

# NEWS RELEASE

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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 employee retention and loyalty," Davies said.

"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," 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 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," Davies said.

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.

City of Chadron recently adopted policy, designated a clean, private room for nursing mothers, and provides local hospital and health center contacts for ongoing support. Bev Bartlett, Human Resource Officer with the city said, "The additional supports have been positive and well-received by employees."

Fred A. Lockwood & Co, PC (FALCO) based in Chadron and Scottsbluff also recently adopted policy to support nursing mothers and complement their wellness program offerings. Annie Loutzenhiser, CPA and Shareholder said, "FALCO feels that putting family first is essential to a happy employee. Having a policy that supports a small aspect of that truth gives the employee the tools and knowledge to breast feed without fear of negative repercussion."

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](http://www.pphd.org/pwwc.html). The Panhandle Worksite Wellness Council is a division of Panhandle Public Health District in partnership with Scotts Bluff County Health Department. The council offers extensive membership benefits to help build evidence-based worksite wellness initiatives for local organizations.

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.