage of these women are between the ages of 20 and 40?  
4. Of the following services, which do you provide to pregnant employees?
   - Insurance benefits
   - Day care provisions
   - Information on maternity leave
   - Support groups
   - Exercise/Wellness groups
   - Time off for medical appointments
   - Other (please specify)

5. Of the following, which are made available to new mothers returning to work?
   - On-site day care
   - Private space to breastfeed/collect milk
   - Refrigerator for milk storage
   - Allow infant to work with mother
   - Extended breaks for milk collection
   - "Flex* time
   - Electric breastpump available
   - Lounge available
   - Other (please specify)

6. Do you support breastfeeding?
   - Yes
   - No

7. Do you think a mother should be allowed to breastfeed at work? Explain.

8. Do you feel that a working mother could successfully breastfeed at work, without disrupting normal operations?
   - Yes
   - No

9. What changes, if any, would you be willing to make to enable an employee to breastfeed at work?

10. If your company does not currently support breastfeeding services, would you be willing to do so in the future?
   - Yes
   - No

11. What information would be helpful to you in support of breastfeeding at your company?
   - Educational materials (brochures) for employees
   - How to incorporate breastfeeding in the workplace
   - How to set up a breastfeeding lounge
   - Support groups for employed mothers
   - Other (please specify)
March 5, 1992

President
Company Name
Company Address
City, State, ZIP

Dear:

Your company is invited to participate in a research study about current business policies regarding breast feeding in the workplace. This study is for a Northern Illinois University Honors Program senior Capstone project. Your company was selected as a potential subject because you have over 100 employees at your location. The purpose of this study is to determine if businesses are supporting their female employees who are breast feeding. In addition, I would like to find out what types of support companies are offering such as on-site day care, extended breaks, flexible hours, etc.

If you choose to participate, you are asked to complete the enclosed survey. Please include as much detail as you desire in your responses. The benefit your company may receive from participating in this study is increased awareness about the importance of breast feeding and how to incorporate breast feeding in the workplace without disrupting company production and efficiency.

Your right to privacy will be protected. Company names and survey responses will be kept confidential and will be used for research purposes only. The information obtained in this study may be presented or copied; however, your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

Please respond to this letter before April 1, 1992. A return envelope is enclosed for your convenience. An adequate amount of data is needed to do this study and your response would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Linda K. Eugene
WORKS CITED


