

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

April 23, 2013

Hillsborough County Breastfeeding Taskforce
10232 Meadow Crossing Drive
Tampa, FL 33647

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my support for protecting nursing in the workplace for all mothers.

The mission of the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County is to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts. The Office of Health Equity recognizes the importance of breastfeeding and has partnered with the Hillsborough County Breastfeeding Taskforce on initiatives including hosting the first Tampa Bay Mother Baby Summit and outreach efforts to normalize breastfeeding at local businesses with launching of the breastfeeding friendly Anytime, Anywhere campaign.

January 2011 marked the release of *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding*. The *Call to Action* aims to remove obstacles women face when trying to breastfeed their babies; one action includes addressing employee lactation support programs. DOH – Hillsborough supports such efforts to remove workplace barriers and recognizes both short-term and lifelong advantages to both a breastfed child's and a breastfeeding mother's health that have been documented by research. The World Health Organization and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend exclusive breast milk for the first six months with continued breastfeeding for one year or longer. Workplace lactation programs help employees attain these health benchmarks.

More than half of mothers with children under the age of one are in the workforce, and women who cannot express milk at work are unable to continue to breastfeed for the optimal duration. Employers benefit from the positive health effects of breastfeeding when employees are more productive and take fewer sick leaves.

Starting and maintaining high-quality lactation support programs for employees in our community, as suggested in the *Call to Action*, would ensure the public health benefits of optimal infant nutrition. It would remove workplace barriers that currently prevent Floridians from providing breast milk for their infants for the recommended length of 6-12 months, and it could help the United States save up to \$13 billion per year in healthcare costs.

Sincerely,

Sophia Hector MPH, CPH
Office of Health Equity
Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County

Florida Department of Health – Hillsborough County

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