



Mothers' Rooms: Nurturing the Future Growth of the Workforce

INFORMATION BRIEF ON
SETTING UP LACTATION ROOMS
AT WORKPLACES

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PREAMBLE

Business Coalition for Gender Equality Association (BCGE) has developed this information brief on setting up lactation rooms in workplaces in order to set out its expectations with respect to the business sector to follow sound and prudent management practices. This information brief therefore covers the *simple steps in action* for mother-friendly workplaces.

The BCGE favours a simple way to intervene rather than a specific rules-based approach. We advocate for businesses to provide lactation rooms and child care programs, policies, and practices and can refer clients to our partners for implementation (i.e. technical guidance, training, toolkits and specific information briefs.)

SCOPE

This brief is intended to increase access to information about lactation rooms, including benefits and basic requirements for establishment. Based on interest from the business sector, BCGE will engage in follow-up consultations and referral to partners for detailed support.

INTRODUCTION

Mothers' rooms are a smart investment that keep the company's human resources, capital and financial resources from drifting away. A small up-front investment in a lactation room will save companies money in the long run and bring rewarding results for both the employers and the employees. This brief will present why the lactation room is a necessary room in every organization and the positive results it will bring.



IN REGARD TO HER “SPACE”

The nature of the workforce has changed in the 21st century. Employees and top talents want to work in workplaces that provide work-life balance and family-friendly working conditions. Installing a lactation room helps to create a mom-friendly workplace that can attract top talents among working mothers and women who plan to have children. Having a lactation room can help ease the transition period for new mothers who are returning to work after their maternity leave. In addition, having a lactation room helps keep employees happy, which means they are more likely to stay at your company. It also helps boost retention and productivity, maintaining the quality workforce your office has assembled. Creating a lactation room at work shows that your company is committed to supporting working families—a great message to send to both employees and competitors.

THE FUTURES SHE “FOSTERS”

Research shows that women who benefit from family-friendly workplace policies, including lactation rooms, breastfeed for longer. Longer duration of breastfeeding has numerous benefits for mothers, children, employers, and society at large. Thus, other mother and baby-friendly workplaces and receiving recognition as a mom-friendly workplace has numerous potential benefits for employers, as well as for employees and their families.

Reduced maternal absenteeism

Infants and young children who are breastfed are healthier than those who are not. Infants and young children who are breastfed are healthier than those who are fed with formula milk. Breastfed infants experience fewer illnesses in the short and long term, meaning that mothers will not need to stay home to care for sick children. So, employers can benefit from a decrease in absenteeism among their employees.

Improved employer-employee relations

Creating a mother-friendly workplace by setting up lactation room is one way in which employers can demonstrate a commitment to equal opportunity and corporate responsibility. It may therefore improve employer-employee relations, as it is a way in which employers can acknowledge and respond to the needs of their employees.

Cost effectiveness in maintaining human capital at work

Human capital is a driving force behind successful enterprises. Employers use their financial capital to attract and maintain diverse and qualified human capital. Providing a lactation room will bring the advantage of efficiency for breastfeeding mothers who are qualified employees, which will drastically reduce the turnover rate thereby reducing the recruiting and training cost for new employees. Moreover, female employees will be more likely to return to work after childbirth if they are provided with a mother-friendly space like a lactation room, which can empower them and increase their productivity.

Cost reduction of healthcare costs and insurance

Breastfeeding benefits both the mother and the child by making both healthier. Not only does the child benefit from breastmilk, but also the mother benefits by having a speedy recovery from childbirth and lower stress levels. Mothers who breastfeed are also at reduced risk for breast and ovarian cancer and Type II diabetes. These benefits for mother and child are well-documented and persist from infancy until much later in the life of mother and child. These benefits encourage mother employees to return to work healthily, while employers will also benefit from low medical insurance claims to their businesses.

Reducing turnover rate

Lactation rooms have the potential to stabilize the female workforce and reduce turnover rate of female employees. Having a place to express and store breastmilk will help breastfeeding mothers settle at their workplace due to the convenience of having a support system at their workplace.

Improvement in Employees work ethics and commitment

Research shows that employees who receive the facilitation and support are more likely to show commitment to work and stronger work ethics. Moreover, the lactation room makes them comfortable to go back to work after maternity leave and makes their transition smooth.

Positive image in professional and public perspective

Setting up a lactation room can also positively affect the company's reputation within the business circle as good welfare service management and improve the company's image in the public's point of view, as a company that creates a reliable working environment for breastfeeding mothers.

A high return on investment

Even though employers might perceive that setting up a lactation room for breastfeeding mothers will cost them office space, money, and time, the actual cost to support breastfeeding mothers is quite low and the results are far more encouraging and effective in cost saving and maintaining human capital.

SIMPLE STEPS IN ACTION

THE STS APPROACH

A ‘mom-friendly workplace’ is a workplace that empowers working women to be both good employees and nurturing mothers by providing lactation rooms that enable them to continue breastfeeding. In order to do so, creating and implementing “mom-friendly workplace policy” comes as the first priority. Moreover, it is required that all employees obtain information on this policy as part of the broader set of HR policies. The following are three key steps that employers must provide in order to facilitate effective use of lactation rooms:

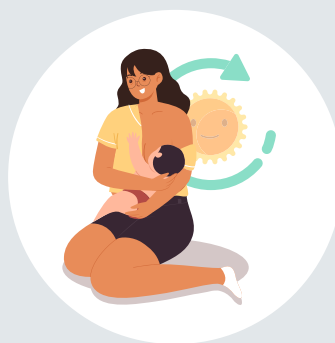
Support:

Supportive interactions from colleagues and employers is an essential factor that contributes to a mother’s success in managing work and breastfeeding. Furthermore, a good policy that covers the wellbeing of breastfeeding moms should be aligned with the mothers’ needs.



