



# The Breastfeeding Friendly Worksite Initiative of the Healthy Gallatin Lactation Education Program

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## Research Question

**How can the Healthy Gallatin Lactation Education Program use existing research to collaborate with local businesses to increase the quantity and quality of breastfeeding friendly worksites in Bozeman?**

## Introduction

To increase the quantity and quality of breastfeeding friendly worksites in Bozeman, the Healthy Gallatin Lactation Education Program, in collaboration with the Gallatin Breastfeeding Coalition, proposed a Breastfeeding Friendly Worksite Initiative in January 2016. This was inspired by similar projects carried out successfully on a larger, statewide scale in Texas and Missouri, where local employers were encouraged to develop breastfeeding policies that supported their employees' needs in exchange for an award of recognition. This recognition is intended to endorse the idea of breastfeeding within the community, which has been shown in Texas to lead to more businesses being willing to provide worksite breastfeeding support to employees.

This poster explores part of phase I (of 3 phases) of development and implementation of the "Healthy Gallatin Breastfeeding Friendly Worksite Award". In this part, approximately 20 businesses were approached and encouraged to become recognized as a Breastfeeding Friendly Worksite. These businesses were from various industries and included both local businesses and corporations.

My research discusses employer responses to the initiative, both positive and negative, and how the Healthy Gallatin Lactation Education Program can use this feedback to further develop the project in order to approach more businesses in the community with success.

## Initiative Overview

- As part of my project, I approached each employer and asked them to fill out an application form that asks for basic information about the business.
- Once the application form is submitted, the Healthy Gallatin Lactation Education Program will conduct a site visit to evaluate the breastfeeding friendly worksite accommodations.
- Businesses are evaluated based on 3 levels of support: Gold, Silver and Bronze. The Bronze level is the minimum requirement needed to meet the state law.
- Employers meeting one of these levels of support will be recognized with a framed certificate, window cling, and recognition on the Healthy Gallatin website, Gallatin Breastfeeding Coalition website, social media, at annual community events, and in quarterly press releases to the local media.



Fig. 1: Window cling employers will receive in recognition of their efforts to support breastfeeding employees. (Designed by the Healthy Gallatin Lactation Education Program)

## Breastfeeding Regulations

Both Montana state law and federal law require employers to encourage and accommodate breastfeeding by providing daily unpaid break times and a private location, other than a toilet stall, in close proximity to the work place for a mother to express breast milk. Employers must also not discriminate against breastfeeding mothers.

**Supporting employees who breastfeed is the law! Therefore, getting recognition as a Breastfeeding Friendly Worksite should be fairly easy and inexpensive!**



Fig. 2: Examples of private space where employees can express breast milk. (Sources: Top: The Business Case for Breastfeeding by MCHB, HRSA, and DHHS; Bottom: Healthy Gallatin Lactation Education Program)

## Methods

- Review the Texas Mother Friendly Worksite Program, its evaluation by the Disease Control and Prevention-funded for Training and Research Translation (Center TRT), the Missouri Breastfeeding Friendly Worksite Program, and academic research on factors that promote and affect breastfeeding in the workplace.
- Approach approximately 20 businesses in Bozeman with information on this initiative and encourage each business to become recognized as a breastfeeding friendly worksite.
- Assess how willing each business is to applying for the award and determine what can be done differently, if necessary, to better encourage businesses.

## Findings

These are few of the important common themes identified

- 95% of businesses approached already support employees who have the need to express breast milk in the workplace.
- 75% of businesses approached were not aware that the private location designated for expressing breast milk need not be a permanent space.
- There was considerable confusion among employers as to whether this initiative supports customers or employees (55% of businesses approached).
- 2 businesses did not want to participate in this initiative because they have few to no employees who would have the need to express breast milk at work in the foreseeable future, therefore time and effort would be wasted in applying for this award.
- Businesses that are part of corporations (35% of businesses approached) were willing but unable to commit to the initiative immediately as they needed approval from the corporate division. A few businesses asked me to contact the corporate division via email, which was unsuccessful as I have received no replies.

