

# Supporting Breastfeeding Students

## Adolescent Mothers

### A vulnerable population

Breastfeeding mothers frequently encounter obstacles including access to breastfeeding information, poor family and social support, and returning to work or school. Teen mothers have additional barriers and challenges that are unique to their age and situation. Teen mothers are less likely to breastfeed than any other population group in the United States. A teen mother may be coping with the stigma and embarrassment related to being a teen mother. She may lack parenting readiness. She may have a need for peer acceptance

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Continuity of care and support by the health care system, breastfeeding resources, and the school system are also important. Many studies indicate that teen mothers who choose formula feeding did so because they thought breastfeeding would make it more difficult to return to school. She may feel her school has a lack of support and limited space for pumping. She may also feel restricted due to time constraints and/or lack of on-site childcare, both of which

and be dependent on social support systems that may not be supportive of breastfeeding. It can be difficult for teen mothers to gain the skills needed to incorporate breastfeeding into their lifestyle as a student. A significant number of teen mothers have a low income and there is a strong association between living in poverty, crime, poor educational opportunities, teen pregnancy, and low breastfeeding rates.

contribute to making breastfeeding more difficult. Adolescent mothers, as is the situation with older mothers, have multiple role obligations in addition to their maternal role.

Though the new breastfeeding law applies to students attending public schools, private schools can also initiate these changes to provide vital support to mothers and infants.

## Breastfeeding Benefits



### For mothers:

- Reduces risk of breast, uterine and ovarian cancer.
- Lessens osteoporosis.
- Benefits child spacing.
- Promotes emotional health
- Promotes postpartum weight loss.
- Costs less to breastfeed (costs around \$1200 a year to formula-feed baby).

### For infants:

- Prevents obesity.
- Better oral health.
- Lowered risk of heart disease, juvenile diabetes, asthma and allergies.
- Protects against future illness and disease.

### For society:

- If 90% of families breastfed exclusively for 6 months, nearly 1000 infant deaths could be prevented and the U.S. would save \$13 billion per year in medical costs.

### For school systems:

- Support for breastfeeding shows all adolescent-aged students the normal way babies eat.
- Less unexcused absences and missed school work due to sick infants.
- Confidence in breastfeeding and parenting will reflect in schoolwork.

Source: <http://womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding>

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## What are the legal requirements?

### Link to HB2369:

<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?DocTypeID=HB&DocNum=2369&GAID=14&SessionID=91&LegID=103005>

### The new legislation requires that public schools do the following:

- Provide reasonable accommodations to a lactating pupil on a school campus to express breast milk, breastfeed an infant or child, or address other needs related to breastfeeding (as long as there is at least one lactating pupil on school campus):
  - Provide access to a private room that is **not a restroom**.
  - Grant permission to bring onto a school campus a breast pump and any other equipment used to express breast milk.
  - Provide access to a power source for a breast pump or any other equipment used to express breast milk.
  - Provide access to a place to safely store expressed breast milk.
- A lactating pupil on a school campus must be provided a reasonable amount of time to accommodate her need to express breast milk or breastfeed an infant or child.
- A pupil may not incur an academic penalty as a result of her use, during the school day, of the reasonable accommodations and must be provided the opportunity to make up any work missed due to such use.
- In the instance where a student files a complaint of noncompliance with these legal requirements, the public school shall implement the grievance procedure of 23 Ill. Adm. Code 200, including appeals procedures.

*A room that is already designated as a lactation room for employees may be utilized for students with no or only minor adjustments.*

## ROOM ESSENTIALS

The room should have a door. A lock is not required, but privacy must be ensured. Try to find an empty office or classroom.

Do not use a broom closet, supply closet or furnace room. This does not send a message of value and respect to students.

Have an "occupied" sign for the door.

The room should allow for good lighting and ventilation.

The room should be large enough for a comfortable chair.

There should be a flat surface in the room for the pump, such as a small table. It should be close to the chair.

The room must have an electrical outlet available.

The room should be in a quiet location away from high traffic and noise.

Windows in the room should be able to be covered for privacy.

Assign a person to help with access and oversight.

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## Storage Essentials

There should be access to a cool place (such as a cooler with an ice pack or refrigerator) to store breast milk.

A small dorm-size refrigerator would take up very little space in the room devoted to pumping.

A bottle or two of breast milk takes up very little room and can easily be stored in a kitchen or breakroom fridge.

The breastmilk container should be properly labeled to avoid any potential confusion.

