

Employee Break Times for Nursing Mothers

The U.S. Department of Labor has released a fact sheet on the break time requirements for nursing mothers. This is part of the provision of the Federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, effective March 23, 2010.

The law requires that employers provide “reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk for her nursing child for one year after the child’s birth each time such employee has need to express the milk.” Employers are also required to provide “a place, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from co-workers and the public, which may be used by an employee to express breast milk.”

The law applies to employers of all sizes, but only those with fewer than 50 workers may apply to the Department of Labor for an “undue hard-

ship” exception based on the difficulty or expense of compliance.

“Women make up 54% of the workforce in Iowa,” stated Workforce Development Director Elisabeth Buck. “In order to maintain a well-balanced workforce, it’s important that we have provisions in place that protect the rights of Iowa workers.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control, Iowa’s rate of breastfed six-month olds (IA 33.2%) is a full ten percent below the national average (US 43.4%). Iowa ranks 37th in the nation for rates of breastfeeding, and is tied for 22nd in the nation for childhood obesity rates (26.7%), according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Breastfeeding has long been correlated with reduced incidence of diabetes and obesity in children, as well as

other health benefits, reduced rates of cancer for nursing mothers, and reduced rates of employee absenteeism for both parents.

The fact sheet on break time requirements for nursing mothers can be found at www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs73.htm.

Grants to Assist Workplace Accommodations

Additionally, the Iowa Breastfeeding Coalition announced the availability of eight \$500 grants to assist worksites throughout the state in starting or improving workplace lactation accommodations. The deadline for application is August 20, 2010. The application, and other information on ways to make an accommodation, can be found at www.iabreastfeeding.org.