



*Florida Breastfeeding  
Coalition, Inc.*

# **THE INFLUENCE OF BREASTFEEDING FRIENDLY BUSINESSES ON LONG TERM BREASTFEEDING**

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# CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Presenters have no conflict of interest to disclose

# OBJECTIVES

After this presentation participants will be able to:

1. Identify barriers to both attaining and maintaining any of the required criteria for the Florida Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Award.
2. Identify breastfeeding employees' perceptions of the support provided for breastfeeding employee.
3. Describe alternative strategies businesses would like to be recognized for providing support in the workplace for their breastfeeding employees.

# BACKGROUND OF BREASTFEEDING OBSTACLES IN THE WORKPLACE

In the last 50 years, the percentage of first time mothers returning to work after delivery within 3 months has increased<sup>1</sup>

1 in 4 women returning to work within 10 days after birth, one-third returning after three months, and another third by six months<sup>2</sup>

Working mothers continue to be among the fastest growing segment of the US labor force with 25.1 million or 69.9 percent of mothers with children under the age of 18 actively participating in the labor force

Mothers have experienced harassment and unsupportive employers and co-workers who do not understand the need to pump several times a day which can negatively affect milk supply or lead to early cessation

# FOUNDING OF THE FBC EMPLOYER PROGRAM AND CRITERIA

In 2008 the Office on Women's Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services created a comprehensive program designed to educate employers in relation to the value of supporting breastfeeding employees in the workplace, known as the Business Case for Breastfeeding (BCB).<sup>5</sup>

A year after the BCB was launched, the Florida Breastfeeding Coalition (FBC) utilized the foundation of the BCB to create the Florida Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Award to recognize businesses with breastfeeding friendly worksites based on a set of criteria for three levels of breastfeeding support: Gold, Silver, and Bronze



# UPDATED ENROLLMENT OF THE PROGRAM

Since its inception the coalition has designated over 700 businesses as breastfeeding friendly leaving the status of millions of other employers as either not breastfeeding friendly, partially breastfeeding friendly or breastfeeding friendly but unknown to the public.

# EVALUATION DESIGN

Evaluation of the Florida Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Award to identify:

- 1) Barriers and perceptions among breastfeeding friendly designated businesses
- 2) If breastfeeding friendly businesses influence long term breastfeeding.

A qualitative approach was used to examine perceptions of attaining and maintaining the award criteria was utilized.

An interview guide was developed to reflect the evaluation questions.

## Interview Guide

Hello, my name is Sandra Suther and I am working with the Florida Breastfeeding Coalition (FBC) to conduct key informant interviews which will inform improvements to Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Award.

1. How long has \_\_\_\_\_ been a breastfeeding friendly workplace?
2. What, if any, are the barriers to both attaining and maintaining any of the required criteria?
  - a. Probe with some of the requirements for recognition.
3. What do you perceive to be the breastfeeding employees' perceptions of the support provided for breastfeeding employees?
4. Are there any other ways the businesses would like to be recognized for providing support in the workplace to their breastfeeding employees?
  - a. Probe: Beyond the Certificate



# METHODS: PART 1 EMPLOYERS

Contact emails and phone numbers for 24 businesses that applied and received the BFE recognition were provided.

Emails were sent to all the contacts requesting a telephone interview. The scheduled interviews lasted from 30 - 45 minutes.

Participants verbally consented to be interviewed and to have interviews audio-taped with permission.

Data extracted from the transcripts and surveys were coded and analyzed for recurring patterns and themes using NVivo 12 Pro™ software to organize the data.

# METHODS: PART 2 — FBC SUBSCRIBERS

Based on the results from the telephone interviews, an online survey was developed, and a link was included in the FBC Newsletter.

The survey consisted of the same questions that was asked of the employees with the addition of answer choices based on the results of the employer telephone interviews.

Each question also allowed for an open-ended response if they did not choose any of the supplied choices.

Two additional questions were added to the newsletter subscriber online survey:

- 1) What recommendations for improvement would you include for the Florida Breastfeeding coalition website?
- 2) Do you think breastfeeding friendly businesses influence long-term breastfeeding?

# RESULTS

## Sample – Part 1

Twelve of the 24 worksites responded to the email invitations.

Two of the worksites were not available at the time of the interview.

Ten Florida BFE's were interviewed.

All ten are at the Gold level.

Most (6 worksites) have been breastfeeding friendly for 1 – 3 years; one for 6 years and two for 8 years. One employer stated that they have been breastfeeding friendly “forever.”

All the employers interviewed were female.

# RESULTS

Sample – Part 2

One hundred and six responded to the online survey

Majority of responders described themselves as:

- 1) Breastfeeding advocate (24)
- 2) Lactation consultant or certified lactation consultant (61).

# RESULTS - BARRIERS TO ATTAINING AND MAINTAINING THE REQUIRED CRITERIA

There were very few barriers to implementation for the ten worksites:

One stated, “We did it all right with very little tweaking necessary.”