Many mothers like to store bottles in a paper bag or a lunch bag.

## Cleaning Essentials

There should be access to a sink to clean breast pump parts.

Access to a sink is also necessary for a mother to wash her hands before and after pumping.

A kitchen or washroom can be used.

The sink should have hot, running water, and soap, as well as a towel for drying hands and pump parts.

The room should have daily maintenance and cleaning.

Have antimicrobial wipes to allow mothers to wipe down surfaces after use.

Hand sanitizer and a wastebasket should be available.

## The Extra Touch



- It would be very helpful to have a multi-user hospital-grade breast pump available at the school so students (and breastfeeding employees) do not have to tote their own back and forth, potentially leaving necessary parts at home. Mothers would provide their own collection kits.
- Consider obtaining, or asking by donation, electrical plugs for common breast pump brands to keep for use at the school. These are commonly forgotten and are required for an electrical pump to work.
- Have a bulletin board for baby photos.
- Consider offering a basket of snacks.
- Consider offering a stash of "extras" such as breast pads, bottles, frequently forgotten pump parts, or provide storage for mothers to bring their own. Changes in routine can cause mothers to forget needed items, causing stress. Keeping stress levels down will help maintain an environment primed for learning.

## Provide Reasonable Time Allowances

There is no legally defined allotted time to express breast milk or breastfeed an infant because both the frequency and the duration of pump sessions and/or feeding sessions will vary by mother, infant and child.

**Frequency of sessions:** Frequency will vary for different mothers. Mothers should express their milk as often as infant nurses, which typically is every 2-3 hours.

**Duration of sessions:** Duration can vary greatly by mother and her experience. A general rule could be 20 minutes to pump and an additional 10 minutes for prep before and clean up afterward.

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## Tips for Preparation



- Try to discuss with the student her plans to breastfeed or pump after delivery. Understand that while plans may be discussed prior to maternity leave, those plans may change.
- Provide the student with the school's written breastfeeding policy, as well as any other supporting material that you may have to help her prepare for her return to school.
- Listen to the student's needs. Her needs may vary from other students' needs and some flexibility may be required. Her needs will likely change as she learns her routine and returns to school following her maternity leave.
- Explain to the student that the school and its staff are fully supportive of the new mother in her choice to continue breastfeeding.
- Consider offering breastfeeding training/education for staff members to ensure support for the breastfeeding student.
- Encourage the student to meet with a lactation consultant to discuss, review and prepare for her specific lactation needs and routine.

## Breastfeeding Policy

It is important to include a breastfeeding policy in the Student Handbook. The policy does not need to be complex. It simply should include the essentials of how the school supports its nursing mothers.

The policy should be written in the same tone and voice as the other student policies and should:

- Clearly state that the school supports nursing student returning to school (and it should be added in the employee policy that staff are expected to also support nursing students returning to school).
- Summarize the legal requirement for complying with the amendments of Public Act 100-0029.
- List private places where a nursing mother can pump or nurse.
- State that the policy will be discussed with nursing students prior to their departure on maternity leave.
- Define or suggest reasonable break times.
- State pumping as a temporary excused absence with the detailed expectations of students and teachers to work together to make up missed school work without penalty.

## Preparation

Preparation is the most important part to successfully implement a breastfeeding policy. Breastfeeding mothers make the decision to breastfeed due to personal and private choices. Students may or may not discuss their decision to breastfeed or pump prior to maternity leave. Pregnancy and postpartum is often a stressful time for the student and knowing she has the support of her school will give her peace of mind. A student's choice to breastfeed and parent her infant does not mean that school and education are not a priority, in fact, by making preparations beforehand, the opposite is true. Mutual collaboration and early communication between the student and the school will promote an optimal transition for when the student returns to school.

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## Conclusion

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Supporting a breastfeeding student benefits the young mother, the infant and the school. It is easy to implement a breastfeeding policy with just some planning and preparation. Supporting and encouraging breastfeeding does not mean you are encouraging teen pregnancy. By supporting breastfeeding, you are supporting healthy mothers, healthy babies, and healthy parenting relationships.

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## Resources

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Sangamon County Department of Public Health/WIC:  
217-535-3102 or 217-415-0721

St. Johns Hospital: 217-535-3983

Memorial Medical Center: 217-788-3378

Office of Women's Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/>

La Leche League International:

<http://www.lalecheleague.org/nb.html>

International Lactation Consultant Association:

<http://www.ilca.org/home>

United States Lactation Consultant Association:

<https://uslca.org/>