

M.O.M.'s STATION - AN IMPORTANT RESOURCE FOR HEALTH

Initiative helps mothers return to work and the state make progress on an important health goal

Public Health Problem

- Breastfed babies are less likely to develop many childhood diseases and conditions, including infections and obesity.
- Increasing the initiation and duration of breastfeeding is important for helping Pennsylvania meet important health objectives.
- Returning to work from maternity leave creates barriers to continuation of breastfeeding such as the lack of a private area to pump and store milk and other supportive practices.

Program

- The Health Education and Information Program of the Pennsylvania Department of Health, through the Wellness Committee, provided technical assistance, information and resources to support breastfeeding in the state's Health and Welfare Building which is among state government buildings with the largest percentage of women workers.
- The Wellness Committee established a Mother's Own Milk (M.O.M.'s) Station in the building which is a private room equipped with a hospital-grade breast pump, table, chair, electrical outlet, paper towel dispenser, waterless cleansers, and an assortment of educational materials. They also provided consultation and support to employees to help them reach their goals related to breastfeeding.
- During the first year the M.O.M.'s Station was consistently in use by breastfeeding mothers during most working hours.

Impact

- Advantages of providing breastfeeding support include worker satisfaction and decreased absenteeism – mothers of breast-fed babies are less likely to be absent from work to care for sick children.
- The many benefits of the M.O.M.'s Station prompted mothers working in other places to request a written document from the health department recommending this type of lactation support for their workplaces. This project also provided an example and resources to help state employees establish breastfeeding rooms in other buildings.
- As one working mother expressed it, "This room and the electric hospital-grade breast pump have proven to be instrumental in my continued breastfeeding of my daughter since I have returned to work."
- This initiative was recognized by the Pennsylvania Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplace Collaborative and provided an example of a successful workplace program in *Mothering*, a national magazine.
- An additional room was added due to the demand.

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