HANDOUT
Making it Work:
Supporting Working Women with Breastfeeding

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Session Description:
There has to be an easier way! Many women returning to work after maternity leave find that the challenges are great and wonder if breastfeeding is going to be the key to making life easier. At the same time, employers of these women may not know how to support them. Creative solutions abound! “Making it Work” examines the realities AND the solutions for combining breastfeeding and employment from both perspectives: the employee and the employer. It includes practical strategies lactation consultants and breastfeeding educators can put into place immediately to make it easier for women to continue breastfeeding after returning to work.

Objectives:

1. Name three major barriers to breastfeeding among women returning to work.
2. Identify practical solutions for helping mothers manage milk expression, particularly in non-office job settings.
3. Name at least two ways to encourage employers to provide lactation accommodations for nursing women.

Supporting Employed Breastfeeding Mothers
- Profile of Working Women
  - Nearly 60% of women are in the workforce today; they comprise half of the total workforce in the country. (DOL)
  - Working women with children represent the fastest growing segment of the workforce. Over 70% of women with children are in the workforce. (DOL)
Health disparities are prevalent. African American women are the most likely to return to work as new mothers. More than 76% are employed. Research shows that employment has a directly impact on breastfeeding duration rates.

- Common Barriers of Employed Breastfeeding women include:
  - Short maternity leave
  - Emotional and physical needs
  - Lack of support from family
  - Lack of knowledge about rights
  - Lack of accommodations in the workplace
  - Lack of support from employer and co-workers
  - Welfare to Work

- Additional challenges face low-income women working in low-wage jobs:
  - Job autonomy and flexibility
  - Nonstandard hours
  - Reliance upon family for childcare
  - Lack of knowledge about using a breast pump and maintaining milk production
  - Lack of empowerment to advocate for needs

- To balance the demands of work and family, women need:
  - Strategies for coping with fatigue and feelings of sadness over being separated from their baby
  - Support from family, especially if they are also the caregivers of the baby
  - Solutions for continuing to breastfeed after returning to work
  - Strategies for how to address their supervisor and co-workers

- Getting organized
  - Sample pumping schedules
  - Sample milk packing schedule (Wright 2013)
  - Storing milk
  - Phasing back to work
  - Preparing baby for the return to work

- Maintaining and building milk production when separated from the baby
  - “Magic Number” concept (Mohrbacher 2012)
  - Use the supply – but replace it!
  - Breastfeed exclusively when home with baby
  - Hands-on pumping
  - Breastfeed at night
  - Skin-to-skin helps increase production
  - Fully empty breast at least once daily
  - Power pumping (Cathy Watson Genna)

- Creative solutions for break time for expressing milk
  - Reasonable breaks protected under law
  - Staff coverage options (floater staff, supervisor/manager provides coverage, staff help each other out)

- Creative solutions for private space
• Permanent space options
• Flexible space options

- Approaching supervisors
  • Begin during pregnancy
  • Focus on mother’s needs
  • “My Lactation and Work Plan” (New York DOH)
- Dealing with co-workers
  • “Breaks are predictable; absences are not!”
  • Establishing a sense of teamwork
- Empowering mothers and building confidence

Assisting Employers with Support for Nursing Employees
- Employer lack of knowledge about:
  • How breastfeeding works
  • The needs of breastfeeding women
  • How to provide support services to meet those needs
  • Bottom-line benefits of lactation accommodations
  • Federal and State laws related to support for nursing women
- Myths and barriers about lactation support among employers
  • Concerns that breastfeeding will interfere with productivity
  • Embarrassment
  • Sexual harassment in the workplace
  • Lack of space
  • Liability concerns
  • Myths about milk storage
  • Coworker concerns
- What motivates employers to provide accommodations for nursing employees
  • Bottom-line benefits
    ✓ Health care costs
    ✓ Lower absenteeism
    ✓ Lower turnover rates
    ✓ Improved productivity and loyalty
  • Federal requirements of the Nursing Breaks Law
    ✓ Private space that is not a bathroom
    ✓ Time to express milk each time employee needs it
    ✓ Exemptions and other stipulations of the law
  • Public relations
  • Sense of fairness for all employees
- Practical solutions for time
  • Using standard breaks (fixed or as needed)
  • Going home to breastfeed
• Staff coverage
• Bringing baby to work

- Practical solutions for space
  • Permanent, dedicated space (for single and multiple users)
  • Flexible space
  • Outdoor/mobile options

- Examples of business solutions
  • Healthcare agencies
  • Schools and universities
  • Retail stores
  • Restaurants
  • Other small businesses

- Going beyond the law
  • Education
  • Access to support
  • Creating a culture of support

- Resources
  • OWH Online Searchable Resource for Employers
  • The Business Case for Breastfeeding
  • DOL website and FAQ’s

Bibliography


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