Other responses included:

Being a non-profit might have been our biggest barrier. We had to have a lactation room – we were luckily able to get things that we needed donated, so we could meet the criteria. I wouldn't say it was so much a barrier as a little bump. The community is very supportive. - (BFF Employer 1)

I did research about what to have in a breastfeeding room, the organization was pretty full throttle. They wanted it up and going. Locating a room was not a big issue. We had a couple of extra rooms I could use, and we had support from the facilities team to either take anything or bring stuff in. Really no barriers. - (BFF Employer 2)

# RESULTS - BARRIERS TO ATTAINING AND MAINTAINING THE REQUIRED CRITERIA

A couple of the employers shared some barriers regarding spacing for the lactation room:

Probably our biggest one right now is we are remodeling here at our hospital, so the room has gotten shuffled around. - (BFF Employer 3)

“Finding a good location in a small office space.” - (BFF Employer 4)

I think the spacing and management if you will because you always want to have them on board as well. There are so many different units I think even the services will expand but that is a concern with the space. - (BFF Employer 5)

# RESULTS - FBC NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS

Providing space for a lactation room (56%)

Support from management (50%) were the top answers

Providing a sink with running water (20%)

Providing refrigeration or a personal cooler was also a problem (23%)

# RESULTS- EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THE SUPPORT PROVIDED FOR BREASTFEEDING EMPLOYEES

They like that there is no longer an issue of whether or not they will be able to breastfeed once they return to work. We actually had a grand opening in 2013 of our first lactation area. I invited the mummies-to-be and anyone that wanted information about it. We had lunch and some games and prizes to give out. Showed the room and asked questions about anything we can do to help them get more comfortable. They shared a lot of feedback. We've had a really good response to the lactation room. - (BFF Employer 9)

That's what makes it comfortable for a mother to breastfeed. And our mothers don't feel ashamed when they go back to work because they are not being very discreet. So, when they have that space and it's very welcoming and homey it just makes them feel comfortable. They don't feel embarrassed and that's a really big thing with a lot of my clients. They feel like they don't have that space – who wants to pump in the bathroom? - (BFF Employer 1)



# RESULTS CONTINUED

We had a great response from the employees that were probably thinking about quitting nursing and some really nice comments. We have a bring the baby to work policy until 6 months. They use the room quite often. I've had people say it is very convenient for them. - (BFF Employer 6)

# RESULTS - NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS

Lack of support from coworkers due to the time that is allowed for breastfeeding mothers to pump

“Occasionally other staff members get frustrated because the special employee gets a break that they don’t get just so they can sit down and pump” (Nurse and Lactation Consultant 93)

As a breastfeeding employee and having breastfeeding co-workers, your co-workers can easily get mad and not understand if the workplace is busy and you have to stop to pump. Many people feel like pumping should wait until there is a slow spot, they are not willing to take on the extra load of work to let you pump. - (Breastfeeding employee 87)

# RESULTS CONTINUED

Many felt that while some businesses have allowed a specific amount of time and number of breaks for a mother to pump, other businesses such as the food and retail industry haven't done as well.

Others felt that teachers also did not get enough support even though there are policies for breastfeeding teachers in schools.

At least 27 of the 106 online respondents were happy with the support breastfeeding

# RESULTS — BREASTFEEDING FRIENDLY INFLUENCE ON LONG-TERM BREASTFEEDING

Over 90% of the FBC Newsletter subscribers that responded to the online survey felt that breastfeeding friendly businesses influence long-term breastfeeding

Improving workplace conditions to support breastfeeding mothers will increase satisfaction of the mothers, reduce the sick time they are required to spend home with their infants, and save costs of hiring since unsupported mothers are more likely to resign. — (DOH employee 47)

... there were *MANY* times I felt like giving up and the support of my coworkers and boss helped me not give up, they never pressed me for time or when I needed to feed more often during clusters they were supportive. — (Breastfeeding Mother/Employee 42)

# DISCUSSION

Most employers thought that there were very few barriers to the implementation of the BFE criteria, a few agreed that providing space for a lactation room was a common barrier.

Survey responders, in addition to previous research, also agreed that providing a space for pumping or breastfeeding was a common barrier for the workplace.

Other barriers supported by the literature included support from management or coworkers, providing a sink with running, lack of accommodations to store breastmilk (i.e.-refrigeration or a personal cooler), and little to no flexibility in the work schedule to express milk.

Differences were found among employer interviews and survey responders' pertaining to employee perceptions, indicating a need for further support and better communication among employer and employee regarding breastfeeding policies and BFE award designation.

# LIMITATIONS

Personal bias all employers were already in worksites that were designated breastfeeding friendly and the survey responders were advocates of breastfeeding.

Lack of clarification regarding whether or not participants perceived employers as positively or negatively influencing long term breastfeeding. With 90% responding yes, interpretation was weighed more on responded commentaries as either being positively or negatively influencing breastfeeding.

Despite these limitation current evidence supports that employers that are unaware of these compounding effects of unsupportive breastfeeding work environment or failure to uphold polices supporting mothers in the workplace can negatively influence long term breastfeeding

# TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Employers that uphold policies that abide by the Breastfeeding Break Time Fair Labor Laws, positively influence breastfeeding by reporting employees still breastfeeding 6 months post birth.

With the implementation of BFE recognition programs employers are now beginning to provide flexible work schedules, provide on-site lactation support and should be continued to further impact breastfeeding duration.

Further research in this area should include both employers and employee perspectives to better understand the influence of breastfeeding friendly worksites on breastfeeding duration.

# RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE ENROLLMENT

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5. What are some other ways, besides a certificate and listing on the Florida Breastfeeding Coalition website, can we recognize those businesses that provide support in the workplace to their breastfeeding employee? Here are some of the ways other U.S. Breastfeeding Coalitions are recognizing their businesses. Check your top 3 choices or add your own suggestion.

- a. Photo shown on Local Coalition Facebook page
- b. Honorees presented with an award by a Senator at the Capital
- c. Annual regional Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplace Awards Luncheon
- d. Award Ceremony scheduled at the convenience of award recipients
- e. A congratulation cake with the name of the facility
- f. Press release announcing Businesses
- g. Links to awards and breastfeeding resources
- h. Information and Educational Webinars
- i. Recognition through other Social Media
- j. Providing Window Clings (“Breastfeeding is Welcome Here”)
- k. A Wooden Plaque (instead of paper certificate)
- l. Other:

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