

Breastfeeding and Work

1 Application:

This policy applies to all persons employed in Queensland Government departments and offices.

The policy supports female employees to breastfeed and/or express breast milk while at work and contributes to improving safe and healthy work environments.

This policy should be read in conjunction with relevant legislation, directives, guidelines and policies governing conditions of employment and work and life balance.

2 Effective date: 5 August 2010

3 Policy:

Principles:

- 3.1 The Queensland Government acknowledges breastfeeding as optimal infant and young child nutrition.
- 3.2 The Queensland Government is committed to fostering a supportive work environment for employees who choose to breastfeed by:
 - providing suitable and reasonable workplace facilities for employees who choose to express breast milk or breastfeed their child
 - providing lactation breaks during work hours
 - supporting access to flexible work options
 - ensuring employee awareness of breastfeeding policies and facilities, and
 - seeking to eliminate any unlawful direct and/or indirect discrimination on the grounds of breastfeeding.
- 3.3 Employees who choose to breastfeed should be supported in that choice and treated with dignity and respect in the workplace.

Facilities for breastfeeding and expressing milk in the workplace

- 3.4 Workplace facilities should be provided, where practicable, for employees who choose to express breast milk or breastfeed their child during work hours.
- 3.5 The minimum requirements for an appropriate workplace facility would include, where practicable:
 - a private, clean and hygienic space which is suitably signed and lockable

- appropriate seating and a table or bench to support breastfeeding equipment
- access to a refrigerator and a microwave; and
- an appropriate receptacle for rubbish and nappy disposal.

3.6 Where suitable workplace facilities are not available on-site, the employee and their employer should discuss suitable alternatives and agree on the most appropriate arrangement.

3.7 In relation to the workplace facility, employees engaged in their use should ensure that:

- breastfeeding or expressing breast milk is only carried out in the designated workplace facility
- children are provided safe transportation to and from the workplace facility and that children are delivered directly to the workplace facility provided for the purpose of breastfeeding
- caregivers and children in their care are to leave the workplace at the completion of each breastfeeding break
- expressed breast milk is appropriately stored (e.g. labelled and dated before being placed in refrigerator)
- the workplace facility is left clean and tidy, and
- workplace health and safety and public liability policies and practices are complied with.

Lactation breaks

3.8 Lactation breaks are to be made available to employees to breastfeed or express breast milk during work hours.

3.9 Where possible, lactation breaks are to be provided as time off without debit. For employees requiring more than one (1) hour for combined lactation breaks during a standard working day, flexible work or leave arrangements may be implemented to cover the time in excess of that hour.

3.10 The frequency, duration and timing of lactation breaks:

- will vary between individuals and may be influenced by the child's age and their breastfeeding pattern, the location of the identified workplace facility, and any special requirements
- should be negotiated and agreed between the employee and their employer to allow the flexibility needed to breastfeed or express milk

3.11 Where possible, employees should notify their employer of their breastfeeding requirements during work hours prior to commencing work.

3.12 Employees have an obligation to ensure that the timing of lactation breaks is to take into account reasonable business and organisational needs with a focus on minimising disruption to the workplace and service delivery.

- 3.13 If, in emergent situations, there is a need to delay the taking of a lactation break, efforts should be made to ensure that the employee is able to take the break as soon as practicable in order to minimise any risks to the employee's health or milk supply or the child's health.

Flexible work options

- 3.14 Where possible, suitable flexible work options are to be negotiated and agreed prior to the employee returning to work. These options may include, but are not limited to, flexible work, spread of hours, rostering or other leave arrangements.
- 3.15 Flexible work options which may assist employees who choose to breastfeed to make a successful transition back to work are to take into account reasonable employee, business and organisational needs. Disruption to operational and service delivery requirements as a result of agreed arrangements is to be minimised.

Decisions

- 3.16 Decisions made regarding requests for lactation breaks and flexible work options must be fair, transparent and capable of review. A written agreement between the employee and employer may be effective in this regard.

Communication and support

- 3.17 All employees are to be provided with reasonable access to breastfeeding policies and facilities in their workplace.
- 3.18 Pregnant employees applying for parental leave should be provided with information about combining breastfeeding and work.
- 3.19 Complaints regarding breastfeeding and work arrangements are subject to the provisions of directives issued by the Commission Chief Executive.

4 Definitions:

For the purposes of this policy:

"Caregiver" refers to any person who assumes responsibility for providing care and attention to a child, including bringing a child onto Queensland Government premises.

Further information and resources

Appropriate facilities

Subject to space and logistic restrictions, workplace facilities should also include:

- a power point suitable for the operation of a breast pump
- access to facilities for nappy changing, washing and drying of hands and equipment ,and
- facilities for storing breastfeeding equipment (e.g. a cupboard or locker).

Workplace facilities, equipment and procedures are to be inspected and reviewed regularly and are to comply with legislative and policy requirements for workplace health and safety and public liability insurance.

Alternatives to on-site facility

If a suitable on-site facility is not available, alternatives may include, but are not limited to:

- using suitable workplace facilities provided by another government department or agency
- using a carer's room, parents room or similar facilities located off-site
- going home or to a caregiver's home, or attending a child care centre.

Resources

Further information can be found at:

<http://www.health.qld.gov.au/breastfeeding/>