

Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Policy

Reviewed Date	April 13, 2021	Number	HS0115
Revised Date	<i>October 26, 2016</i>	Approved Date	<i>February 28, 1995</i>

Introduction

Health Canada and the Canadian Paediatric Society recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a child’s life, with continued breastfeeding for up to two years and beyond. This recommendation is based on an extensive body of literature that clearly demonstrates that breastfeeding has a life-long positive impact on the health and well-being of breastfeeding parents, children and society.

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit recognizes that breastmilk is the physiologically normal and optimal food for healthy growth and development of infants and young children. The health unit protects, promotes and supports breastfeeding and the expression of breastmilk for employees who are breastfeeding when they return to work. Returning to a supportive workplace can significantly influence a parent’s ability to successfully sustain breastfeeding or lactation.

The Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine suggests that providing support to employed parents to sustain breastfeeding and/or lactation has the potential to impact such critical issues as maternal and child health, and cost savings to business and society.¹ Some specific benefits to employers providing supportive environments may include:

- improved productivity, morale and higher job satisfaction
- increased loyalty and decreased staff turnover and associated costs
- decreased absenteeism ^{1, 2}

Purpose

To provide a supportive environment in which employees are accommodated to continue to breastfeed or express breastmilk.

Legislative Authority

Ontario Human Rights Code

Policy Definitions and Interpretation

N/A

Policy

All Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit employees, students, volunteers, and contractors will be supported and accommodated to feed their child, or to express breastmilk while at work.

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit shall provide clean, comfortable and private space within each office for the purpose of breastfeeding, expressing breastmilk, feeding and/or providing care to their child.

Procedures

1. All new employees will be oriented to the Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Policy within their initial agency orientation, by the manager/supervisor or designate.
2. Employees will be made aware of this policy a) upon application for Leave of Absence related to maternity and/or parenting and b) upon notification of intention to return to work. Employees will also be made aware of infant feeding information and support available from the health unit.
3. Employees may request a consultation with a Public Health Nurse from Health Connection to provide individual breastfeeding information and support. Public Health Nurses from this team are available to provide information and support related to:
 - a. prenatal informed decision-making;
 - b. combining work and breastfeeding;
 - c. expression of breastmilk by hand or pump;
 - d. safe storage and handling of breastmilk;
 - e. introduction to solids; and
 - f. any other infant feeding issues identified by the employee
4. Breastfeeding employees are responsible for clearly informing their manager/supervisor or designate of their need for accommodation to support them to breastfeed and/or express breastmilk, and what accommodation is needed.
5. Every request for accommodation will be considered on an individual basis as each situation will be unique. Employees are required to provide sufficient information to the manager/supervisor or designate to make the accommodation. Employees seeking accommodation are responsible for discussing possible accommodation solutions with their manager/supervisor or designate.
6. The manager/supervisor or designate will take an active role in ensuring different approaches and possible accommodation solutions are explored. Once the manager/supervisor or designate is aware of what accommodation is needed they will endeavor to attempt to accommodate the special needs and circumstances of the breastfeeding employee.
7. Employees will be supported to use their paid rest breaks and additional time needed to breastfeed and/or express breastmilk. Employees will not be asked to forgo normal meal breaks, or work additional time to make up for time spent breastfeeding or expressing breastmilk beyond the two 15 minute rest periods already provided.
8. The Flexible Working Hours Policy, Paid Rest Periods Policy, Hours of Work policy, Flexible Hours for Managers policy and the ONA Collective Agreement will be considered in the negotiation of the accommodation.
9. Employees will have access to a private, clean, quiet space within each office for the purpose of breastfeeding, expressing breastmilk, feeding and/or providing care to their child.
10. Expressed breastmilk is to be stored in an office refrigerator or a cooler provided by the employee. If expressed breastmilk will be stored in an office refrigerator, it must

be placed in a closed container in a sealed, plastic storage bag labeled with the employee's name. Expressed breastmilk must be removed from the fridge at the end of each work day.

Related Policies

HR0601 Hours of Work
HR0602 Paid Rest Periods
HR0603 Flexible Working Hours
HR0606 Flexible Working Hours Policy for Managers
ONA Collective Agreement (2020)

Key Documents

- (1) Ontario Human Rights Commission's suggested guidelines on preventing discrimination because of pregnancy and breastfeeding. <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-because-pregnancy-and-breastfeeding>
- (2) Marinelli KA, Moren K, Scott Taylor J, The Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine. Breastfeeding support for mothers in workplace employment or educational settings: summary statement. Breastfeeding Medicine 8[1], 137-142. 1-2-2013.
- (3) OPHA Breastfeeding Promotion Workgroup Members. Creating a breastfeeding friendly workplace. Ontario Public Health Association; 2008.

Final Approval Signature: _____

Review/Revision History:

September 2010 Policy re-numbered, previous number B2.050

January 12, 2011 - replaces Agency Breastfeeding Policy

October 26, 2016 updated

March 24, 2021 reviewed