
BREASTFEEDING IN SCHOOLS

Background

Schools play a unique role in creating a breastfeeding-friendly environment that goes beyond supporting breastfeeding employees. Schools also have a responsibility to students and visitors to support breastfeeding through accommodations to reduce stigma and create a welcoming space. Breastfeeding-friendly environments must also extend beyond the school day to support visitors at all events and extra-curricular activities occurring on school grounds.

Rationale

Supportive breastfeeding policies and practices in the school not only benefit caregivers and babies. They also provide several benefits to the school as an employer and an educational system. These benefits include:

For Individuals Breastfeeding in the Workplace

- *Productivity* – Lactation support programs in the workplace often demonstrate higher productivity. This increase in productivity is frequently attributed to a lessened emotional and psychological burden associated with being away from the baby, as well as higher energy and greater optimism.
- *Fewer Distractions* – Individuals who can express breast milk in the workplace are better able to concentrate during the workday. A breast infection and/or a drop in ability to produce milk can result if an individual is unable to express breast milk each time they feel the need to do so.
- *Absenteeism* – Individuals who use lactation support programs and facilities exhibit lower absenteeism.

For Those Attending School

- *Academic Success* - Confidence in breastfeeding and parenting may reflect positively in school work.
- *Absenteeism* - Less unexcused absences and missed school work due to infant's resistance to sickness.

For Employers

- *Productivity* – When employers provide breastfeeding support, breastfeeding employees tend to have fewer absences and tardiness because their infants are more resistant to sickness.
- *Organizational Loyalty* – Breastfeeding employees often feel increased loyalty to their employer because it demonstrates that their workplace supports the employee, their family, and their health.

- *Recruitment and Retention* – Employer support for breastfeeding serves as a recruitment tool. Employees that offer lactation support programs often have higher retention rates for female employees.
- *Job satisfaction* – Having effective lactation support programs demonstrates care for employees and their health. Businesses that display support for their employees facilitate greater workplace satisfaction.

For School Systems

- *Health Education* – Support for breastfeeding shows adolescent-aged students the benefits of breastfeeding, creates a cultural normalcy for breastfeeding, and promotes public health.

Procedures

1. The District will provide a supportive environment for employees and/or volunteers to breastfeed during school and work hours.
2. An individual may breastfeed their child in any location, public or private, where the individual and child are otherwise authorized to be present (see **Administrative Procedure 156: Visit Protocol**). No school may outright ban breastfeeding in public places. It is discriminatory to ask an individual who is nursing a child to move or cover up.
3. Breastfeeding employees will be permitted to express their milk during regularly scheduled breaks and meal times. They will be allowed to extend their work day to compensate for any milk expression breaks that go beyond regularly scheduled breaks and meal times. If they choose, employees may use regularly scheduled breaks and meal times to breastfeed infants attending day care programs in the area.
4. Schools will provide a shared space (lactation room/quiet room, etc.) with a locking door. This space will have access to power and seating. Employees interested in using this space for expressing milk will coordinate with their Principal.
5. It is expected that all employees will assist in providing a positive atmosphere of support for breastfeeding employees.

Reference: Sections 20, 22, 65, 85, 177 *School Act*
BC Human Rights Code
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

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