

# A National Snapshot of Lactation Policies in the Academic Work Environment

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## PURPOSE

Despite amendments made to Section 7(r) of the Fair Labor Standards Act – Break Time for Nursing Mothers in the Affordable Care Act little is known about the impact of implementation and outcomes in academic institutions. The purpose of this study was to identify and describe features of lactation policies in a national sample of American colleges and universities.

## SIGNIFICANCE

- Numerous national professional health organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, acknowledge that exclusive breast milk is the optimal form of nutrition for all newborns for a minimum of six months and up to 12 months of age.
- New mothers rely on legislation to fulfill breastfeeding related expectations and goals in their communities, schools and workplace settings.
- Inconsistent adoption of policies related to lactation create academic work environments that may prevent women, especially new mothers, from attempting to provide the highest form of nutrition to their infants.

## METHODOLOGY

**Design:** Descriptive study a national sample of U.S. Catholic colleges and universities (n= 226) to assess the level of support provided for lactating students, staff and faculty.

**Sample:** Colleges with the presence of a formal lactation policy publically visible on their website (n = 22). Each school was contacted by a trained interviewer using a telephone script. Key measures included: policy details, number of lactation spaces, descriptions of spaces, and accessibility to the spaces

**Data Analysis:** Calculation of simple percentages comparing the characteristics of schools and components of available lactation policies.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: University Characteristics (n=226)**

	Percent (N)
<b>Region</b>	
West	11.5% (26)
Midwest	35.5% (80)
Northeast	36.3% (82)
South	16.8% (38)
<b>Size (# Undergraduate Students)</b>	
Small <5,000	89.8% (203)
Medium 5,000-15,000	9.3% (21)
Large >15,000	0.9% (2)
<b>University Characteristics</b>	
% of Male's	
Low (0% - 30%)	29.6% (63)
Medium (31% - 51%)	61% (130)
High {52% -100%}	9.4% (20)
% of Female's	
Low (0% - 49%)	12.2% (26)
Medium (50%-70%)	60.6% (129)
High (71% - 100%)	27.2% (58)
Full time %	
Low (0% - 58%)	13.9% (29)
Medium (59% - 79%)	26.8% (56)
High (80%-100%)	59.3% (124)
Part Time %	
Low (0% -15%)	48.8% (102)
Med. (16%-28%)	19.6% (41)
High (29%-100%)	31.6% (66)
Tuition	
Low (< \$30,000)	47.8% (108)
Med. (\$30,000-\$33,000)	19.0% (43)
High (> 33,000)	33.2% (75)
Nursing School on Campus	65.5% (148)

**Table 2: Lactation Space Characteristics (n= 22)**

	Percent (N)
<b>Number of Lactation Spaces</b>	
1 room	41% (9)
2 rooms	18% (4)
3 or more rooms	27% (6)
<b>Locations</b>	
Distributed Throughout Campus	50% (11)
Student Center	18% (4)
Women's Center	14% (3)
Human Resources Department	5% (1)
<b>Availability</b>	
Business Hours (8am-9pm)	68% (15)
24 hours-7days a week	18% (4)
<b>Available Supplies</b>	
Chair	59% (13)
Sink/Hand wash	56% (12)
Table	50% (11)
Electrical Outlet	45% (10)
Antibacterial Hand Wipes	23% (5)
Refrigerator	18% (4)
Microwave	5% (1)
Hospital-Grade Pump	9% (2)
Changing Table	9% (2)
TV	5% (1)

**Table 3: Lactation Policy Details (n=22)**

Type of Room Access	Percent (N)
Appointment/ Reservation required	41% (9)
Key Checkout	23% (5)
Self Access with ID card	18% (4)
Self-Access without restriction	14% (3)
Self Access with Key Code	9% (2)
Security Escort to room	5% (1)
Own office used to breastfeed	9% (2)
<b>Policy Characteristics</b>	
Supportive and comfortable environment	77% (17)
Compliant with FLSA / Affordable Care Act	32% (7)
Agreement between employee and supervisor	18% (4)
Mother responsible for storage of milk	18% (4)
Available for students, faculty, and staff	14% (3)
No policy description on website	14% (3)
Reasonable break time	14% (3)

**81% of U.S. infants begin life breastfeeding**

Source: CDC Breastfeeding Report Card, 2016

## CONCLUSIONS

- 1/3 of schools identified the Fair Labor Standards Act as the foundation of their lactation policy.**
- All schools with a policy had at least one room dedicated for maternal lactation.**
- Only 9% of the schools had a hospital-grade pump available for mothers to use**
- Key access (23%) was the most common form of lactation space access**

## IMPLICATIONS

American colleges and universities may improve the design of policy, accessibility and resources of lactation resources for students, staff and faculty. Nursing schools in academic campuses are well positioned to lead efforts to support mothers who choose to breastfeed their children in the academic work place.