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MCH Innovations Database Practice Summary & Implementation Guidance

Reducing Breastfeeding Disparities in California through Lactation Accommodation Workgroup

The purpose of the “Reducing Breastfeeding Disparities in California through Lactation Accommodation Workgroup” is to collaborate to build capacity to support workplace lactation accommodation in California and reduce related equity disparities.



Location

California



Topic Area

Health Equity



Setting

Workplace



Population Focus

Perinatal/Infant Health



NPM

NPM 4: Breastfeeding



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Section 1: Practice Summary

PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the *Reducing Breastfeeding Disparities in California through Lactation Accommodation Workgroup* is to collaborate to build capacity to support workplace lactation accommodation in California and reduce related disparities. We did this by convening high level stakeholders that promote, monitor and/or enforce various state and federal lactation accommodation laws in California.

The Workgroup promotes and advocates for creative strategies needed in low-wage workplaces so that lactating individuals can continue to feed their babies despite constraints in the availability of space and employee time. The Workgroup utilizes the US Office of Women's Health (womenshealth.gov) resources. For example, pop up tents have been used to create private spaces for outdoor and agricultural workers, scheduled breaks in supervisors' offices have been used in manufacturing, and floaters have been brought in to support customers in retail environments while workers are taking lactation breaks. The workgroup promulgates information on the return on investment, as has been achieved by a variety of employers providing lactation support to their workers.

Many low-wage worksites provide little or no support for lactating individuals. Each missed opportunity for mothers to pump or feed their babies during the workday increases the risk that their milk supply will decrease, reducing milk available for their babies, and potentially increasing the need for formula supplementation. This can result in increased risk of illness for both mothers and babies.

For many high wage worksites, practices beyond the minimum legal requirements have been implemented to promote working individual's ability to continue to produce milk including extended paid leave, bring your baby to work policies, telecommuting, on-site childcare, worksite lactation policies, flexible scheduling, and access to more than one private area to pump and store expressed milk. While these practices may be helpful in extending lactation, significant barriers exist to accomplish similar practices in many low-wage workplace settings.

CORE COMPONENTS & PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

The goal of the workgroup is to increase the number of low-wage worksites that support lactating individuals by addressing each of the levels of the [Spectrum of Prevention](#). Collaborative ongoing work of the Workgroup supports California lactating individuals having equal access to lactation support in the workplace and school, thus reducing disparities in lactation initiation and duration.



Core Components & Practice Activities

| Core Component | Activities | Operational Details |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Assessment | Utilized California Dept. of Public Health survey data, Maternal Infant Health Assessment (MIHA). | Utilized California Dept. of Public Health survey data, Maternal Infant Health Assessment (MIHA). |
| Clarifying Laws | Reviewed language in state and federal laws addressing lactation accommodation. | Provided clarification of the laws on our respective webpages, as well as the USBC webpage. |
| Stakeholder Engagement | <p>Ensuring questions and answers on stakeholder web pages are accurate.</p> <p>Ensuring stakeholders provide consistent helpful information on lactation accommodation.</p> | Regular meetings with the organizations that have jurisdiction over California and federal laws. Advancing parents' questions on lactation accommodation to the workgroup to 1.) develop consistent and accurate responses and 2.) identify areas for needed advocacy and improvement. |
| Workgroup Breastfeeding Education | <p>Develop lactation accommodation educational materials, resources and social media for the public.</p> <p>Leading a coordinated -lactation accommodation campaign as part of California's World Breastfeeding Awareness month.</p> | Developing educational and promotional materials via social media and organizing webinars and conference workshops that promote breastfeeding awareness. |
| Leveraging Partnership | To provide consistent and accurate information, we worked with partners, with related expertise, to review and respond to lactation accommodation inquiries and complaints and participate in trainings including webinars and conference workshops. | Publishing a 2020 brief Lactation Support for Low-Wage Workers |



HEALTH EQUITY

The workgroup addresses health inequities and discrimination via Strategies to ensure low-wage workers receive the quality accommodation needed for lactation.

One strategy is to increase knowledge and awareness of California Paid Family Leave and lactation accommodation laws, especially for the low wage worker. This includes informing employers of low-wage workers about Paid Family Leave and state and federal lactation accommodation laws including developing and implementing a written lactation accommodation policy; working together to encourage employers to protect the jobs of low-wage workers with the birth or adoption of a child; providing; advocating for clear, accessible multilingual education on-line for low-wage workers and employers to easily obtain information about their lactation accommodation rights and how to report violations.

