

## Workplace Lactation Factsheet

Workplace lactation is an important issue for women and their employers. A mother's choice of how to best feed her baby is a critical and intensely personal decision. Yet many low-wage working women are not offered the time and support they need to make the choice that's right for their families because their workplace does not offer policies or programs that support breastfeeding. The relationship between workplace supports and sustained breastfeeding or expressing milk is clear across the working population - while as many full-time working mothers start breastfeeding as do part-time or unemployed mothers, many stop within three months.

- Companies whose lactation support programs offer their employees the resources to make healthy choices about how to feed their babies report **greater employee morale, loyalty, productivity and retention** - all of which can be linked to greater customer service, customer satisfaction, and profit.
- Workplace lactation programs also lower healthcare costs - a critical point after a decade which saw healthcare costs double. The U.S. Breastfeeding Committee reports that **for every \$1 employers invest in workplace lactation programs, they can gain back \$3 in reduced healthcare costs** - averaging \$400 per baby over the first year.
- **Low-wage workers are much less likely to enjoy the workplace flexibility or conditions necessary to breastfeed or express milk.** One California study found that 65% of all childbearing women had incomes under 200% of the federal poverty level. In fact, women make up a disproportionate percentage of the low-wage working population: almost 30% of the female workforce is low-wage, compared to only 20% of the male workforce - making workplace lactation a more relevant issue to this population than any other.
- Since **low-wage work represents one out of every four new jobs** that is expected to grow over the next decade, low-wage workers' lack of access to workplace lactation is a growing problem.

To help hourly and low-wage employees make good choices about infant feeding, and to educate low-wage employers about the benefits of workplace lactation programs and policies, Corporate Voices is developing a new body of work around workplace lactation. The project's first product will be a workplace lactation toolkit for line and hourly workers and their employers.

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