How best to approach a business

- A phone call followed by a brief face-to-face meeting
- To contact business owners and heads of HR: Email
- To get the word out about this initiative: Drop in at a business and ask to speak to the store manager (this approach did not yield any definite responses, but store managers were willing to pass on the information to their superiors)

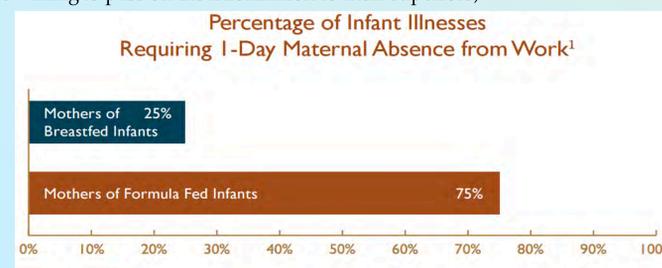


Fig. 3: The benefits of breastfeeding for businesses (Source: The Business Case for Breastfeeding by MCHB, HRSA, and DHHS) Other benefits include: lower health care costs, higher employee retention rates, higher employee productivity and loyalty, and recognition as a "Family Friendly" business.

## Discussion

Challenges encountered

- Approaching the figure of authority**  
When contacted, most businesses were unaware of who had the authority to approve or disapprove of this initiative, which shows that this is a subject that is not talked about often.
- Uncertainty of information reaching appropriate person**  
I did not know if the information presented will reach the appropriate person, especially in a corporation, in order for the initiative to be considered.
- Time**  
- I had very little time to present this initiative, explain why it is important to our community, and how participating will benefit the business.  
- Businesses may view breastfeeding in the workplace as a less important matter, and given busy schedules, may not consider applying for this award in the near future.
- False perceptions**  
Many businesses stated that they already support breastfeeding employees. However, the Healthy Gallatin Lactation Program Coordinator disclosed that she has worked with clients who are employed by these businesses and are not getting the proper support they need.

Suggestions to overcome challenges

- Follow-up phone call/email/visit** 2 weeks after business is approached and information regarding the initiative is given.
- Approach businesses more formally**, with a 15-20 minute presentation, instead of just an information packet. The Bozeman Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Bozeman Association may help facilitate meetings with business owners directly.
- Create an online information packet**, and email this to businesses that can only be approached via email, such as corporate divisions and Headquarters of businesses.
- Encourage and support **breastfeeding employees to approach their employers**, if they are comfortable doing so.
- The Texas program found that organizing "Lunch and Learn" events were a great way to bring many business owners together to present this initiative – even the busiest employers needed a lunch break!

## Future Work

- In the immediate future, the Healthy Gallatin Lactation Education Program will conduct site visits and award recognition to breastfeeding friendly worksites that submit applications.
- Currently, there are no statistics or reports on breastfeeding friendly worksites in Bozeman (or Montana), so the Healthy Gallatin Lactation Education Program will begin compiling information on the number of breastfeeding friendly worksites, their breastfeeding policies, etc. The application form businesses submit will be useful in collecting this information.
- Phase II of this initiative will take place in 5 years, when the Healthy Gallatin Lactation Education Program will contact the businesses that participated in this initiative to assess and evaluate the impact on supporting breastfeeding in the workplace and of being recognized as a Breastfeeding Friendly Worksite in the community.

## Conclusion

The "Healthy Gallatin Breastfeeding Friendly Worksite Award" is currently in its early stages of implementation. My project involved approaching different types of businesses in Bozeman, and assessing how better to approach businesses based on what I learned and observed. Effectively approaching businesses is critical to the successful implementation of this initiative.

**My hope is that the successful implementation of this initiative will encourage more communication on the topic of breastfeeding in our community, protect breastfeeding mothers from harassment in and out of the workplace, and help our community view breastfeeding with a more positive attitude.**

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