Another strategy is to increase access to breast pumps, counseling, and appropriate lactation accommodation for low-wage workers, including access to a safe pumping space, time to pump, electricity, a sink, and a refrigerator. Several cost analyses and return on investments were produced about this strategy: [Impacts of Breastfeeding Support, Supplies, and Counseling on Health Insurance Premiums and Costs](#); [Breastfeeding Support in the Medi-Cal Program: A Large Return on a Small Investment](#) - [Breastfeeding Support and the ACA Requirement](#). The workgroup works to improve health plan benefits to cover quality electric breast pumps, pump supplies, essential in-person lactation support services, and resources such as numbers to warm lines. They also support training employers about the role of local WIC programs to ensure low-wage workers have access to breastfeeding supportive services, in addition to their health plan benefits.

The workgroup initiates or supports efforts to educate employers of low-wage workers on the benefits of lactation accommodation and how to accommodate lactating workers, such as how to write their lactation accommodation policy and when to distribute it to workers, and how to support breastfeeding parents who are returning to work. The workgroup discusses and shares creative strategies for low-wage environments to support breastfeeding and promote solutions to workplace breastfeeding accommodation barriers, such as proximity and conditions of pumping location that offer sufficient privacy, cleanliness, and safety as well as flexibility in scheduling and timing as returning workers adapt to their working and pumping schedules.

Finally, the workgroup provides input and supports the California Breastfeeding Coalition's role to recognize employers of low-wage workers that provide exemplary lactation accommodation at the state and local levels.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

In 2019, the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory, a free online collaboration assessment was sent to participating members of the "Reducing Breastfeeding Disparities through Lactation Accommodation" Workgroup. The responses were overall positive. Participants of the workgroup



know where to ask for more clarification and those responsible for monitoring specific laws now feel comfortable responding to enquiries.

While this program has not been formally evaluated yet, some initial signs of success experienced by the Workgroup included:

- Being instrumental in updating the [Workplace Breastfeeding Support in California infographic](#) with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH);
- Collaborating on responses to inquiries related to lactation accommodation violations;
- Collaborating with stakeholders and partners to update member web pages and resources;
- Providing guidance to improving state annual worksite lactation accommodation award;
- Participating in webinars and social media development for the annual Breastfeeding Month campaigns;
- Collectively marketing the [9 Steps to Breastfeeding Friendly: Guidelines for Community Health Centers and Outpatient Care Settings](#);
- Providing technical writing for the United States Breastfeeding Committee Inventory Analysis of Lactation Accommodation Rights for California.
- Recommending speakers for the [California Breastfeeding Coalition Annual Summit](#) and the [California WIC Association Annual Conference](#); and
- Providing input to the California Pediatric Obesity Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network. [Lactation Support for Low-Wage Workers](#) ,published in 2020 by the California WIC Association, California Breastfeeding Coalition, and California Department of Public Health.

Section 2: Implementation Guidance

STAKEHOLDER EMPOWERMENT & COLLABORATION

The workgroup convenes high level stakeholders addressing lactation accommodation, including but not necessarily limited to: the California Division of Labor Standards Enforcement; California Department of Fair Employment and Housing; United States Department of Labor; California Breastfeeding Coalition; Legal Aid at Work, California Department of Public Health (WIC, MCAH and Center for Healthy Communities); California WIC Association; United States Breastfeeding Committee; BreastfeedLA; California Department of Education; and Association of California School Administrators.

Since many of these stakeholders are new to openly discussing lactation accommodation and local enquiries are discussed, families are not included. Maintaining confidentiality is important and it allows the group to freely discuss their individual confusion and work out responses as a partnership. New lactation accommodation enquires are discussed at every meeting, so all attendees are aware of new scenarios that have arisen.



The workgroup:

- Provides input on the collection and analysis of lactation accommodation related data including development of a [Workplace Breastfeeding Support in California infographic](#).
- Monitors inquiries related to lactation accommodation violations
- Evaluates, edits and coordinates workgroup member web pages and resources
- Provides input to improving state annual worksite lactation accommodation awards
- Plans for annual [California Breastfeeding Month](#) campaigns
- Markets the [9 Steps to Breastfeeding Friendly: Guidelines for Community Health Centers and Outpatient Care Settings](#)
- Provides feedback on the [United States Breastfeeding Committee Inventory Analysis of Lactation Accommodation Rights for California](#)
- Recommends speakers for annual [California Breastfeeding Coalition Annual](#) Summits and [California WIC Association Conferences](#)
- Conducts a health departments lactation accommodation gap analysis
- Promotes lactation accommodations in school setting for adolescents
- Promotes lactation training and support for childcare providers.
- Provided input to the California Pediatric Obesity Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network. [Lactation Support for Low-Wage Workers](#) ,published in 2020 by the California WIC Association, California Breastfeeding Coalition, and California Department of Public Health.

