Washington State Laws Protect a Woman's Right to Breastfeed in Places of Public Accommodation

2001: Breastfeeding in public is not considered indecent exposure. (RCW 43.70, 9A.88.010).

2009: Breastfeeding mothers are protected under state anti-discrimination law, and can breastfeed their children in places of public accommodation such as restaurants, pools, theaters, government buildings, museums, libraries, busses, or parks. (RCW 49.60.030 and 49.60.215).

What Businesses and Employees Need to Know:

The owner, manager or employee of a place of public accommodation cannot request that a mother stop breastfeeding, cover her child, move to a different room or area, or leave.

If someone complains to you, as an employee or owner of a business, about a mother breastfeeding her child, politely explain that the law protects the right of the mother to stay where she is to breastfeed. If they are offended, the only suggestion that you can make is that they avert their eyes or move away.

If you choose to provide a space for breastfeeding, place signs prominently in your business but know it is the breastfeeding woman's right to stay where she is. She does not have to use a designated area.

The law does not apply to employees. However, Washington Law encourages employers to support breastfeeding employees. To learn more visit the **Breastfeeding Coalition of Washington** website: www.breastfeedingwa.org.

To contact the **Washington Human Rights Commission** with questions about the law protecting a mother's right to breastfeed in places of public accommodation call 800-233-3247 or visit www.hum.wa.gov.

Nearly 90% of all mothers initiate breastfeeding in Washington State.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months.

Washington State Human Rights Commission

Breastfeeding Coalition of Washington
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