

**UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND  
BREASTFEEDING AND LACTATION SUPPORT PROGRAM**

**Originators:** ADVANCE Office & URI Work-Life Committee

**Date:** December 1, 2008

**Policy #08-1**

**Purpose:**

The University of Rhode Island recognizes the importance and benefits of breastfeeding for both mothers and their infants, and in promoting a family-friendly work and study environment. Rhode Island Law provides for the needs of mothers who are nursing and their infants, as outlined in the End Note of this policy, and URI intends to fully comply with these provisions of state law by implementing a breastfeeding and lactation policy for students, faculty, and staff.

By implementing a breastfeeding and lactation policy, the University strives to create an exceptional environment conducive to working and learning and attuned to both professional and personal needs, such as the needs of a mother who is nursing to feed and/or to express milk for her baby while she is at work or school.

**Applicable To:**

All female University faculty, staff, and students.

**Responsibility:**

All University supervisors are responsible for being aware of the policy and working with female employees to arrange mutually convenient lactation break times. The Office of Student Affairs will be responsible for making this policy known to female students.

**Policy:**

The University of Rhode Island recognizes the importance and benefits of breastfeeding for both mothers and their infants, and in promoting a family-friendly work and study environment. Therefore, in accordance with Rhode Island state law, the University of Rhode Island acknowledges that a woman may breastfeed her child in any place open to the public on campus, and shall provide sanitary and private space, other than a toilet stall, in close proximity to the work or study area for employees or students who are nursing to be used as a lactation room. Supervisors/chairs will work with employees who are nursing to schedule reasonable and flexible break times each day for this activity.

1. Lactation Breaks
  - a) Whenever possible, the University shall provide flexibility for staff and faculty mothers who give their Department Chair or Supervisor adequate notice identifying a need for lactation support and facilities.
  - b) Mothers are responsible for requesting lactation support prior to or during maternity leave, preferably no later than two weeks before returning to work.
  - c) The unpaid time (such as a lunch period), generally not to exceed one hour, ideally should run concurrently with an employee's paid break time (if applicable), but the University shall make separate time available, if this is not reasonable. Supervisors and employees shall work together to establish mutually convenient times.

- d) Alternatively, personal leave, vacation time, or flexible scheduling may be used for this accommodation.
- e) It is assumed that no serious disruption of University operations will result from providing lactation time.
- f) Consistent with URI's efforts to recognize the importance of supporting the needs of working caregivers, supervisors will respond seriously, positively, and will ensure that there are no negative consequences to mothers who are nursing when lactation break times are needed.
- g) Students and instructors planning to use lactation facilities must do so around their scheduled class times. Although any necessary student accommodations should be negotiated with individual professors, professors are not required to excuse tardiness or absences due to lactation needs.

## 2. Lactation Facilities

- a) The University of Rhode Island shall provide sanitary and private facilities in close proximity to the work area across campus for mothers to breastfeed or to express breast milk.
- b) The location may be the place an employee normally works if there is adequate privacy, cleanliness, and is comfortable for the employee.
- c) Areas such as restrooms are not considered appropriate spaces for lactation purposes, unless the restroom is equipped with a separate, designated room for lactation purposes.

### **Procedure:**

1. Supervisors who receive a lactation accommodation request should review available space in their department/unit and be prepared to provide appropriate nearby space and break time.
2. If the employee or student wishes to use designated lactation rooms, they are listed at [http://www.uri.edu/advance/work\\_life\\_support/lactation\\_facilities.html](http://www.uri.edu/advance/work_life_support/lactation_facilities.html). Included are descriptions of each lactation room, what, if any, pumping equipment is available, and whether provisions for the appropriate storage of breast milk are provided.
3. Mothers who are breastfeeding or expressing milk shall be responsible for keeping the facilities clean, and, where pumps are available, for cleaning and sanitizing the breast pumps after each use.
4. If an employee has comments, concerns, or questions regarding the URI Breastfeeding and Lactation Support Program Policy or other work-life balance personnel policies, she or he should contact the Office of Human Resources at (401)874-5271. Those who believe they have been denied appropriate accommodation or need assistance on how to make or respond to a request for accommodation should contact the Office of Human Resources at (401)874-5271. Students and others who have questions regarding access and use of the lactation facilities or would like general information about breastfeeding in the workplace and other work-life balance topics may contact the ADVANCE Office at (401) 874-9422.

*End Note. Rhode Island State Laws supporting breastfeeding are as follows:*

**§ 08-223 (amended 2008, Chapter 23-13.5-1). Breastfeeding in public places.** A woman may breastfeed or bottle feed her child in any place open to the public.

**§ 23-13.2-1 Workplace policies protecting a woman's choice to breastfeed.** – (a) An employer may provide reasonable unpaid break time each day to an employee who needs to breastfeed or express breast milk for her infant child to maintain milk supply and comfort. The break time must, if possible, run concurrently with any break time already provided to the employee. An employer is not required to provide break time under this section if to do so would create an undue hardship on the operations of the employer.

(b) An employer shall make a reasonable effort to provide a private, secure and sanitary room or other location in close proximity to the work area, other than a toilet stall, where an employee can express her milk or breastfeed her child.

(c) The department of health shall issue periodic reports on breastfeeding rates, complaints received and benefits reported by both working breastfeeding mothers and employers.

(d) As used in this section: "employer" means a person engaged in business who has one or more employees, including the state and any political subdivision of the state; "employee" means any person engaged in service to an employer in the business of the employer; "reasonable efforts" means any effort that would not impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business; and "undue hardship" means any action that requires significant difficulty or expense when considered in relation to factors such as the size of the business, its financial resources and the nature and structure of its operation.

**§ 11-45-1 Disorderly conduct.** – Protects mothers breastfeeding in public from disorderly conduct laws.