

# NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

For more information, contact: *Jessica Davies*, 308-487-3600 Ext. 101 or *Courtney Ostrander*, 308-282-6182

## **Gordon Memorial Health Services offers additional support for mothers returning to work**

One of the most pivotal times in a woman's career, both for herself and her employer, is the months immediately following the birth of a baby. Making the decision to return to work is both an emotional and a financial decision – one an employer can make easier by supporting breastfeeding for working mothers.

Gordon Memorial Health Services (GMHS) has committed to making this important time easier by providing support for their employees returning to work. They have recently adopted a breastfeeding policy to support employees and created a room for employees and use for parents visiting the clinic with little ones.

"Employees have been excited. Our room is at the Gordon Clinic and our staff has been very excited about having a mother's room, a changing space for families with little ones, and to benefit for employee use as well," said Courtney Ostrander, Marketing Coordinator with GMHS.

"The benefits to helping breastfeeding mothers are obvious for employers. Creating a breastfeeding-friendly work environment reduces the risk of absenteeism, reduces health claims to employers, and increases employee retention and loyalty," said Jessica Davies, Assistant Health Director.

Family-friendly benefits bring your business a 3:1 return on investment through basic accommodations such as reasonable time to pump in a clean, private space.

"Mother-child separation due to work presents a serious challenge to meeting breastfeeding goals when employers do not meet the relatively simple needs of breastfeeding employees," Davies added.

Women with children are the fastest-growing segment of the work force. Returning to an unsupportive work environment has been identified as a major reason for avoidance or early abandonment of breastfeeding. Workplace support can bridge this gap and help more women balance working and breastfeeding.

There are more supports than ever for working mothers to maintain breastfeeding when returning to work. Employers are required to provide reasonable break time and a private, non-bathroom place for nursing mothers to express milk during the workday for one year after the child's birth. The Panhandle Worksite Wellness Council is an excellent local support for area organizations with technical assistance, information, and resources.

Ostrander added, "This was part of our Community Health Needs Assessment as a need area. We feel as a healthcare facility this is a small, but powerful space we could provide support to both mothers and fathers."

Breastfeeding is not just good for business, it is also a key strategy in the fight against the obesity epidemic. Multiple studies have shown that a history of *not* breastfeeding increases the risk of being overweight or obese in childhood and adolescence. Adolescent obesity often persists into adult life. Breastfeeding plays an

important role in obesity prevention and improving overall health outcomes, and therefore is vitally important to community health.

For additional information about worksite wellness, visit [www.pphd.org/pwwc.html](http://www.pphd.org/pwwc.html) or call Davies at 308-487-3600 extension 101. The Panhandle Worksite Wellness Council is proudly part of Panhandle Public Health District. The Council specializes in supporting employers in the Panhandle region. We recognize that many employers support a diverse and remote workforce and offer innovative ways to overcome the challenge of working with a virtual team. We understand that many of our employers do not have full-time wellness resources and work to provide resources and training to make running a worksite wellness program as easy as possible.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle community.