

## Wage and Hour Division



Print Fact Sheet



WAGE AND HOUR DIVISION



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

# Fact Sheet #73: FLSA Protections for Employees to Pump Breast Milk at Work

Revised January 2023

Under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), most nursing employees have the right to reasonable break time and a place, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view to express breast milk while at work. This right is available for up to one year after the child's birth.

This fact sheet provides general information on the FLSA's protections for nursing employees, as extended by the Providing Urgent Maternal Protections for Nursing Mothers Act (PUMP Act), which was signed into law on December 29, 2022 (P.L. 117-328).

## ABOUT THE FLSA

The FLSA establishes minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, and child labor standards affecting full-time and part-time employees in the private sector and in Federal, State, and local governments. The FLSA also protects the rights of employees to pump breast milk at work.

Workers may have greater protections under State or local worker protection laws. The FLSA does not preempt State or local laws that provide greater protections to employees.

For more information about the FLSA, visit [www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/flsa](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/flsa).

## Break Time to Pump Breast Milk

Most employees have the right to take reasonable break time to express breast milk for their nursing child. For **one year after the child's birth**, covered employees may take reasonable break time “**each time such employee has need to express the milk.**” An employer may not deny a covered employee a needed break to pump.

The frequency and duration of breaks needed to express milk will likely vary depending on factors related to the nursing employee and the child.

Factors such as the location of the space and the steps reasonably necessary to express breast milk, such as pump setup, can also affect the duration of time an employee will need to express milk.

Employees who telework are eligible to take pump breaks under the FLSA on the same basis as other employees.

# Private Space to Pump Breast Milk

Covered employees must be provided with “a place, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public, which may be used by an employee to express breast milk.” Under the FLSA, a bathroom, even if private, **is not a permissible location** for the employer to provide for pumping breast milk.

The location provided must be functional as a space for expressing breast milk. If the space is not dedicated to the nursing employee’s use, it must be available when needed by the employee in order to meet the statutory requirement. A space temporarily created or converted into a space for expressing breast milk or made available when needed by the nursing employee is sufficient provided that the space is shielded from view and free from any intrusion from co-workers and the public.

Workers who telework must also be free from observation by any employer-provided or required video system, including computer camera, security camera, or web conferencing platform.

## Covered Employees

As of December 29, 2022, nearly all FLSA-covered employees have the right to take needed time and to access an appropriate space to express breast milk for a nursing child for up to one year after the child’s birth. For more information about FLSA coverage, see [Fact Sheet #14](#).

Certain employees of airlines, railroads, and motorcoach carriers are exempt from nursing employee protections under the FLSA. Employees who are exempted may be entitled to break and/or space protections under State or local laws.

Employers with fewer than 50 employees are not subject to the FLSA break time and space requirements if compliance with the provision would impose an undue hardship. Whether compliance would be an undue hardship is determined by looking at the difficulty or expense of compliance for a specific employer in comparison to the size, financial resources, nature, and structure of the employer’s business. All employees who work for the covered employer, regardless of work site, are counted when determining whether this exemption may apply.

### Examples

- Julia cleans guest rooms at hotels on weekends. Julia is entitled to break time and space under the FLSA for one year after the birth of a child.
- Samantha is a registered nurse who is exempt from receiving overtime pay under the FLSA. Beginning on December 29, 2022, Samantha is entitled to break time and space for one year after the birth of a child.
- Irina is the shift manager at a fast-food restaurant with several locations and meets all requirements to be exempt from overtime pay requirements under the FLSA. When Irina returns to work after the birth of her child in March of 2023, in order to comply with the law, her employer provides an office to take four breaks a day of 25 minutes each to pump breast milk for the nursing child.

## Compensation for Break Time to Pump Breast Milk

Under the FLSA, when an employee is using break time at work to express breast milk they either:

- Must be completely relieved from duty; or
- Must be paid for the break time.

Further, when employers provide paid breaks, an employee who uses such break time to pump breast milk must be compensated in the same way that other employees are compensated for break time.

For more information about time that must be compensated, see [Fact Sheet #22](#).

### Examples

- Madison works on a farm. Madison’s employer provides all employees with two paid 15-minute rest breaks each day. Madison chooses to use both of the paid 15-minute breaks to pump breast milk for her 6-month-old infant. If Madison needs additional breaks to pump, the additional break time does not have to be compensated as long as Madison does not perform any work during the breaks.
- Peyton is a third-grade teacher. Under the FLSA, Peyton is entitled to time to pump breast milk in a private space. Peyton chooses to grade papers and complete student records while pumping breast milk. Peyton must be compensated for the

time spent pumping and doing this work at the same time.

- Lauren's employer requires all employees to attend a team-building meeting at 3pm on Thursdays. Lauren requests break time to pump during the Thursday meeting. Lauren's employer denies her request in violation of the FLSA. Lauren must be paid for the time attending the meeting and must be permitted time and space to pump.

## FLSA Prohibitions on Retaliation

It is a violation of the FLSA for any person to "discharge or in any other manner discriminate against any employee because such employee has filed any complaint or instituted or caused to be instituted any proceeding under or related to this Act, or has testified or is about to testify in any such proceeding, or has served or is about to serve on an industry committee."

Employees are protected regardless of whether the complaint is made orally or in writing. Complaints made to the Wage and Hour Division are protected, and most courts have ruled that internal complaints to an employer are also protected.

### *Example*

- Linda is a delivery truck driver for a department store and takes breaks to pump breast milk a couple of times each day. The supervisor complains that the breaks are interfering with the delivery schedule and moves Linda to a lower-paying job as a result.

In this example, Linda has experienced unlawful retaliation under the FLSA.

## Remedies for Violations

Beginning April 28, 2023, an employer who violates an employee's right to reasonable break time and space to pump breast milk will be liable for appropriate legal or equitable remedies under the FLSA. Remedies may include employment, reinstatement, promotion, and the payment of wages lost and an additional equal amount as liquidated damages, compensatory damages and make-whole relief, such as economic losses that resulted from violations, and punitive damages where appropriate. These remedies are available regardless of whether the employee has also experienced retaliation.\*

An employee may file a complaint with the Wage and Hour Division or may file a private cause of action seeking appropriate remedies. Special procedures may apply to filing a private action where an employer has failed to provide an employee with an appropriate space to pump. Special procedures **do not apply** before an employee or other party can file a complaint with the Wage and Hour Division or when an employee brings a private suit to enforce the reasonable break time requirement.

\*Please Note: Before April 28, 2023, remedies for violations of the reasonable break time and space requirements of the FLSA are limited to unpaid minimum or overtime wages. An employee who experienced retaliation may also seek additional remedies including, but not limited to, employment, reinstatement, lost wages and an additional equal amount as liquidated damages, compensatory damages and make-whole relief, such as economic losses that resulted from violations, and punitive damages where appropriate.



Where to Obtain Additional Information

For additional information, visit our Wage and Hour Division Website: <http://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd> and/or call our toll-free information and helpline, available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in your time zone, 1-866-4USWAGE (1-866-487-9243).

This publication is for general information and is not to be considered in the same light as official statements of position contained in the regulations.

The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

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