

## **ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES BECOMES *BABY-FRIENDLY***

*Bringing babies to work helps parents and babies bond and promotes breastfeeding*

### **Public Health Problem**

- A baby's physical and mental development is enhanced by close, regular contact with parents.
- Strong evidence supports the many health benefits of breastfeeding for both mothers and babies. For example, children who are breastfed as infants are less likely to become overweight and women who breastfeed their babies are less likely to develop type 2 diabetes.
- Supportive workplace policies can remove barriers to the implementation of recommended child health practices by encouraging coworker support and enabling working mothers to breastfeed their babies.

### **Program**

- An Arizona Department of Health Services policy administered by the Employees Wellness Program permits workers to bring their baby to work, provided they have advance, signed permission and follow the policy as well as the written implementation guidelines which address potential areas of disagreement among employees related to the policy.
- The policy began as a breastfeeding policy and later was extended to all parents or legal guardians of infants up to six months of age, whether breastfeeding or not.
- Lactation rooms with rocking chairs and breast pumps are available in several state health department buildings.
- The program was featured in Time magazine as a growing workplace trend and in the Arizona Republic, a local newspaper.

### **Impact**

- More than 75 babies joined their parents at work over the last 8 years under this policy, positively impacting their future health. This includes all infants participating since implementation of an initial policy related just to breastfeeding.
- Worksite supports like this make it possible for working mothers to meet American Academy of Pediatrics health recommendations by breastfeeding their babies and supporting healthy child development.
- The "babies at work" policy is a positive influence on the work environment despite initial concern by some employees who felt the policy might encourage distractions on the job.
- Agency director, William Humble says, "Not only is the Agency doing this to improve health of the child, but just as importantly, we do it because it helps foster team spirit and camaraderie in our work units. Bottom line it is the right thing to do."

### **Contact**

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