The workgroup has met as frequently as quarterly but aimed for at least 2 meetings per year. Meetings were held at the California Department of Public Health Offices and via a virtual platform. Meeting dates were set by using a doodle poll and often took longer than expected to find a time that worked for each member. Because many of the members are now participating in a 2018-2021 child obesity Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network (CollIN) addressing lactation accommodation, the meetings have been frozen since mid-2019, though communication and collaborative work continues between the workgroup members as an excellent relationship has developed. There are plans for the CBC and CWA to restart the workgroup meetings in 2021.

REPLICATION

This practice has not yet been replicated.

INTERNAL CAPACITY

- Subject matter experts
- Seasoned facilitators and collaborators
- Time needed to arrange meetings, build agendas, write up notes and maintain communications.



- Time varied to work collaboratively on different projects.
 - Agency and name recognition to motivate others to attend the meetings.
- Leadership from CDPH helped develop personnel capacity to support and deliver our practice.

PRACTICE TIMELINE

Phase: Planning/Pre-Implementation

| Activity Description | Time Needed | Responsible Party |
|---|--|-------------------|
| Reviewed current laws related to lactation accommodations | Ongoing 4 hours | MCAH Staff |
| Contacted organizations involved in monitoring lactation accommodation laws and requested a liaison | 2 year before meeting until meetings began | MCAH Staff |

Phase: Implementation

| Activity Description | Time Needed | Responsible Party |
|--|-------------|--|
| Compiled a list of related resources | 6 months | BreastfeedLA |
| Developed a workplan | Ongoing | Workgroup |
| Monitored lactation accommodation complaints | Ongoing | All agencies overseeing lactation accommodation complaints |



Phase: Sustainability

| Activity Description | Time Needed | Responsible Party |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| Identified California WIC Association and the California Breastfeeding Coalition to lead the workgroup | Final year of meeting together | CWA and CBC Executive Directors an CDPH leadership |

PRACTICE COST

All workgroup members were volunteers, and no specific funding was identified. The MCAH Nutrition and Physical Activity Coordinator was funded through the HRSA Title V Grant.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Including people from the agencies that enforce state and federal lactation accommodation laws is important for identifying and addressing complaints, clarifying laws, and improving web information for the public. Assessing the needs of the different partners facilitates development of a common action plan, such as developing the brief, [Lactation Support for Low-Wage Workers](#).
- Developing partnerships can be leveraged for other collaboration such as the Childhood Obesity CoINN.
- Having developed relationships with workgroup members made it easy to request speakers for webinars and conferences addressing lactation support in the workplace.
- Finding times to meet is difficult so it is helpful to identify a consistent meeting time or choose a time to meet months ahead of the meeting.
- Addressing lactation accommodation in the workplace and in education, as one statewide workgroup, is difficult because of the laws that dictate their responsibility are different.
- Working with high level federal and state agencies may require the leadership of a nonprofit agency to convene the workgroup to reduce bureaucratic challenges.

Assets:

- Utilizing multi-year planning with short- and long-range goals.
- Utilizing the Spectrum of Prevention for a multi-strategy approach.
- Including diverse partners from the public and private sectors.
- Elevating California Department of Public Health workplace support data and making it available to the public.



Challenges:

- How to evaluate the collaborative. When the Wilder survey was identified we were able to assess the collaboration.
- Finding times to meet is challenging. We learned to set the date well in advance but could not meet everyone's needs.

NEXT STEPS

- The California WIC Association and the California Breastfeeding Coalition are planning to begin meetings in Spring 2021 now that the Childhood Obesity CoIIN activities are winding down.
- Future improvements to our workgroup include:
 - Base future meetings on the evaluation components
 - Expand workgroup members
 - Update workplan: short and long term goals

RESOURCES PROVIDED

- [Workplace Breastfeeding Support in California Infographic](#)
- [Lactation Support for Low-Wage Workers \(PDF\)](#): Breastfeeding improves maternal and infant wellbeing and reduces health care costs. This Brief address returning to work and the significant challenges this creates to breastfeed for many women.
- [The Maternal and Infant Health Assessment \(MIHA\)](#), is an annual, statewide-representative survey of women with a recent live birth in California. MIHA collects self-reported information about maternal and infant experiences and about maternal attitudes and behaviors before, during and shortly after pregnancy.
- [9 Steps To Breastfeeding Friendly: Guidelines for Community Health Centers and Outpatient Care Settings \(PDF\) : Guidelines](#) developed in collaboration with input from community health centers, the California Department of Public Health, the California WIC Association (CWA) and the California Breastfeeding Coalition (CBC) to support community health centers and outpatient care settings.
- [Recorded Webinar: 9 Steps to Breastfeeding Friendly: Guidelines for Community Health Centers and Outpatient Care Settings](#)
- [California National Breastfeeding Month campaign](#)
- [USBC Guide to the Rights of Breastfeeding Employees in California](#)
- [California Breastfeeding Coalition Annual Summit](#)



- [California WIC Association Conference and Trade Show](#)

APPENDIX

- N/A.

