For Immediate Release

New Policies Ease Return to Work for New Mothers

Retaining valuable employees after childbirth can be a challenge for many businesses. Successful workplaces can make this important part of a new mother’s return to work more realistic by making a few small changes to increase the number of satisfied, loyal employees and cost savings for business. In an effort to encourage adoption of these practices in workplaces, the President signed into law the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act or PPACA on March 23, 2010. This law amends Section 7 of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) as part of the new health care reform policies.

One of the general requirements of the PPACA states that employers are required to provide “reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk for her nursing child for 1 year after the child’s birth each time such employee has the need to express the milk.” Employers must provide “a place, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public, which may be used by an employee to express breast milk.” The PPACA only makes these requirements for breastfeeding mothers for employers with more than 50 employees.

A woman that is breastfeeding produces milk on a constant basis and may need to express milk every three hours to maintain a healthy milk supply. Women that do not have a private office should be provided with a private space (4’ x 5’ or greater). This space should not be a bathroom which may be unsanitary and often difficult to locate a power source with needed privacy.

Implementing these small changes can provide a significant return on investment. Mothers that are breastfeeding provide many important health benefits for their infants, often miss work less often and reduce health care costs for their infants. Additionally, employees that return to work after childbirth have lower turnover rates in employers that offer an environment that is supportive of breastfeeding. This can lead to improved morale, better job satisfaction and higher productivity. For more information on breastfeeding related to employers, please visit The National Women’s Health Information Center: The Business Case for Breastfeeding for Business Managers.

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department WIC office is available to answer questions and support as businesses implement these new regulations. Please contact Kelly Evans, Breastfeeding Peer Counselor, by calling 417-851-1581.

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