Becoming a Breastfeeding Friendly Place

a step by step guide

Why welcome breastfeeding?

What's in it for you?

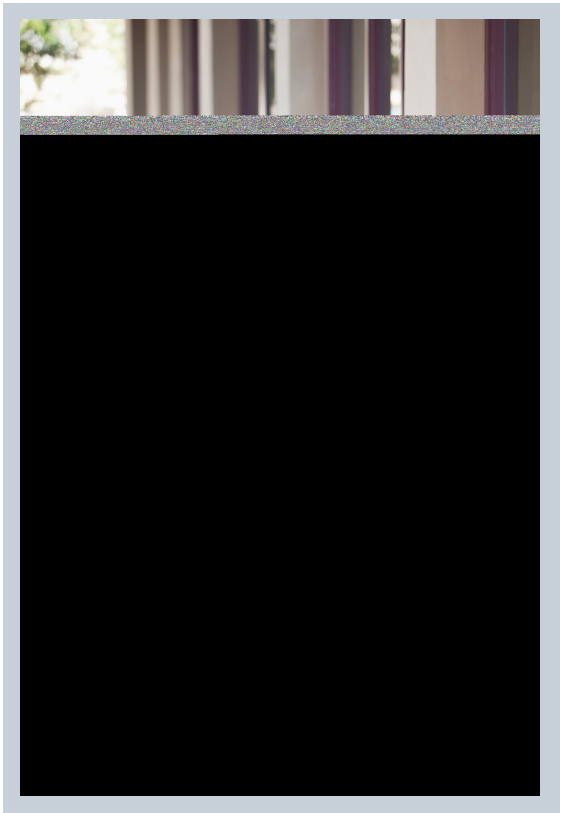
Many businesses, organizations and municipalities already welcome breastfeeding in their premises. The benefits of becoming a breastfeeding friendly place include:

- Making an improvement to customer service.
- Possibly attracting a new customer base.
- Possibly improving your image and increasing publicity.

What's in it for the community?

- Breastfeeding is environmentally friendly; it imposes no costs on the environment in terms of production, packaging or waste disposal.
- Breastfeeding parents need to be fully supported by all sectors of the community. You are a vital part of creating that supportive environment and in doing so will create opportunities for healthier people, healthier relationships and a healthier community.

Why is breastfeeding important?

