

NIH Policy Manual

2300-640-1 - NIH Nursing Mothers Program

Issuing Office: OD/OM/ORS/DOHS **Phone:** [\(301\) 496-2960](tel:3014962960)

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Transmittal Notice

1. **Explanation of Material Transmitted:** This issuance establishes policy, responsibilities and procedures for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Nursing Mothers Program to support nursing mother personnel. This Program is administered by the Office of Research Services (ORS), Division of Occupational Health and Safety (DOHS).
2. **Filing Instructions:**

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PLEASE NOTE: For information on:

- Content of this chapter, contact the issuing office listed above.
- NIH Policy Manual, contact the Division of Management Support, OMA on 301-496-4606, or enter this URL: <https://oma.od.nih.gov/DMS/Pages/Manual-Chapters.aspx>.

A. Purpose

This Manual Chapter establishes the policies and procedures for the NIH Nursing Mothers Program and the requirements for participation. The NIH Nursing Mothers Program supports nursing mother personnel by assisting with education, private facilities, and necessary equipment to express breast milk to take home for their infant(s); enabling the nursing mother to prolong their breastfeeding relationship for their health and the health of their infant(s).

The NIH Nursing Mothers Program is administered by the Office of Research Services (ORS), Division of Occupational Health and Safety (DOHS).

B. Scope

This policy applies to all NIH Institutes or Centers (IC) or Office of the Director (OD) Offices and any nursing mother personnel, contractors, fellows, and visitors choosing to express breast milk to take home for their infant(s).

C. Background

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) has been in the forefront of breastfeeding promotion and support for several decades. HHS announced its goals for breastfeeding through Healthy People 2020: 81.9% of women initiating breastfeeding, 60% of babies being breastfed for at least 6 months, and 34% for a full year. HHS supports nursing mothers who want to express milk upon their return to the workplace after the birth of their infant.

According to the Department of Labor, mothers are among the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. labor force. Recent data indicate that at least 62% of all mothers with children younger than 12 months are employed. Approximately 70% of employed mothers with children younger than 3 years of age work full-time. After pregnancy, one-third of these mothers return to work within 3 months, and two-thirds return within 6 months.

Research indicates that intentions to return to work full-time after giving birth are significantly associated with lower rates of breastfeeding initiation and shorter duration. Some mothers will make the determination not to initiate breastfeeding in anticipation of returning to work. Given the substantial presence of mothers in the Federal work force, HHS has served as a role model in establishing and assuring lactation support; and NIH has sponsored a workplace lactation program (now the NIH Nursing Mothers Program) since 1998, with over 400 women participating each year.

D. Policy

It is the policy of the NIH to provide workplace support to nursing mothers (employees, contractors, fellows, and visitors) choosing to express breast milk to take home for their infant(s). The support includes:

1. Break Time for Nursing Mothers

Nursing mother personnel are allowed reasonable break times to express breast milk during work hours; for one year after the infant(s) birth, each time such individual has need to express their milk (see HHS Guidance, 990-003: Nursing Mothers Program).

Note: Supervisors are encouraged to consider other work-life flexibilities to support the nursing mother, such as alternative work schedules, telework, annual leave, compensatory time off, and credit hours.

2. Lactation Room

NIH provides lactation rooms in a variety of locations, on and off campus, for exclusive use by nursing mothers for the purpose of breast milk expression. The rooms are private and sanitary, located near a restroom or other area, equipped with a sink and running water to wash hands and rinse out breast pump parts^{*}. Expressed breast milk should be stored in the individual's personal cooler at her desk or locker and taken home at the end of each workday. **Note:** Guidance for creating new lactation room(s) in facilities should be directed to the DOHS Nursing Mothers Program Manager and Lactation Consultant Services.

3. Equipment Provided for Expressing Breastmilk

NIH provides hospital-grade electric breast pumps to assist nursing mothers with breast milk expression during work hours. Personnel choosing to use the equipment provided through the NIH Nursing Mothers Program will provide their own personal attachment kit. No personal equipment may be stored in the lactation rooms.

4. Education

Prenatal and postpartum breastfeeding classes and informational materials are available for all Program participants.

5. Evaluation

The NIH Nursing Mothers Program will keep statistics concerning the activities of the Program and present them to the DOHS Nursing Mothers Program Manager on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis. A Program evaluation form will be provided to each participant as they complete the Program, on an anonymous basis, to comment on the services received. These evaluation forms will be forwarded directly to the DOHS Nursing Mothers Program Manager.

^{*} This policy does not exclude the possibility of the arranging other accommodations. If an official lactation room is not available, supervisors are encouraged to assist personnel make other arrangements.

E. Responsibilities

1. Lactation Consultant Services Responsibilities

The lactation consultants and staff of the NIH Nursing Mothers Program can provide:

- a. Prenatal outreach detailing the Program and education with regard to returning to work and breastfeeding;
- b. Telephone support while the participants are on maternity leave;
- c. A return-to-work consultation to explain how to maintain the breastfeeding relationship and how to support the milk supply after returning to work;
- d. Ongoing support for participants through the duration of expressing milk while at work; and
- e. Coordination of the NIH Nursing Mothers Program activities.

2. Nursing Mother Personnel Responsibilities

- a. Nursing mother personnel who choose to use the NIH lactation rooms are responsible for registering with the NIH Nursing Mothers Program prior to use of a lactation room and for following rules for lactation room use.
- b. Nursing mother personnel who wish to express milk during the work period shall keep their supervisors informed of their need to take time for this activity and how it will alter their work routine or break time.
- c. Nursing mother personnel are responsible for keeping milk expression areas clean for the next user and free of personal items.
- d. Each nursing mother is responsible for proper storage of their milk using a personal storage cooler that is kept at their own desk or in their locker, to be taken home at the end of each workday.
- e. Nursing mother personnel are responsible for notifying the NIH Nursing Mothers Program Lactation Consultant Services when they no longer require use of the lactation rooms and/or other services of the Program.

F. Procedures

The DOHS, administers the NIH Nursing Mothers Program. The resources NIH provides in support of the Program, and information and procedures pertaining to employee participation, are outlined on the DOHS Web site at:

<https://www.ors.od.nih.gov/sr/dohs/HealthAndWellness/Pages/lactation.aspx>.

G. References

1. [NIH Policy Manual Chapter 1743 Keep and Destroying Records](#)
2. [General Records Schedule 2.7 080](#)
3. [HHS Guidance, 990-003: Nursing Mothers Program](#)

Appendix 1: Definitions

Expression of Breast Milk: Taking milk from the breast using special equipment and storing it for later use, allowing a mother and infant to continue their breastfeeding relationship by preserving the mother's milk supply while she is separated from her infant at work.

Hospital Grade Electric Pump: An electrical device used to extract milk from the breast. It is commonly used in newborn intensive care nurseries and hospital settings and, if used regularly, is effective to maintain lactation. The pumps in use in the Nursing Mothers Program are designed for multiple users with each mother having her own personal attachments.

Lactation: The chief function of the mammary glands, or breasts, and is a scientific word for the basic physiology of milk synthesis, storage, and expression.

Lactation Consultant: A health professional who specializes in the clinical management of breastfeeding. The International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners (IBLCE) certifies lactation consultants who meet its criteria and have passed its exam.