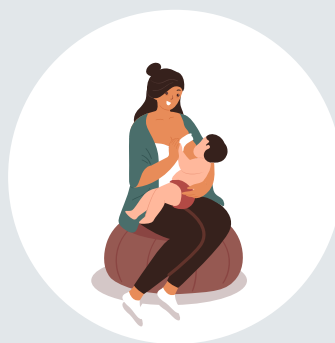
Time:

Giving 2 periods of 30 minutes breaks for breastfeeding and/or express and storing breastmilk for a minimum duration of two years and cooperating with a flexible alternative schedule after that.



Space:

Securing a comfortable, hygienic space and facilities where mothers can express and store breastmilk with privacy.



This information brief addresses the three essential steps which are mandatory to facilitate a workplace lactation program. The required basic facilities in the lactation room are mentioned in the fact sheet with the specification of resources. Organizations and companies may develop the implementation and design to fit their working environment by following the basic information briefs from the references mentioned above.

PUTTING INTO ACTION

SUPPORT

Developing a 'Mother's Room', 'Lactation Support', or 'Mother-Friendly Workplace' policy must come first. The distribution of information should be uniform within the organization.



TIME

Allowing specific break times for mothers at work are essential needs in the lactation program. This type of flexible break time arrangement can reduce the guilt of the mothers leaving the baby at home and encourage mothers to return to work early due the realization that they can still express and store breastmilk for their babies at work. Knowing that her baby is being fed with her breastmilk while she is away being a comfort to a working mom.



The HR Department is a vital actor in this role in order to keep stabilization between the working hours of employees within the company's guidelines. Moreover, there are a variety of lactation program designs to facilitate the smooth transition of working mothers. Furthermore, the International Labor Organization (ILO) of the United Nations recommends that lactation breaks are included in working hours and paid accordingly:

- Assign two 30-minute periods or one 1-hour period of lactation breaks within the eight-hour period.
- OR Assign two to four times of 15-minute period within eight-hour span of working by allowing flexible choices for workers to choose.
- The breaks taken for lactation are encouraged to count as paid hours.
- The employees are not required to compensate for the time spent using the lactation room.
- The proven status of breastfeeding is not required for using location room.

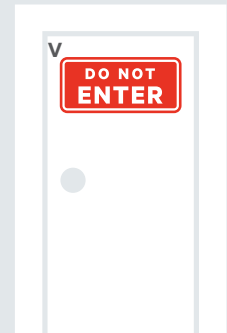
Even though keeping a regular schedule is good, it is required to give the employees flexible choices of time for breaks. Women are allowed to adjust time expressing and storing breastmilk up to 30 minutes.

SPACE

A lactation room is an essential encouragement for working mothers who are breastfeeding to be able to transition back to work. Having a hygienic room with privacy and basic facilities such as a comfortable seating area and refrigerator to keep the breastmilk fresh are vital components. In preparing the lactation room, it is important to take into consideration the number of mothers using the facilities in order to determine the space area of the facilities. Other key components include:

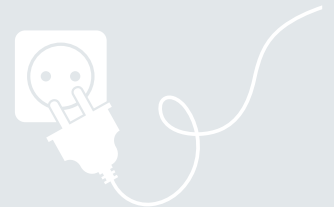
Privacy in space:

Privacy can bring comfort to the process of expressing or pumping breastmilk or breastfeeding. Hygiene is another essential factor and proximity of the room to mothers' working area is beneficial. Moreover, it encourages that the room should be a peaceful environment with as little noise pollution from outside as possible so that women can feel safe and comfortable in this process. Therefore, the blinds and curtains are a must for the room. Having a lock that can operate inside is a must and the space per capita should be about 25 sq.ft with good lighting and ventilation along with visible signs such as "occupied or vacant".



Power supply and outlets for electricity:

A number of power outlets and power supply for electricity is a necessary component for an electrical powered breast pump and the refrigerator. Power outlets should ideally be positioned near chairs or tables. Otherwise, there should be heavy duty extension cord nearby.



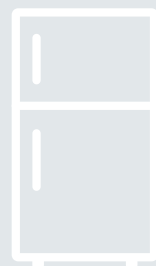
Furniture Arrangement:

The furniture in the lactation room such as a table should be present to enable the use of breast pumps, storage containers, and other utensils used for expressing and storing breastmilk. Chairs which are adjustable to support different heights with reliable back support to assist comfortable breast milk expression is beneficial. The number of chairs and tables in the room can be adjusted according to the number of breastfeeding mothers and a certain amount of space between each mother is really important as well.



Storage Refrigerator:

Refrigerators are required for stage storage of breastmilk, while a cool box can help in times of electricity outage.



ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Prenatal Education: Employers are encouraged to provide additional training on breastfeeding in collaboration with health professionals to enhance the effectiveness of workplace lactation initiatives. Providing prenatal care classes can enhance the experience of new mothers and fathers and build support among working fathers at the organization to understand their unique role in supporting breastfeeding. The classes will bring various essential topics on balancing work and home life, positive impacts of breastfeeding, breastfeeding techniques, and breastmilk expression and storage.

Information & Educational Materials: Employers can provide additional information from different sources including but not limited to: The Ministry of Health and Sports (MOHS); World Health Organization, UNICEF, and Alive & Thrive. The Global Breastfeeding Collective website includes a variety of tools for employers and advocates: <https://toolkits.knowledgesuccess.org/toolkits/breastfeeding-advocacy-toolkit/enact-paid-family-leave-and-workplace-breastfeeding-policies>

Breastfeeding training: MOHS and UNICEF can provide the breastfeeding training for mothers and guidance on setting up lactation rooms and trainings to ensure that the varying needs of employers and mothers are being met.



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