



Breastfeeding and lactation breaks at work

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Queensland public servants, including teachers, are entitled to a paid break of up to one hour each day to breastfeed their babies or to express milk. This entitlement is included in the Public Service Commission policy "[Breastfeeding and work](#)", which took effect on 5 August, 2010.

This QTU brochure provides information and advice to help teachers and principals work together to come to local arrangements that deliver on the intent of the policy, which is to support "employees to breastfeed and/or express breast milk while at work", and so help ensure successful transitions back to work.

Negotiating breaks

In schools, the timing and frequency of breaks are to be negotiated between the employee and principal. This looks very different in different workplaces.

For the best outcome, women who plan to breastfeed and/or express milk at work should give as much notice as possible of their intention before returning to work from parental leave. Such notice provides more time for the school's administration to look at suitable options that minimise disruption to service delivery while still catering for the mother's and baby's needs.

According to the policy, "the frequency, duration and timing of lactation breaks:

- will vary between individuals and may be influenced by the child's age and their breastfeeding pattern, the location of the identified workplace facility, and any special requirements
- should be negotiated and agreed between the employee and their employer to allow the flexibility needed."

The policy states that "employees have an obligation to ensure that the timing of lactation breaks is to take into account reasonable business and organisational needs with a focus on minimising disruption to the workplace and service delivery". It also states that "decisions made

regarding requests for lactation breaks and flexible work options must be fair, transparent and capable of review". The policy recommends and the QTU strongly advises that there be a written agreement.

Where schools are genuinely unable to accommodate requests, school leaders are encouraged to contact regional HR for advice and support.

Timing of breaks

The policy says that breaks should be "without debit". That means that the breaks should be in paid time and there should not be the assumption that meal breaks or non-contact time are to be used as lactation breaks.

Preferred options are to adjust teaching timetables and rosters.

Non-contact time is for preparation and correction. If it is planned that the breaks will be taken in non-contact time, the school will need to work out how to avoid any additional workload burden for the teacher. For example, in primary schools this could mean replacing lost non-contact time as per the aggregation process.

Where negotiations are considering the use of meal breaks for lactation purposes, the QTU would advise that meal breaks (apart from the 10-minute rest pause) are unpaid.

Mothers who need more than their entitlement of one hour per day should discuss flexible work options or leave arrangements with their principal to accommodate their needs.

Other arrangements

Negotiations may also consider a range of flexible work options. A carer can bring the baby to the school for feeding; babies obviously must be safely transported to and from the school, and taken directly to the breastfeeding facility. If the teacher lives close to the school (as is particularly the case in some rural towns), she can leave the school grounds to go home and breastfeed the child. Leaving the school grounds must be approved by the principal and relevant staff should be informed.

Facilities

Wherever possible, the facilities provided for breastfeeding employees should include a private, clean and hygienic space which is suitably signed and lockable, has appropriate seating, a table or bench to support breastfeeding equipment and access to a refrigerator, microwave and bin for rubbish and nappy disposal.

This might be a withdrawal room, or an unused staffroom, however sick rooms and staff toilets should be avoided. In some schools, there may be a suitable office in the administration building, or the office of an administrator may be made available, with their consent.

Employees using the facilities have a responsibility to ensure expressed milk is appropriately stored and labelled, and to only breastfeed or express milk in the designated facility.

Breastfeeding employees may choose to seek further assistance in relation to breastfeeding and returning to work by contacting a breastfeeding counsellor from the National Breastfeeding Helpline on 1800 68 62 68. Email counselling is available by contacting www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Need help?

Please contact the Queensland Teachers' Assist Desk on 1300 11 7823 or qtad@qtu.asn.au or contact your regional QTU Organiser should you have any issues negotiating and accessing breastfeeding breaks at your school.