

Guidelines for Supporting Breastfeeding in the Workplace

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Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has a duty to accommodate employees pursuant to the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. HRM recognizes all women's right to breastfeed and supports employees who wish to continue breastfeeding upon return to work from maternity/parental leave.

1 - Purpose

To establish guidelines to assist HRM staff in supporting and accommodating HRM employees who wish to continue breastfeeding upon return to work from maternity/parental leave.

2 - Scope

All employees of Halifax Regional Municipality

3 - Definitions

Breastfeeding – includes feeding directly from the breast as well as expression/pumping of breastmilk.

HRM Premises – includes all land (including parks, playgrounds, sportsfields and trails), property, structures, installation, offices, job sites, vehicles and equipment owned, leased, operated or otherwise directly controlled by HRM.

4 - Responsibilities

Managers/Supervisors:

- Will support and accommodate employees who wish to continue breastfeeding upon their return to work. Upon receipt of a request, the manager or supervisor will respond in a timely manner.
- Will work with breastfeeding employees to develop an accommodation agreement that outlines the specific arrangements, on an individualized basis.

- Will work with breastfeeding employees to determine mutually agreeable hours of work, assignments and breaks to support breastfeeding practices while ensuring that these are compatible with operational requirements and not inconsistent with collective agreements and/or other non-union employment policies. Arrangements may include but are not limited to:
 - Flexible hours – this may include hours of work and breaks;
 - Space – suitable space for breastfeeding/pumping that is clean, quiet, comfortable and safe for both the employee (and baby, if applicable);
 - Arrangements for a caregiver to bring the baby to the workplace to breastfeed;
 - Time off without pay;
 - Use of paid leave (vacation or banked overtime).
- Any arrangements or accommodations, and any limits placed on them, will respect the individual's dignity and will be in accordance with Nova Scotia Human Rights legislation.

Employees (Returning to Work)

- Employees will make a formal request to their supervisor to identify and discuss their anticipated breastfeeding needs at least four (4) weeks prior to their return to work and as any changes arise.
- Employees are responsible to make up any time beyond regular breaks, if necessary and operationally feasible, through arrangements with their manager or supervisor (if they are not using paid leave or time off without pay).

All HRM Staff

- HRM staff will support employees who wish to continue breastfeeding at the workplace after a return from maternity/parental leave.
- HRM staff will not ask a breastfeeding mother to leave the premises, cover up, move to a more discreet area, use a restroom to breastfeed, or suggest any other alternative that is contrary to the NS Human Rights Act.
- If managers or staff experience difficulty in securing appropriate alternatives or accommodations in the workplace, or have any other questions related to these guidelines, please contact Human Resources staff to discuss possible solutions.

All HRM staff will apply these guidelines in a manner that is consistent with workplace safety rules and/or obligations.

5 - Contact

HR Business Partners

6 - Additional Resources

- *Make Breastfeeding Your Business: An Action Support Kit:*
<http://novascotia.ca/dhw/healthy-communities/documents/Breastfeeding-support-kit.pdf>

- *Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission links:*
 - List of protected rights: <https://humanrights.novascotia.ca/content/know-your-human-rights>
 - NS Human Rights Act: <http://nslegislature.ca/legc/statutes/human%20rights.pdf>
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