

**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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**DOH-OKALOOSA CELEBRATES WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK**

*~ Breastfeeding and Work...Let's Make It Work! ~*

**OKALOOSA COUNTY, FL** — The Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (DOH-Okaloosa) is celebrating World Breastfeeding Week, August 1<sup>st</sup> through August 7<sup>th</sup>. This year's theme is "Let's Make it Work," and DOH-Okaloosa wants to make sure local workplaces are supporting breastfeeding mothers.

"It is important for workplaces to promote, encourage, and support breastfeeding among their employees, clients, and customers," stated Dr. Karen Chapman, Director of the Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County. "The health benefits of breastfeeding for nursing children and mothers should outweigh any stigma that might be present in workplaces."

Work can often be a barrier to breastfeeding. Having supportive employers can help mothers successfully breastfeed as long as they desire. Employer support pays off by boosting morale and productivity, reduces turnover, and reduces recruitment and training costs. Mothers who feed their infants mainly breastmilk miss one-third fewer work days because of a sick child. Additionally, breastfeeding reduces healthcare costs and provides a \$3 return for every \$1 invested.

Breastfeeding protects babies from infections and illnesses that include diarrhea, ear infections, and pneumonia. Breastfed babies are less likely to develop asthma. Children who are breastfed for six months are less likely to become obese. Breastfeeding also reduces the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Mothers who breastfeed have a decreased risk of breast and ovarian cancers.

Possible ways employers can show support to breastfeeding mothers is by offering:

- Flexible work hours to breastfeed or to express breastmilk such as part-time work schedules, longer lunch and other breaks, job-sharing or any such alternatives.
- Private facilities for expressing and storing breastmilk. It can be a breastfeeding room, a corner or any safe space at or near the worksite.
- Information about national maternity laws and benefits.
- Information about community resources.
- Support from employers, management, superiors, and co-workers in terms of positive attitudes.
- Job security and non-discrimination on the grounds of maternity and breastfeeding.

Being distinguished as a "breastfeeding-friendly" workplace should be a priority for every business in Okaloosa County. The Florida Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Recognition Program is an award program sponsored by the Florida Breastfeeding Coalition that recognizes

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TWITTER: HealthyFLA  
FACEBOOK: FLDepartmentofHealth  
YOUTUBE: fldoh  
FLICKR: HealthyFla  
PINTEREST: HealthyFla

businesses who are providing support in the workplace to their breastfeeding employees. Interested workplaces are strongly encouraged to visit [fbreastfeeding.org/employerprogram.htm](http://fbreastfeeding.org/employerprogram.htm).

The good news, it is not expensive for an employer to accommodate breastfeeding moms. The estimated costs of furnishing a workplace room for breastfeeding moms can be as little as \$150 to a maximum of less than \$1,000. All Okaloosa employers are encouraged to learn more about the Florida Breastfeeding Coalition award program and to apply. "Let's make Okaloosa County the friendliest community in the state for breastfeeding moms and their babies," says Dr. Chapman.

DOH-Okaloosa offers several services for new or expecting mothers. The Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) program at DOH-Okaloosa offers breastfeeding support through peer counselors, certified lactation consultants, breast pump loan program, and breastfeeding classes. Breastfeeding promotion and education is also included in the Healthy Okaloosa 5-2-1-0 initiative that is a part of the Healthiest Weight Florida statewide initiative. The Healthy Okaloosa 5-2-1-0 initiative uses community partnerships to promote healthy and active lifestyles for Okaloosa County residents and visitors.

For more information, please visit [www.healthyokaloosa.com](http://www.healthyokaloosa.com), [www.worldbreastfeedingweek.org](http://www.worldbreastfeedingweek.org), [www.floridahealth.gov](http://www.floridahealth.gov), [www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding](http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding), [www.healthiestweightflorida.com](http://www.healthiestweightflorida.com), or [www.babyfriendlyusa.org](http://www.babyfriendlyusa.org).

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