Illinois Law Supports Breastfeeding Moms

Being a new mother can be a tough job. When a new mom returns to work or even school, this can be especially challenging. This challenge is even greater for those moms who are also breastfeeding. Some mothers have had to make a choice between their jobs or school and the choice of breastfeeding or formula. Both federal and Illinois laws support moms for breastfeeding their infants in public, in the workplace, and now in school.

The Illinois Public Act 100-0029 amends the School Code and went into effect on January 1, 2018 for public and charter schools to provide reasonable accommodations for breastfeeding and lactation purposes. The law is designed to help moms as they adjust in returning to school. Keeping students enrolled in school and reducing days missed from school attendance are benefits to students as well as long term benefits to the community. Having the right to pump breast milk during school hours will make the choice to breastfeed much easier. From a health perspective, the positive impact of increasing breastfeeding rates provides babies with a healthier start in life.

Breastfeeding is healthier not only for infants, but also for moms. Mothers who breastfeed have a lower risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, ovarian cancer, and breast cancer. Infants who are breastfed have a lower risk of respiratory and ear infections, obesity, childhood cancers, type 1 and 2 diabetes, diarrhea, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). It’s even been linked with higher IQ.

While current laws allow for breastfeeding in public, laws also afford women at work or school a private place for breastfeeding and pumping. Supporting new moms in
the workplace, at school, or even in public gatherings or shopping can include some easy adjustments for businesses and schools alike:

- Develop a comfortable, private, and secure area for pumping breast milk or breastfeeding. Many schools already have a pumping area for teachers returning to work. Accommodating students to use this room would be an easy first step. Rest rooms are not acceptable places to assign as breast pumping or breastfeeding areas for schools or for any business workplace.
- Assure a sink is available in the same area of pumping to wash breast pump parts. This is a both a convenience and a time saver. It’s also a sanitary issue.
- Provide a refrigerator specifically for breast milk. This is helpful, so mothers don’t stress about keeping their breast milk in a cooler all day. No baby needs spoiled milk.
- Help moms who are breastfeeding to get the recommended additional 300-500 calories a day. Try supplying your lactation room with nutritional snacks and bottles of water.
- Support mothers with kind words. A friendly and supportive atmosphere will go a long way to boost new moms with confidence and positively impact their lives.

While the laws establish the framework, the community understanding and support will be the help our new moms need to choose breastfeeding as a foundation for a healthy family.

For more information on breastfeeding laws in our area, visit the Central Illinois Breastfeeding Task Force [http://www.illinoisbreastfeeding.org](http://www.illinoisbreastfeeding.org). For important information on other public health issues, visit [www.pcchd.org](http://www.pcchd.org).

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The Peoria City/County Health Department continues efforts to improve community health in Peoria County with the overarching goal “to increase the number of people who are healthy at every stage of life.”