**URGENT: Provide Accessible Lactation Spaces**

We at 500 Women Scientists [pod name] believe that work and study should not interfere with breastfeeding. Breastfeeding has important health and societal benefits, but institutional barriers and lack of support often lead to early weaning. There are many features of scientific work that pose unique challenges to breastfeeding, including: departmental culture, workforce and student mix, remote field sites, open laboratory spaces, hazardous work materials, experiment schedules, teaching obligations, and many more. Unfortunately, in many academic settings and across scientific fields, there are insufficient policies and infrastructure for lactation support and legal protections are often not honored.

Research shows that comprehensive workplace lactation programs, including clear policies, dedicated lactation space, and a culture of support, can improve breastfeeding rates. Dedicated, well-designed lactation rooms are optimal for efficient and comfortable expression of milk during the workday and would reduce involuntary early weaning. Here are some considerations for supporting lactation spaces at academic institutions and scientific conferences.

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### Create a Lactation Policy at your Institution

Creating and implementing a lactation policy at your university or company is the only way to ensure proper protections for lactation will be in place consistently now and in the future. Some institutions have developed policies that clearly state the rights of working moms. One great example is the University of California Davis, which was on the vanguard of having a comprehensive lactation support program. The Office of Women’s Health, Pregnant@Work, and the Pregnant Scholar have additional resources for informing supportive policies in academia and beyond. Pregnant@Work has a guide to federal and state laws protecting lactating employees.

**Our recommendations:**

- Advocate for a clear and comprehensive lactation support policy at your institution, citing examples at similar institutions.

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### Demand Accessible Lactation Spaces at Your Institution or Conference

To ensure accessible lactation spaces, workplaces and conferences should consider several key features with respect to location, mechanical appliance considerations, and furniture choices. Additional information on designing ideal lactation spaces can be found below, along with general considerations for hosting child-friendly conferences.

**Our recommendations:**

- Advocate for the above considerations at your institution
- Share this sheet with appropriate decision-makers
- Help normalize the need for lactation spaces whenever possible.

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**References and Resources**


5. Center for Worklife Law. Pregnant@Work Initiative. [https://www.pregnantatwork.org/](https://www.pregnantatwork.org/)

6. The Pregnant Scholar. [https://thepregnantscholar.org/](https://thepregnantscholar.org/)