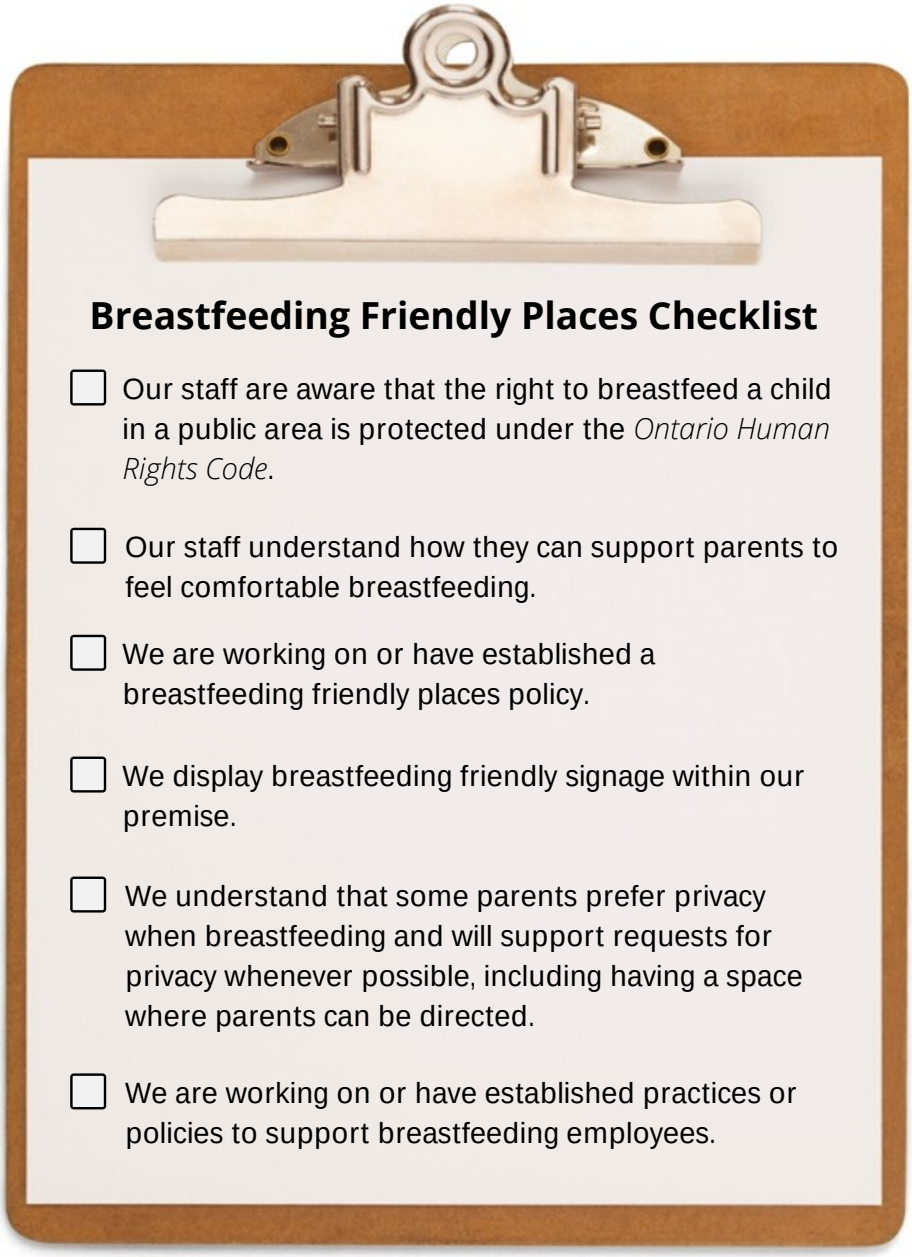


- Promotes closeness and bonding between child and parent.
- Reduces mother's risk of breast and ovarian cancer.
- Saves time and money.
- Safe and secure food source for a child when travelling and in emergencies.
- May protect a child against ear, chest and stomach infections.
- May lower a child's risk of obesity, diabetes, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and leukemia.
- Supports the healthy development of a child's brain.

Taking Action

What can you do?

All parents have the right to breastfeed their child in a public area. The checklist below and the steps on the next page describe simple things you can do in order to welcome breastfeeding families.



Breastfeeding Friendly Places Checklist

- ☐ Our staff are aware that the right to breastfeed a child in a public area is protected under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.
- ☐ Our staff understand how they can support parents to feel comfortable breastfeeding.
- ☐ We are working on or have established a breastfeeding friendly places policy.
- ☐ We display breastfeeding friendly signage within our premise.
- ☐ We understand that some parents prefer privacy when breastfeeding and will support requests for privacy whenever possible, including having a space where parents can be directed.
- ☐ We are working on or have established practices or policies to support breastfeeding employees.

To request assistance in becoming a breastfeeding friendly place, to obtain a window decal, or for other inquiries about supporting breastfeeding, call **Health Connections** @ **905-546-3550** to speak to Public Health Nurse. You can also visit the following website:

https://www.hamilton.ca/public-health/health-topics/breastfeeding-friendly-places

Taking Action

Step #1: Inform your staff

Well informed staff are critical to creating a breastfeeding friendly place. Guidelines or policies create clear expectations. Here are some ways to ensure your staff are well informed:

- Inform your staff of any breastfeeding friendly policy and practices.
- Post a copy of the Policy and Staff Tips where employees will see it.
- Share a copy of this guide with staff and discuss ways that staff can support breastfeeding in your premise.
- Inform all new staff that your establishment welcomes breastfeeding families and keep track of staff that have received information. Keep a copy of the policy with your staff orientation material.

Remember:

Workplaces must also support breastfeeding employees to stay in compliance with the law.

The **Ontario Human Rights Commission** states, "Women cannot be discriminated against in any way because they have chosen to breastfeed." The employee and the employer need to collaborate on the arrangements to permit the mother to breastfeed upon her return to work. "Employees who require breaks, such as for pumping or breastfeeding, should normally be accorded those breaks, and not be asked to forgo normal meal breaks as a result, or work additional time to make up for the breaks, unless the employer can show undue hardship."

