

AUGUST 2000 WOMEN'S BUREAU CONFERENCE CALL

Low Cost/High Impact...Work and Family Programs: Lactation Trends in the Workplace

Host: Beverly Lyle, Women's Bureau, Region 6

Speakers: Rani Garcia, Attorney at Law; Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld

SUMMARY OF TOPIC

This call focuses on mother friendly policies in the workplace including lactation and child care trends. This summary will discuss the portion of the call that focuses on lactation trends. For more information on on-site, near site and backup child care see the resource links below. Mother friendly policies like lactation accommodations are a low/cost high impact and a win, win for employees and employers. Why should employers care about mother friendly policies? National trends tell us that women with infants and toddlers are the fastest growing segment of today's workforce. 59% of new mothers choose to breastfeed their infants, but that number drops to 22% by the time their infant is 6 months old, and only 12.5% of working mothers continue through 6 months. The most common reason women do not continue to breastfeeding when they return to work is lack of time and space. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that babies be breast fed for at least the first twelve months of life. There are numerous reasons why this is a good policy to adopt for employers that include lower health costs and lower absenteeism due to healthier babies and healthier mothers. Research tells us that learning begins at birth and mother/baby bonding is extremely critical to early brain development. Cigna reported that its corporate lactation program has resulted in savings of more than \$300,000 annually in healthcare expenses. The Texas Mother-Friendly Work Site Program is a law that was passed in 1995 that allows businesses in Texas to use the designation "Mother Friendly Employer" if they voluntarily develop and implement a policy that includes four specific elements. First flexibility in the work schedule, second a private location or area to express breast milk, third nearby access to a clean safe water source, and fourth access to refrigerated storage to store the breast milk.

KEY POINTS

- Lactation programs are a low cost benefit that can decrease absenteeism for new parents and promote a successful transition from maternity leave.
- The longer a mother nurses her infant the healthier the baby and the mother are.
- Texas, Oregon and Minnesota have formal lactation policies and program guidelines.

ADVANTAGES/SUCSESSES

- Lactation programs are a low cost benefit and are easy to implement.

- Lactation programs see lower health care costs, lower turnover and increased loyalty.
- Increases visibility for the employer as being family friendly and can be used a recruitment tool.

DISADVANTAGES/ROAD BLOCKS

- Without formal written policies the program may not be successful.
- Lactation programs require buy in from managers and a willingness to be flexible.
- It may be difficult to find a private space to locate the lactation room that is convenient for the employee. Lactation programs should not be located in a restroom.

SPEAKER CONTACT INFORMATION

Rani C. Garcia

Title: Labor and Employment Law Attorney

Firm: Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld, L.L.P., a "Mother-Friendly" Employer

E-mail: rgarcia@akingump.com

Website: www.akingump.com

RESOURCES

- Karen Furia, Women's Bureau Regional Director Region 10 furia-karen@dol.gov
- The Women's Bureau <http://www.dol.gov/wb/welcome.html>
- Kelly Tyler, Child Care Resources, Business Liaison tyler@childcare.org
- Child Care Resources, King County, Washington www.childcare.org
- Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral www.childcarenet.org
- Transitions Corporate Lactation Program <http://www.breastpumpshop.com/corporate.htm>
- La Leche League <http://www.la lecheleague.org/corporate.html>
- The Child Care Bureau <http://nccic.org>
- Alliance of Work Life Professionals <http://www.awlp.org>
- Life Work Strategies <http://www.nationalpartnership.org>
- National Partnership for Women & Families <http://www.nationalpartnership.org>
- Boston College Center for Work & Family <http://www.bc.edu/cwf>
- Labor Project for Working Families <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~iir/workfam/home.html>
- Blue Suit Mom <http://www.bluesuitmom.com/>
- National Network for Child Care <http://www.nncc.org/>
- Child Care Partnership Project <http://www.nccic.org/ccpartnerships>
- Woman's-Work <http://www.womans-work.com>
- Human Resources Executive/Cornell <http://www.workindex.com>
- Families and Work Institute <http://www.familiesandwork.org>
- The Life Station <http://www.thelifestation.com>
- Work Life Benefits <http://www.wlb.com>

- Child Care in Health Care <http://www.childcareinhealthcare.org/>

The Women's Bureau Region X office and Child Care Resources of King County has compiled this "Work and Family Virtual Conference Call Summary Sheets" for information sharing and does not endorse any programs or organizations included in it. These summaries include information on programs and policies that employers have tried or ideas and thoughts that work and work/life professionals have shared.