



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Statewide initiative aims to increase business support for breastfeeding

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Breastfeeding Committee, the Alabama Department of Public Health, Birmingham Healthy Start and the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health Department of Maternal and Child Health announce a statewide initiative to increase the numbers of businesses who provide lactation support to breastfeeding employees.

“Breastfeeding provides nutritional and health benefits for infants and mothers throughout their lives,” said Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer. “We support this initiative to promote breastfeeding which is one of many ways Alabama can reduce infant mortality.”

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services selected Birmingham as one of 10 pilot locations to implement the project aimed at encouraging women to breastfeed their infants for a longer duration after they return to work. The Business Case for Breastfeeding is part of a nationwide emphasis of the HHS Health Resources and Services Administration’s Maternal and Child Health Bureau.

According to Dr. Lewis Doggett, President of the Alabama Breastfeeding Committee, providing lactation support is a “win-win-win” for everyone: businesses, mothers and babies. “Mothers are breastfeeding in record numbers today,” Dr. Doggett says. “Here in Alabama more than 64 percent of mothers choose to give their babies the healthiest start in life through breastfeeding. When businesses accommodate their basic needs with simple family friendly benefits, they can enjoy significant cost savings.”

These benefits, according to Dr. Doggett, include lower health care costs since breastfed infants are healthier, lower absenteeism rates due to healthier babies, and lower turnover costs since employees are more likely to return to work when the company provides lactation support benefits.

Twenty-six percent of companies in the U.S. provide lactation support programs. Babies are able to take advantage of their mother’s milk longer, giving them an edge in overall health with lower risk of infections, disease, diabetes, and even some forms of cancer. Dr. Doggett says the needs of breastfeeding employees are relatively simple.

“There are four easy steps that make the difference for working mothers,” he says. “Those four things include support from managers and coworkers, flexible time to express milk around 10-15

minutes three times a day, education for employees about how to combine breastfeeding and work, and a designated space to breastfeed or express milk in privacy. That space does not need to be elaborate. A simple space as small as 4 by 5 feet is often all an employee needs.”

As part of the national initiative, HHS has produced a comprehensive resource kit, The Business Case for Breastfeeding, with information, tools and step-by-step instructions for implementing a lactation support program in a workplace. Businesses throughout the state will be encouraged to consider some of these simple support options.

Businesses can learn more about the program by visiting the Alabama Breastfeeding Committee site at www.adph.org/albfcomm or by calling 205-975-2924. HHS has also produced a WEBCAST about the project, available in its archives at www.mchcom.com. A training event for community leaders will be hosted on July 30 and 31.

The Alabama Breastfeeding Committee, Birmingham Healthy Start Program, the Alabama Department of Public Health, and the UAB School of Public Health Department of Maternal and Child Health invite health care professionals and community leaders to learn more about the project. For more information, contact Gayle Whatley at gwhatley@adph.state.al.us or 205-934-6254 or Kelley Swatzell at ksw@uab.edu or 205-975-2924.