

NEWS RELEASE

July 30, 2012

For immediate release

For more information, contact: *Jessica Davies*, 308-487-3600 Ext. 101 or 866-701-7173

Breastfeeding-friendly worksites benefit new mothers, offer high return on investment for employers

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.

“August 1-7 is World Breastfeeding Week,” said Worksite Wellness Coordinator Jessica Davies with the Panhandle Worksite Wellness Council. “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 retention of female employees,” Davies said.

“According to the National Business Group on Health, basic accommodations such as reasonable time to pump and a clean, private space for breastfeeding offer a 2:1 return on investment. More comprehensive accommodations, like supportive policies and flexible schedules offer a 3:1 investment for employers,” she added.

“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 now make up half the U.S. workforce and are the primary breadwinner in nearly four of 10 American families. 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,” Davies said.

There are more supports than ever for working mothers to maintain breastfeeding when returning to work. Through the amendments of the Fair Labor Standards Act, 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 supports Panhandle worksites and breastfeeding employees with tools, information, and resources.

Sidney Regional Medical Center (SRMC) recently adopted policy and created a room for nursing mothers. Tammie Brunkow, SRMC Employee Health Nurse said, “We are excited to have a quiet, comfortable environment for nursing mothers in addition to our OB Coordinator, Amy Abbott, who is working diligently to make SRMC a baby-friendly hospital through the World Health Organization/UNICEF.”

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 public health.

For additional information about breastfeeding friendly worksites or to know how your organization can become a Panhandle Worksite Wellness Council member, visit www.pphd.org/pwwc.html. The Wellness Council provides free tools and consultation for members, training and networking opportunities and ready-to-use services such as employee newsletters and bulletins, podcasts and customizable policies and behavior

change programs, updated frequently. The council offer consultations with employers to develop policies and environmental supports such as those described above. Panhandle Worksite Wellness Council is a division of Panhandle Public Health District in partnership with Scotts Bluff County Health Department.