Step #2: Inform families

- Put up breastfeeding friendly signs where everyone can see them.
- Support requests for privacy for breastfeeding or pumping whenever possible.
- If you have one, promote that there is a place for parents to change their child.

Step #3: Inform the general public

- Use your efforts to your advantage. Advertise that you are a breastfeeding friendly place.
- An electronic version of the breastfeeding friendly signage is available for your website.
- In October, participate in or support local activities for National Breastfeeding Week.

Taking Action

Breastfeeding Friendly Place Policy

Having a breastfeeding policy is an effective way to ensure that all staff are aware that your premise supports breastfeeding.

If you do not already have a policy, you can **fill in the template** below and post in a visible area. You can use this policy as is, or can incorporate into other existing policies.

BREASTFEEDING FRIENDLY POLICY

Policy No. _____

Date Approved: _____

_____ supports breastfeeding parents and the right to breastfeed undisturbed in public places.

Purpose

To support visiting breastfeeding parents to breastfeed within _____ and to provide the conditions (time, space and support) necessary to facilitate breastfeeding.

Definitions

Breastfeeding- includes pumping or expressing milk, as well as nursing directly from the breast.

Public- any visitor to _____ .

Public place- refers to any area in the premise where customers, clients, visitors are permitted.

Application

_____ promotes and supports breastfeeding and the expression of breastmilk by members of the public when they are visitors to our premise.

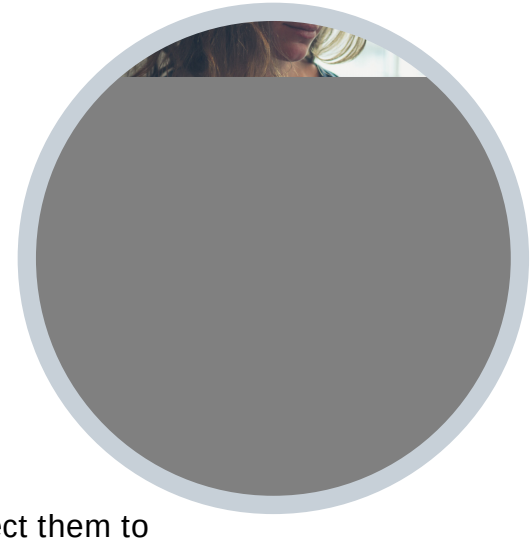
Upon request, staff will provide assistance to visitors who wish to breastfeed their child by providing a location comfortable to both child and parent, where space is available.

Pursuant to the Ontario Human Rights Code, staff will not disturb breastfeeding parents, ask them to "cover up," or move to another area that is more "discreet."

If a member of staff feels they need more guidance on this they should speak to _____ .

Staff tips for creating a breastfeeding friendly place

The following are some ways that staff can help breastfeeding families feel more comfortable:



- Allow the family to breastfeed undisturbed.
- Make eye contact with a breastfeeding parent.
- Talk to the breastfeeding parent in a comfortable manner.
- Accommodate a breastfeeding parentʼs request for a place to sit and allow them to choose a place where they will be comfortable breastfeeding.
- Accommodate a parent's request for privacy. ʯf available, direct them to a designated breastfeeding location or an area that is more private.
- Note that washrooms are not a suitable place for anyone to eat, including a breastfeeding child. While encouraged, business participation does not require that a private location be provided on site.
- Be supportive of coworkers who are breastfeeding.

If a customer expresses a concern about a breastfeeding family, staff are encouraged to:

- Explain that your business is a breastfeeding friendly place and that it is your practice/policy to welcome breastfeeding families.
- Explain that the Ontario Human Rights Code protects the right to breastfeed in public areas regardless of the age of the child. ʯt specifies that a parent should not be disturbed by being asked to stop, ʝcover up,ɟ or asked to move to an area that is more ʝdiscreet.ɟ
- Offer to make other accommodations to help the customer be more comfortable, instead of disturbing the breastfeeding parent.